



P.O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

## Item No. 4.1

Halifax Regional Council

June 3, 2025

June 10, 2025

June 19, 2025

**TO:** Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**FROM:** Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** May 16, 2025

**SUBJECT:** **Regional Plan Review: Phase 4 (Case 22257), including Minimum Planning Requirements**

---

### **ORIGIN**

See Attachment A-13.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Municipality has been undertaking a comprehensive review of the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Regional Plan) since 2020. This report presents a new Regional Plan, together with a comprehensive package of amendments for implementation.

The proposed Regional Plan included in Attachment B represents a new planning framework to guide growth and development in HRM. Drawing on many of the same principles as the original 2006 Regional Plan and current 2014 Regional Plan, the proposed Regional Plan represents a modern, forward-looking planning framework that will support our goals of building healthy complete communities and a sustainable future. The proposed Regional Plan envisions that over time, the municipality will grow to be a region supporting one million people.

Community engagement was undertaken when the Draft Regional Plan was released for public comment in June 2023. Engagement took place during Summer and Fall 2023, with a What We Heard Report presented to Regional Council in December 2023.

In August 2024, the Province issued a set of new *Minimum Planning Requirement Regulations* related to housing supply. Council directed staff to initiate the process of addressing these new regulations as part of the Regional Plan Review process.

The proposed Regional Plan was developed based on feedback gathered from Council, the public, and internal/external stakeholders on the policy concepts contained in the June 2023 Draft and in response to the provincial Minimum Planning Requirements *Regulations*. This report presents the new Regional Plan with a full implementation package, which includes amendments to Community Plans, Land Use By-Laws, and the Regional Subdivision By-Law required to implement the new Regional Plan policies.

### **RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2-3**

This report recommends that Regional Council give first reading and schedule a public hearing to consider:

- Repealing the 2014 Regional Plan and approving the proposed 2025 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Attachment B);
- Repealing and re-adopting the by-laws, policies, and provisions of the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-Laws (as amended) that were previously adopted to implement the 2014 Regional Plan, (Attachment C); Amendments to the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies, Land Use By-Laws, and the Regional Subdivision By-Law required to implement the Regional Plan; and (Attachments D, E, F); and Amendments to implement the Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations related to housing supply (Attachment G).

The report further recommends that Council direct staff to generally follow the Phase 5 Work Plan and the approach for site-specific amendments set out in this report (Attachments A-5, A-6, A-8).

In support of these recommendations, this report:

- Highlights key changes to Regional Plan policy and regulations that will impact land use planning and development rights (Attachments A-1, A-2);
- Describes the approach taken to address the Minimum Planning Requirements related to housing supply and feedback from residents during the engagement period on these approaches (Attachments A-3, A-9);
- Describes the approach taken to site-specific requests addressed in the proposed Regional Plan and supporting amendment package (Attachment A-4);
- Responds to motions of Council and Committee that have been considered as part of the Regional Plan Review process;
- Provides an update on the completed Regional Plan Review Phase 4 Work Plan (Attachment A-12), and provides an outline of work expected to be undertaken in Phase 5 (Attachment A-5); and
- Identifies new and outstanding site-specific requests for amendments to the Regional Plan and recommends an approach to proceed based on staff's initial analysis (Attachments A-6, A-8).

There are risks associated with the recommendations in this report as they related to the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) decision in *Annapolis Group Inc. v. Halifax Regional Municipality* (2022). Additionally, the Municipality is obligated to respond to some of the *Provincial Minimum Planning Requirements* by June 30, 2025.

The financial implications of any policies, programs, or projects established by the proposed Regional Plan policy will be managed during the normal Budget and Business Planning process.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Give First Reading to consider:
  - a. Repeal of the existing 2014 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, and approval of the proposed 2025 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, as set out in Attachment B;
  - b. Repeal and re-adoption of the by-laws, policies, and provisions of the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-Laws (as amended) that were previously adopted to implement the 2014 Regional Plan as set out in Attachment C;
  - c. Approval of the proposed amendments to the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies as set out in Attachment D;
  - d. Approval of the proposed amendments to the Land Use By-Laws, as set out in Attachment E;
  - e. Approval of the proposed amendments to the Regional Subdivision By-Law, as set out in Attachment F;

- f. Approval of the proposed amendments to the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-Laws, as set out in Attachment G.
- and schedule a public hearing.
2. Repeal the existing 2014 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy and adopt the proposed 2025 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, as set out in Attachment B.
3. Repeal and re-adopt the by-laws, policies, and provisions of the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-Laws (as amended) that were previously adopted to implement the 2014 Regional Plan, as set out in Attachment C.
4. Adopt the amendments to the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies as set out in Attachment D.
5. Adopt the amendments to the Land Use By-Laws as set out in Attachment E.
6. Adopt the amendments to the Regional Subdivision By-Law as set out in Attachment F.
7. Adopted the amendments to the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-laws to meet the Provincial *Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations* related to housing supply as set out in Attachment G.
8. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:
  - a) use the Phase 5 Work Plan Framework outlined in Attachment A-5 as a guide for developing a detailed Phase 5 Work Plan;
  - b) follow the recommended approaches to consider site-specific requests during Phase 5 as set out in Attachment A-6 (Phase 5 Site-Specific Requests) and A-8 (Recommended Approach for Margeson Drive Area, Middle Sackville); and
  - (c) return to Council with a Phase 5 public participation program.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (the Regional Plan) sets out a common vision, guiding principles and long-range, region-wide planning policies outlining where, when, and how future settlement, balanced growth, and development should take place. Originally adopted in 2006, the Regional Plan provided the first comprehensive guide for future growth for the entire Municipality following amalgamation. The 2006 Regional Plan established policy for a 25-year horizon, from 2006-2031, with minor reviews expected every 5 years. The first review (RP+5) began in 2011, with readoption in 2014. The 2014 Regional Plan has been guiding the Municipality's growth and settlement pattern since then.

Regional Council directed staff to begin the second five-year review of the Regional Plan in 2020, just a few weeks prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the onset of the pandemic, as well as HRM's population growth and increased pressure on housing, infrastructure and community services, the project was redesigned to include two additional phases – Phase 3, which focused exclusively on potential housing projects; and Phase 5, which will focus on long-term growth planning.

In May 2021, Regional Council released the deliverables set out in the [Phase 2 Themes & Directions Report](#) and staff led engagement until July that same year. The results of the engagement were presented to Regional Council in a [What We Heard Report](#) in December 2021. Following this, a set of amendments

focused on potential housing projects, [Phase 3 Quick Adjustments for Housing](#) was presented to Council in July 2022, to support the Municipality's response to current housing conditions. In June 2023, the [Phase 4 Draft Regional Plan](#) was released for public engagement, and the results of the engagement were presented in a [What We Heard Report](#) in December 2023. The release of this report, including the proposed Regional Plan and supporting planning document amendments, represents the conclusion of Phase 4 of the Regional Plan Review project.

### **Regional Plan Review Work Plan**

Since 2021, the Themes & Directions document has served as the basis for the Regional Plan Review Work Plan, with each Direction serving as a deliverable. Regular updates to this Work Plan have been provided to and endorsed by Regional Council as the project has progressed, with the last update supporting the release of the Draft Regional Plan in June 2023. Significant progress has been made on all deliverables outlined in the Work Plan during Phase 4. Attachment A-12 provides a final update on this Work Plan and includes references to the relevant policy in the proposed Regional Plan. A work plan framework for Phase 5 is provided in Attachment A-5.

### **Provincial Minimum Planning Requirements Related to Housing**

Under subsection 229(4) of the *HRM Charter*, the Minister may make regulations (a) prescribing matters in respect of which the inclusion of statements of policy in a municipal planning strategy is either mandatory or discretionary, and (b) prescribing requirements that a municipal planning strategy must fulfill. These have been established by the Minister as the *Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations*.

Separate to the Regional Plan Review, on August 21, 2024, the Minister enacted a set of mandatory *Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations* in the Halifax Charter ([Section 4A](#)), which provides mandatory content that a municipal planning strategy must contain as it relates to the supply of housing. The Provincial MPRs require the Municipality to implement the changes by December 30, 2024. Following a request from the Mayor, the Minister of Growth and Development [provided](#) an extension to **June 30, 2025**.

An initiation report, [Response to Provincial Minimum Planning Requirements](#), was brought to Regional Council on October 1, 2024, to consider amendments to all planning documents to ensure compliance with the *Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations* as amended by the Province in August. Staff completed the technical analysis of the required amendments to HRM's Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, all Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies (SMPS) and Land Use By-Laws (LUB), and the Regional Subdivision By-Law and have drafted the necessary amendments, which are being presented as part of this report and package. An engagement period was held to consult residents on the proposed approach to comply with each of the new *Minimum Planning Requirement Regulations*. The feedback received during this engagement period is presented in Attachment A-9 of this report.

### **Provincial Minimum Planning Requirements Related to Wind Turbine Setback Requirements**

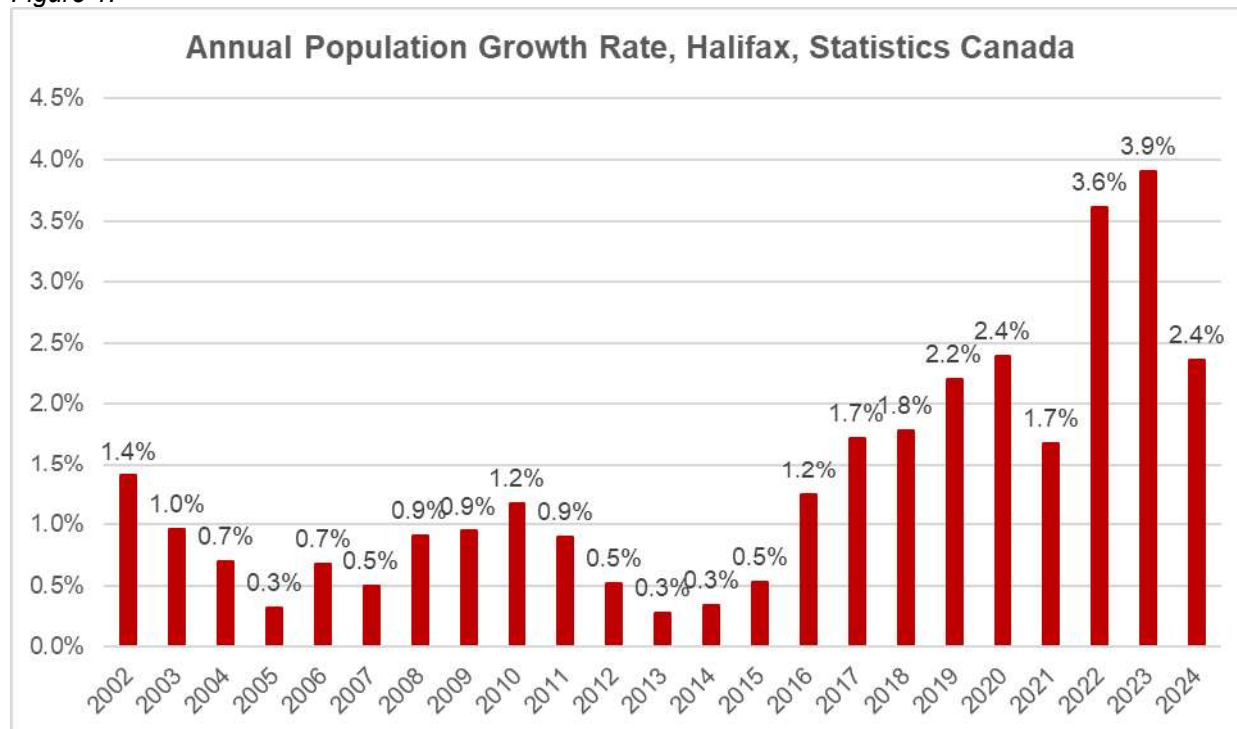
On March 7, 2025, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing initiated further changes to the HRM Charter under Section 229 to address new setback requirements in relation to wind turbines for large scale wind energy developments. The new regulations on [wind turbine setback requirements](#) require that the minimum distance between a commercial wind turbine that generates 2 MW of greater and a residential dwelling cannot be more than either four times the height of the turbine, or the distance needed to keep noise levels below 40 decibels outside the home, and limit shadow flicker to no more than 30 minutes a day, or 30 hours per year. The regulations also direct that Council may not consider the visual impact or aesthetic appearance of a wind turbine development prior to approval of a Project. Attachment A-10 provides a summary of the land use by-law amendments required to address this Minimum Planning Requirement.

### **Housing and Growth Analysis**

As part of the Regional Plan Review process, since 2021, staff have published analysis of the Municipality's population projections, associated housing demand, and regulatory capacity for housing (how many units

may be possible to build, based on current policy direction). Issue Papers were published in [June 2021](#) with the Preliminary Population & Housing Analysis Issue Paper, and updates in [December 2021](#), [May 2022](#), and [May 2023](#). A new update is provided as Attachment A-11.

Figure 1:



The 2025 update report reveals that HRM has improved its ability to accommodate projected population growth and promote diverse housing options by utilizing zoning adjustments and strategic planning initiatives, such as the Centre Plan and Suburban Rapid Transit Corridors. However, the next 10-year and future scenarios reveal that if HRM grows at the rate indicated in the NS Targeted Migration and High Migration/Economic Boom scenarios, there might be challenges in meeting the demand for housing by 2050, if no further changes to planning policy are contemplated.

Given the dynamic nature of population growth and the planning system, this process should be considered iterative in nature. The Regional Plan Review and the Suburban Plan process will continue to identify additional lands that are capable of accommodating new housing, which will be included in future iterations of this analysis. Adjustments to include or exclude areas in this analysis may continue as the Regional Plan Review evaluates future growth scenarios in Phase 5 and the Suburban Plan becomes more defined.

Furthermore, Planning & Development staff will continue to monitor trends and analyze how changes to the planning framework impacts housing delivery.

### Constructive Taking Considerations

Planning & Development staff have worked with Legal Services to understand the implications of the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in [Annapolis Group Inc. v. Halifax Regional Municipality \(2022\)](#), and subsequent court decisions. The impact of these decisions requires the Municipality to continue being mindful when making planning decisions to ensure there is not a loss of all reasonable uses through the application of planning policy. Accordingly, adjustments have been made to allow the development officer

to relax certain restrictions regarding watercourse, wetland and coastal buffers, as well as allowing Council to consider development agreements to address these circumstances.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Engagement Program for the Overall Regional Plan**

The Phase 4 Draft Regional Plan was released for public comment in June 2023, and public engagement took place from June 20 to October 27, 2023, consistent with the intent of the Public Engagement Guidebook. The detailed results of the engagement have already been presented to Regional Council in a [What We Heard Report](#) in December 2023. An overview of this engagement is provided in this section.

The Phase 4 Public Participation Program shared the Draft Regional Plan widely and provided opportunities to collect meaningful feedback through broad and inclusive engagement. While previous Regional Plan Review engagement focused on digital tools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this phase of engagement brought a renewed focus on in-person engagement options. Event times and locations were selected to be accessible to a range of people. There was a special focus on events in suburban and rural areas as the Draft Plan introduced the Suburban and Rural Community Planning programs.

A total of 23 in-person engagement activities were held, with a total attendance of over 600 people. Several different formats for engagement were used: Pop-ups in public libraries, farmer's markets, and shopping malls; Planner Office Hours; and Public Open Houses. Staff were also available to attend and present at meetings hosted by community groups.

Hard copies of the Draft Plan were made available at all Halifax Public Library locations, while online engagement used the Shape Your City Halifax webpage ([www.shapeyourcitycityhalifax.ca/regional-plan](http://www.shapeyourcitycityhalifax.ca/regional-plan)) as a central hub. The webpage provided a comment board, information on engagement activities, a dedicated phone line and email contact information for questions and submissions, and access to all documents, such as the draft plan, topic summary sheets, and background. A Suburban Plan Questionnaire was available both online and at in-person events. Live online engagement was held as a Reddit 'Ask me Anything, with staff responding to questions posed by members of the public online. In total, 122 pieces of written and emailed correspondence were received.

Generally, the feedback was supportive of policies and objectives contained within the Draft Regional Plan. There was wide support for the concept of healthy and complete communities as a guiding framework for planning, and for environmentally focused regulations to protect sensitive ecosystems. There was concern expressed for housing supply and affordability, along with the social and physical infrastructure needed to support current and future residents. Written submissions provided a highly detailed review of draft policies, with suggestions for strengthening policy language.

Since the public engagement period, Regional Planning staff have continued to meet with residents, stakeholders, Councillors, and collaborate with other Business Units and use feedback to improve the document. A summary of the adjustments made to the Regional Plan as a result of feedback is included in Attachment A-1.

### **Engagement Program for the Minimum Planning Requirements**

On [October 1, 2024](#), Regional Council directed staff to incorporate amendments to meet the Minimum Planning Requirements as part of the ongoing Regional Plan Review, and approved a public participation program. As the changes being made were mandatory and required by provincial legislation, the public engagement materials focused on information-sharing and making the public aware of the changes. The public was invited to share comments and questions with staff throughout the 30-day engagement period from January 24 to February 24, 2025. The public engagement campaign included several methods of communication:

- The Shape Your City Webpage (<https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/minimum-planning>) for the



Minimum Planning Requirements was launched on January 24, 2025. The webpage was a central hub for the engagement, as digital and print advertisements directed the public to visit the webpage to learn more;

- The email ([regionalplan@halifax.ca](mailto:regionalplan@halifax.ca)) and phone number (902-943-5139) were the primary methods of communication between staff and the public. Staff returned phone calls, logged correspondence, and answered questions. A digital advertising campaign, including paid and unpaid posts, ran over the engagement period on the platforms Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram;
- A short video explaining the Minimum Planning Requirement changes and how to learn more was displayed on digital screens in libraries, transit terminals, and recreational centres across the municipality during the engagement period;
- Posters were also distributed to all library branches that included a brief explanation of the changes and where to learn more, including a QR-code linking to the webpage and staff contact information.

In general, feedback received on the Minimum Planning Requirements was mixed. Comments often noted support for a few of the changes and concern about others in the same correspondence. Some residents thought that the Minimum Planning Requirements were being implemented too slowly, and others communicated that the changes were occurring too quickly without time to fully digest the impacts. Comments expressed some frustration about the provincial role in mandating the changes and the length of the public engagement period. Nearly half of residents who submitted feedback misunderstood the scope of the Minimum Planning Requirements and confused these changes with other planning initiatives, notably the *Housing Accelerator Fund Urgent Changes to Planning Documents for Housing* amendments from spring 2024.

Acknowledging these challenges, staff responded to all correspondence directly, clarified the scope of the Minimum Planning Requirements where necessary, and referred residents to colleagues working on relevant projects for follow-up as needed. A complete summary of feedback is included in a 'What We Heard Report' in Attachment A-9.

## **DISCUSSION**

The proposed Regional Plan included in Attachment B represents a new planning framework to guide growth and development in HRM, and Attachments C through G include the amendments required to implement the Plan.

In light of recent population and housing trends that are presented in Attachment A-11 of this report, HRM has improved its ability to accommodate projected population growth and promote diverse housing options. To date, this has been largely done through zoning adjustments and strategic planning initiatives (e.g. adopting the Regional Centre planning framework, through the planning packages related to the Housing Accelerator Fund<sup>1</sup>) which have occurred separate to this Phase 4 Regional Plan Review. The next 10-year and future scenarios reveal however, that if the municipality continues to grow at a high rate, there will be challenges in meeting the demand for housing if additional policy changes are not made.

The Phase 4 Regional Plan recognizes the growth pressures that our municipality has experienced and brings forward a planning framework that is responsive to growth. The Plan envisions that over time, the municipality will grow to be a region supporting one million people. The policies of this Plan have been developed with a forward-looking view to supporting this growth in population by strategically directing housing, jobs, and community infrastructure in a way that supports goals for healthy, connected, and inclusive communities. It also draws on many of the same principles as the original 2006 Regional Plan and current 2014 Regional Plan, by proposing a modern, forward-looking planning framework that will support our goals of building healthy complete communities and a sustainable future.

---

<sup>1</sup> Through two separate HAF reports, HRM has enabled approximately 200,000 new units. See [Urgent changes to Planning Documents for Housing](#), and [Urgent changes to Planning Documents for Housing: Additional sites](#) for more details.

The following sections include:

1. **Overall Policy Framework:** Describes the content of the proposed Regional Plan and its policies, organized by each chapter.
2. **Major Regulatory Amendments:** Describes the key changes to Regional Plan policy and regulations that will impact land use planning and development rights (see also Attachments A-1 and A-2).
3. **Amendments to Address the Minimum Planning Requirements:** Describes the changes to Regional Plan policy, secondary municipal planning strategies and land use by-laws to address the Provincial Minimum Planning Requirements related to housing supply (see also Attachment A-3).
4. **Site-Specific Amendments (Phase 4):** Describes the approach taken to site-specific requests addressed in the proposed Regional Plan and supporting amendment package (see also Attachment A-4).
5. **Responses to Motions of Council and Committees:** Provides responses to motions of Council and Committees (included in the Origin section of this report) that have been considered as part of the Regional Plan Review process.
6. **Minor Housekeeping Amendments and Readoption:** Describes general amendments to clarify language, rectify errors, and keep a policy connection to the 2014 Regional Plan once it has been repealed and replaced by the new Regional Plan. This section also describes minor housekeeping amendments to enable housing in four locations, consistent with existing policy intent.
7. **Next Steps: Phase 5:** Provides an overview of the work to consider future growth which will be undertaken during Phase 5 (see also Attachment A-5).

## 1. **Overall Policy Framework**

The Regional Plan is a strategic policy document that sets out the goals, objectives and direction for long-term growth and development in HRM. To ensure planning policy can be responsive to a quickly growing population, the proposed Regional Plan envisions that the municipality will grow to be a region supporting one million people. As the municipality's population grows, most new development will be directed to established centres in urban and rural communities. The municipality's physical geographic constraints, existing and planned water and wastewater infrastructure, impacts of climate change, transit service boundary, and the location of employment and community infrastructure will guide where the most significant growth will occur.

The proposed Regional Plan consists of ten chapters. Key policies in each chapter are summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Regional Plan Summary**

Chapter	Summary
1. <b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Introduces the plan and provides historical and planning context.</li><li>Sets out the Plan's Vision, Guiding Principles, regional planning framework, and identifies the Municipality's response to the Statements of Provincial Interest and the Minimum Planning Requirements.</li></ul>
2. <b>Planning for The Region</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sets out the Municipality's approach to Regional and Community Planning for a projected population of 1 million people.</li></ul>



<p><i>Maps 1 and 2</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a planning framework organized around four geographic areas: Region-Wide, Regional Centre, Suburban and Rural Areas. The Community Planning program will be established around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Urban Area, which includes the Regional Centre and Suburban Area (lands outside of the Regional Centre, where municipal water and wastewater services and conventional transit are available or planned to be considered); and</li> <li>the Rural Area, which includes all lands outside the Urban Area inside of the municipality's boundary, and includes communities of suburban-rural, semi-rural, and rural character.</li> </ul> </li> <li>The policy anticipates that the boundaries of the region's sub-geographies may be adjusted as the Community Planning program progresses. Staff note that boundary adjustments will be considered in coordination with Phase 5 of the Regional Plan Review (see below regarding Next Steps: Phase 5).</li> <li>Provides direction to prioritize safe, sustainable and affordable housing.</li> <li>Establishes a program to regularly monitor population, housing, demographic, and employment scenarios to inform reviews and amendments to the Plan, Community Plans, and supporting planning documents or studies.</li> <li>Establishes a strategic growth target directing at least 75% of new housing growth to the Urban Area.</li> <li>Sets intent to direct future growth strategically and develop a Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priorities Plan, to provide a framework for future long-range growth and investment in water and wastewater, mobility, community services, and open space. This work will study different scenarios for growth and consider the implications of directing up to 90% of growth to the Urban Area.</li> <li>Establishes the Regional Land Use Structure (Map 1).</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Building Healthy and Complete Communities</b></p> <p><i>Map 2, Maps 3 and 4</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishes the Community Planning framework and sets direction for the Urban Area (including Regional Centre and Suburban Area) and Rural Area, using a complete communities approach (Map 2).</li> <li>Establishes the Suburban Community Planning program and the intent to adopt a Suburban Plan. Sets a vision and core concepts for the Suburban Area, to be refined as part of the Suburban Plan process. Core concepts include open space and culture, complete communities, human-scale design, pedestrians first, and transit supportive growth.</li> <li>Establishes the Rural Community Planning program and the intent to adopt a Rural Plan, which will support working landscapes, and planning for rural communities at different scales and contexts.</li> <li>Establishes guidelines for transit supportive land use in the Urban Area.</li> <li>Identifies growth areas in the Regional Centre and Suburban Area where significant development will be directed, to develop complete communities aligned with transit and other services (Map 3).</li> <li>Sets out the process and consideration criteria for major new serviced development in Future Serviced Communities.</li> <li>Identifies technical studies required to support planning for Rural Area services and mobility.</li> <li>Provides direction for community-led planning in Rural Areas.</li> <li>Proposes Rural Growth and Rural Local Centres for future development and service provision, to be refined through the Rural Community Planning program (Map 4).</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Strengthening Community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies community infrastructure as essential to building healthy, complete, and sustainable communities.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p> <p><i>Map 5</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides direction to plan and direct investment in a network of parks and community facilities at neighbourhood, community, and regional scales to meet the needs of diverse communities.</li> <li>• Supports the park planning process for regional wilderness parks including Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes (Map 5), Sandy Lake, Shaw Wilderness Park and McIntosh Run.</li> <li>• Sets intent to develop a Parks and Outdoor Facilities Priorities Plan and an Indoor Recreation Facilities Priorities Plan, which will be coordinated with the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priorities Plan.</li> <li>• Identifies the need to ensure equitable access to facilities and services across all communities, and coordinate planning with all relevant services providers as part of the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priorities Plan. These services include libraries, schools, childcare and health care, emergency services, solid waste, and regional energy and telecommunications infrastructure.</li> <li>• Identifies the importance of household food security and establishes policies to remove barriers in Land Use By-Laws.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Fostering Diverse and Affordable Housing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes that housing affordability and availability are critically important to developing healthy and complete communities, and that the municipality's current housing shortage is an urgent priority that must be addressed with a range of initiatives.</li> <li>• Supports removing barriers to housing and increasing housing supply in Community Plans and Land Use By-Laws by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allowing more diverse housing types in all residential areas;</li> <li>- Permitting gentle density and missing middle housing;</li> <li>- Enabling adaptive reuse; and</li> <li>- Removing parking requirements.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Supports municipal efforts to increase housing affordability by directing consideration of municipal initiatives including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusionary zoning;</li> <li>- Incentive or bonus zoning;</li> <li>- Consideration of no net loss/rental replacement;</li> <li>- Municipal surplus land and grants for affordable housing;</li> <li>- Regulating short term rentals; and</li> <li>- Partnering with other levels of government, non-profit and private sector housing providers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The policies established in Chapter 5 support and are consistent with the amendments <a href="#">Regional Council approved</a> in support of the Housing Accelerator Fund in May 2024, and the Minimum Planning Requirements related to housing supply.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Protecting the Environment and Acting on Climate</b></p> <p><i>Map 6</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes an objective to adopt development practices that sustain and nourish air, land, soil, water, and groundwater resources, and reduce negative impacts to surrounding areas.</li> <li>• Supports the consideration of the Halifax Green Network Plan and HalifACT when preparing the Municipality's business plans and programs.</li> <li>• Allows for the creation of a program to identify opportunities to maintain or improve connectivity through ecological corridors, as recommended by the Green Network Plan. Regional Planning staff have begun this work internally and anticipate engaging third-party consultants to undertake this study in parallel with Phase 5 of the Regional Plan Review. Staff identified this work as part of the 2025/26 budget and business plan.</li> <li>• Recognizes the Municipality's efforts to promote and manage natural assets through naturalization initiatives and an update to the Urban Forest</li> </ul>

	<p>Management Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets direction to protect municipal water resources by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishing intent to develop watershed management frameworks;</li> <li>- Setting parameters for watershed studies and lake water quality monitoring;</li> <li>- Protecting municipal source water supplies (Map 6); and</li> <li>- Increasing required buffer distances around watercourses and wetlands.</li> <li>- To ensure there are continued reasonable uses within the watercourse and wetland buffers, a development agreement policy has been added to allow development to proceed where it can be demonstrated that a property cannot otherwise be reasonably developed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Establishes coastal horizontal and vertical setbacks, with similar relaxations as for watercourses and wetlands, including a development agreement policy.</li> <li>• Directs the Municipality to pursue resilient infrastructure, including stormwater management using green infrastructure and to address flooding and erosion control.</li> <li>• Promotes renewable energy by removing barriers to district energy, commercial solar energy facilities, and electric vehicle infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Providing Options for Mobility</b></p> <p><i>Maps 7 and 8</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes the integrated nature of transportation and land use planning, supports mobility choices, and directs the Municipality to develop and maintain complete and safe networks for all mobility modes.</li> <li>• Supports the considerations of the Integrated Mobility Plan when preparing business plans and programs.</li> <li>• Establishes mode share targets for the short term (2031) and long term (1 million people), with the intent to increase the number of trips taken by walking/rolling, cycling, and transit over time.</li> <li>• Supports work to improve mobility choice in the Rural Area.</li> <li>• Promotes a Complete Streets approach and identifies Strategic Corridors important for creating a multimodal mobility network in the Urban Area (Map 7).</li> <li>• Promotes a Complete Networks approach and directs further study to identify additional network connections to support anticipated population and employment growth.</li> <li>• Directs the Municipality to identify communities with limited access and egress and work to prioritize these communities for new connections.</li> <li>• Establishes the Urban Transit Service Boundary (Map 8) and directs the Municipality to prioritize implementation of the rapid transit network identified in the Rapid Transit Strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Promoting Inclusive Economic Prosperity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the consideration of the <i>People Planet Prosperity, Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-27</i>, and the <i>Road to Economic Prosperity for African Nova Scotian Communities</i> when preparing the Municipality's business plans and programs.</li> <li>• Supports collaboration with institutional partners including post-secondary Institutions, Department of National Defence, Halifax Stanfield International Airport, and the Halifax Port Authority.</li> <li>• Directs Community Planning programs to promote mixed-use to support complete communities.</li> <li>• Establishes region-wide policy to protect industrial employment lands, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishing the Business Industrial Sub-Designation and Halifax Harbour Sub-Designation to lands to be prioritized for industrial use;</li> <li>- Setting a framework for industrial zones to be used when updating</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>Community Plans; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Directing that conversion of industrially-designated land, including conversion marine-industrial lands, may only be considered as part of a comprehensive review of planning documents to ensure that the Municipality can maintain a sufficient supply of industrial land over time.</li> <li>• Directs the Municipality to discourage or regulate infilling of pre-Confederation water lots and promotes a collaborative approach to the siting and approval of sulfide-bearing material disposal sites.</li> <li>• Supports the <i>Integrated Tourism Master Plan</i> and rural tourism.</li> <li>• Supports African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Celebrating Culture, Arts and Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes the Municipality's efforts to develop policies, programs, and regulations to protect and enhance diverse cultural, artistic and heritage resources.</li> <li>• Supports the consideration of <i>Sharing Our Stories: The Culture &amp; Heritage Priorities Plan</i> when preparing the Municipality's business plans and programs.</li> <li>• Supports the Municipality's efforts toward reconciliation with Mi'kmaq and Indigenous communities, by establishing Friendship Accords, and increasing opportunities for commemoration and representation.</li> <li>• Supports working with African Nova Scotian communities to recognize ANS culture and heritage, as well as community-led approach to supporting planning efforts for other traditionally under-represented groups.</li> <li>• Directs the Municipality to maintain a Registry of Heritage Properties, and to review and update criteria to identify and evaluate heritage properties and sites to broaden the diversity of communities, cultures, and time periods.</li> <li>• Supports studying and establishing Heritage Conservation Districts across the region, as well as future identification and study of cultural landscapes.</li> <li>• Establishes policy to enable adaptive reuse of municipally-registered heritage properties by development agreement.</li> <li>• Supports the Municipality in considering opportunities to require or promote deconstruction and salvage of building materials to support sustainability goals.</li> <li>• Provides guidance for appropriate development on and near heritage properties.</li> </ul>
<b>10. Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes technical policies to support implementation of the Plan.</li> <li>• Establishes a standard for public engagement and engaging with abutting municipalities, providing direction for the Public Participation Administrative Order.</li> <li>• Implements the Plan through a range of planning tools, including secondary municipal planning strategies, land use by-laws, and development agreements.</li> <li>• Establishes policy guiding comprehensive development of opportunities sites.</li> <li>• Establishes development agreement option for sites within the Suburban Plan area that meet certain criteria which can be initiated ahead of the Suburban Planning process.</li> <li>• Implements certain policies through the Regional Subdivision By-Law, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting growth management policies which manage subdivision in the Rural Commuter, Rural Resource, Open Space and Natural Resource and Agricultural Designations;</li> <li>- Establishing special provisions for legacy subdivisions, subdivisions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>within Land Titles Clarifications Areas, and for 10-hectare lots; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Setting minimum requirements for parkland dedication through the subdivision process.</li><li>• Establishes service boundaries for municipal water and wastewater services, and the process for expanding those boundaries.</li><li>• Establishes the role of the Municipal Design Guidelines to set minimum standards for the design of municipal rights-of-way, and provides guidance for updating the Guidelines over time.</li><li>• Requires the Plan to be reviewed on a regular basis (every 10 years minimum, per HRM Charter requirements).</li></ul>
--	---

## 2. Major Regulatory Amendments

Attachment A-2 provides a detailed summary of proposed Regional Plan policy and the related amendments to Community Plans and Land Use By-Laws which will implement the policy, organized by Regional Plan chapter. The following sections briefly describe these changes, organized by topic area, with a focus on regulations that will impact land use planning and development rights.

### **Amendments to support environmental protection and climate action:**

- ***Watercourses and Wetlands:*** The proposed Regional Plan considered the direction contained in the Green Network Plan to increase the required watercourse buffer from 20 metres (plus additional for steep slopes) to a consistent 30 metre buffer, or 100 metres for primary municipal water supply sources. Development will be prohibited in all wetlands, and wetlands that share a boundary with a watercourse, and Wetlands of Special Significance will require a 30 metre buffer to be applied. (See Section 5 below for additional information on wetland protection and coastal buffers.)

The increased watercourse buffer will be required for new lots. Development on existing lots will be required to provide a buffer consistent with the regulations that were in place when the lot was created. To ensure there are continued reasonable uses within the buffer, a development agreement policy has been added to allow development to proceed where it can be demonstrated that a property cannot be reasonably developed.

- ***Electric Vehicle Ready Infrastructure:*** To support emissions reductions, electric vehicle ready infrastructure will be required in new residential and non-residential construction where vehicle parking spaces are being provided. EV Ready Parking includes a Level 2 energized outlet that meets the SAE J1772 standard, but excludes the physical charger.
- ***Commercial Solar Energy Facilities:*** To promote alternative energy sources, large-scale commercial solar energy facilities will be permitted as-of-right in commercial, industrial, and mixed-use zones, in certain designations in the Rural Area. For developments that cannot be approved as-of-right, commercial solar energy facilities, community solar projects, and large-scale solar installations may be considered by development agreement.
- ***Limiting Conservation Design Development as a development tool in the Agricultural Designation to established rural centres:*** Consistent with the Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Agricultural Lands, the intent of the Agricultural Designation is to preserve lands for farming and other resource production and minimize conflicts with residential uses. To better implement the intent of this Designation, the Conservation Design Development tool will be enabled only for lands in the Agricultural Designation that are also designated Village under the Musquodoboit Valley/ Dutch Settlement SMPS. The Village Designation is applied to lands in Dutch Settlement, Middle Musquodoboit, Meaghers Grant, and Upper Musquodoboit.

**Amendments to support increased housing supply:**

- ***Growth Management and Legacy Subdivision Files:*** When the Regional Plan was originally adopted in 2006, approved Concept subdivision files were permitted to retain their development rights, with the restriction that subdivisions could only be developed at a rate of 25 lots/year. As these legacy subdivisions in the Rural Area largely do not meet the objectives of the proposed Regional Plan to direct development to Rural Growth Centres, and some are in challenging locations with regards to subdivision access and egress, the development rights should be phased out over time to ensure that new development meets current Regional Plan policy. The Regional Subdivision By-Law will be amended to add a sunset clause to require that tentative or final subdivision applications for the final phase of subdivision to be filed before April 29, 2031 (25 years from the adoption of the 2006 Regional Plan, which was that length of that plan's horizon). Where a tentative plan was approved within two years prior to April 29, 2031, the final plan of subdivision will be approved in accordance with the HRM Charter. Concept plans that meet the eligibility criteria will be time-limited. In Phase 5, staff will undertake further work to identify all eligible legacy files and their potential lot yield. If it is determined that the 25 lots/year limit will result in a loss of development rights, staff will work with property owners to determine whether amendments to the Regional Plan and/or RSBL are needed, while ensuring any proposed development meets policy intent.
- ***Adaptive Reuse in Rural Areas:*** To permit existing underutilized buildings in Rural Areas to be adapted for residential uses, conversion will be permitted by development agreement. Adaptive reuse in the Urban Area has been enabled by the Regional Centre Plan and will be a focus of the forthcoming Suburban Plan.
- ***Secondary and Backyard Suites in Conservation Design Developments:*** Secondary and backyard suites are permitted region-wide as accessory to residential dwellings. To date, the Conservation Design Development policy, which sets criteria for these developments using the development agreement tool, has been silent on whether these accessory dwellings are permitted within these developments. The proposed policy enables secondary and backyard suites to be permitted in all types of Conservation Design Developments. Within Rural Growth Centres, these accessory dwelling units will not contribute to the maximum permitted density of the development, enabling additional units in these locations. For developments proposed with on-site water service (wells), hydrogeological assessments will need to confirm that there is a sufficient supply of groundwater for all units, including any proposed secondary or backyard suites.

**Amendments to support Priorities Plan Implementation and Complete Communities:**

- ***Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy Discretionary Application Criteria:*** To support the intent of the Regional Plan and Priorities Plans, the amendment package standardizes the considerations for Policy-Enabled Discretionary Applications (i.e. Development Agreements, Rezoning) across the region. This will ensure consistency in how discretionary applications are reviewed by staff and considered for approval by Council.
- ***Urban Settlement Employment Zone:*** To support the Municipality's efforts to ensure a sufficient supply of industrial land, an Urban Settlement Employment Zone will be created and applied on municipal lands where future serviced industrial land is anticipated within the Burnside Phase 14 lands. This will prevent the premature development of industrial and other employment uses on lands designated Urban Settlement and within the Business/ Industrial Sub-Designation but not yet within the Urban Service Area. Comprehensive planning for these areas will be consistent with the process for Future Serviced Communities.
- ***Land Titles Clarification Initiative:*** To recognize unique needs for subdivision related to African Nova Scotian communities subject to the Land Titles Clarification Act, in support of the Road to Economic Prosperity for African Nova Scotian Communities, the Regional Subdivision By-Law and the Land Use Bylaws will be amended to clarify and update definitions, enable subdivision using lot



frontage and area exemptions, enable subdivision of multiple buildings on one lot, and enable the issuance of permits that have used subdivision by-law exemptions.

### **3. Amendments to Address the Minimum Planning Requirements**

Attachment A-3 provides a detailed summary of proposed amendments to the Regional Plan, Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-laws to address the “Mandatory content related to housing supply” in the Provincial Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations. The following is a summary of the approaches taken to address each of the requirements.

***Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations: In addition to the requirements prescribed in subsection 229(1) of the Charter and Section 4, a municipal planning strategy must do all of the following to address the issue of housing supply:***

***(a) include a statement of policy that expressly recognizes that the Province and, in particular, the Municipality are experiencing a housing shortage crisis and specifies that the most urgent priority in municipal land-use planning, regulation and development approval is to rapidly increase the supply of housing in the Municipality;***

- The Regional Plan includes a dedicated Housing chapter which recognizes the current housing shortage crisis. The Plan’s policies encourage and permit a variety of residential forms and uses throughout the region.

***(b) require that priority be given to increasing the supply of safe, sustainable and affordable housing in the Municipality over other interests identified in the municipal planning strategy for the purposes of all processes, approvals and decisions made under the municipal planning strategy;***

- The proposed Regional Plan responds to this requirement by using the lens of safety, sustainability, and affordability to create an integrated framework for housing and growth throughout the various Chapters. Specific policies in Chapters 2 (Regional Planning), Chapter 3 (Healthy Communities), and Chapter 5 (Housing) state the intent to increase the supply of housing that is safe, sustainable, and affordable. Policy in Chapter 10 (Implementation) states that safe, sustainable, and affordable housing must be considered for every discretionary application (such as rezoning and development agreements).

***(c) permit residential uses in all zones, except for all of the following:***

***(i) areas zoned for industrial, military, park, transportation reserve and utility uses,  
(ii) zones intended to protect the environment, water supply, floodplains or another similar interest.***

- The Regional Plan includes Policy H-1, which aims to permit residential uses in all zones except those explicitly restricted by regulations. Only 7 commercial zones within the Suburban Area (in Dartmouth, Halifax, Sackville and Bedford) do not currently permit any form of residential uses. Special consideration is needed for areas in Sackville and Bedford near floodplains before appropriate changes are recommended. In advance of comprehensive zoning changes to be considered as part of the Suburban Plan process, the following changes are proposed:
  - An amendment is proposed to the C-3 Zone in Dartmouth to enable residential via the same Development Agreement policy currently permitted in the C-2 Zone;
  - A development agreement policy is proposed that enable suburban development proposals on properties within an 800 metre walkshed of a planned BRT corridor and the Mill Cove Ferry Terminal to move forward by development agreement as the Suburban Planning process proceeds (see additional detail under clause (e) below). This policy will provide opportunity to proceed by development agreement in C-2, Halifax, and provide another option in the C-3 Zone, Dartmouth.

***(d) require that the Municipality share with the Province the information used by the Municipality to identify, fund, schedule and deploy the infrastructure to develop an adequate supply of housing to support anticipated population growth;***

- Chapter 2 of the proposed Regional Plan outlines the Municipality's commitment to developing population projections and growth scenarios to guide housing and infrastructure planning. Policies RP-24 and RP-25 ensure this data is shared with stakeholders, including the Province. Additionally, Section 2.5 calls for a Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Plan to guide long-term investment. Throughout the course of this work, staff will engage closely with the Province to ensure alignment of priorities and investments. This work will also be made publicly available.

***(e) provide for the adoption of a secondary municipal planning strategy and the implementation of a land-use by-law for the area of the Municipality identified as the suburban area on the map attached as Appendix A, or a substantially similar area, no later than January 31, 2025;***

- The proposed Regional Plan includes an overview of the Community Planning framework in Chapter 3 (Community Planning), and Policy HC-3 establishes intent to adopt a secondary municipal planning strategy and land use by-law for the Suburban Area, through the Suburban Community Planning process.
- The objective was partially fulfilled through the adoption of Urgent Changes for Housing in 2024, and Urgent Changes for Housing – Additional Sites (March 2025), and an extension was requested from the Province. An updated workplan and community engagement strategy is expected to be presented to Council later this spring.
- To further support housing in the suburban area while the suburban planning process is taking place, Policies IM-25, IM-26 and IM-27 establish an additional development agreement option for “shovel-ready” development projects within the Suburban Area and within Urban Service Boundary which meet certain criteria. Sites must be located within 800 m walkshed of planned Bus Rapid Transit route or Mill Cove Ferry Terminal, be less than 2 hectares in area, must not demolish an existing multi-unit dwelling building, and comply with stipulated timelines for commencement and completion of construction. A complete application for a development agreement will need to be filed with the Municipality on or before the first notice to adopt the Suburban Plan. Land use and built form requirements will be guided by the Housing Accelerator Zone in the Suburban Housing Accelerator Land Use By-Law, with low-rise, mid-rise and tall mid-rise building forms considered. Incentive or bonus zoning provisions will apply, and certain amount of ground floor commercial or institutional uses will be required.
- While the Suburban Plan process is underway, new development in suburban areas will also continue to be permitted under policies established in the existing community plans, such as policies in the Dartmouth, Sackville, and Eastern Passage/ Cow Bay Plan Areas which permit consideration of multi-unit residential buildings by development agreement.

***(f) for developments enabled under the Municipality's Conservation Design Development policies in the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy that begin construction before April 1, 2027, determine the maximum density of a development based on a lot's gross area and not on its net area;***

- The proposed Regional Plan updates the Conservation Design Development policy to allow density to be calculated in a different manner. Projects that have permits issued before April 1, 2027 will have density determined based on gross lot area, rather than net developable area (gross area minus riparian buffers and wetlands, floodplains, and slopes in excess of 30%).

***(g) not impose maximum height restrictions in a manner that negatively affects the density of residential buildings using mass timber or any other construction method;***

- The proposed Regional Plan addresses height restrictions in land use by-laws that have unintentionally limited building massing and residential density. Policy H-3(b) introduces flexible

height maximums to support mid and high-density development, including mass timber construction. Amendments were made in Spring 2024 through the Housing Accelerator Fund, with further updates proposed to standardize height measurements in storeys and define 'Storey' and 'Mezzanine' consistently. Low-density zones allowing up to four units remain unchanged, as height is not a limiting factor. Policy H-1(h) also directs consideration of amendments to other built form requirements, like angle controls, through future amendments to secondary municipal planning strategies. As new building forms and construction methods emerge, Staff will continue to work closely with industry to identify potential barriers to maximum height restrictions and explore additional amendments that may be needed. In light of recent industry feedback, there will be close monitoring of mass timber construction as it is an emerging building form and additional amendments may be needed to ensure further flexibility for mass timber projects and other innovative housing forms.

***(h) for residential buildings that begin construction before April 1, 2027, provide that no requirement related to unit mix applies;***

- Policy H-3(c) of the proposed Regional Plan removes unit mix requirements for multi-unit residential buildings that begin construction before April 1, 2027. To implement this, amendments are proposed to applicable land use by-laws to include a 'notwithstanding' clause waiving unit mix requirements during this period. Policy IM-9(2) further ensures no unit mix is required for discretionary planning applications, with these regulations set to be removed after April 1, 2027. This temporary regulation will be removed after the deadline.

***(i) provide that no requirement for on-site parking applies to residential uses within the urban service area;***

- Policy H-10 removes parking requirements for residential uses in the Urban Service Area to encourage housing development and efficient land use. Amendments to land use by-laws will enforce this change, though developments that include parking must still follow existing standards for layout, landscaping, and amenities.

***(j) for multi-unit residential buildings that begin construction before April 1, 2027, not require that the ground floor consist of more than 20% commercial space;***

- Policy H-3(d) limits ground-floor commercial space requirements to a maximum of 20% for multi-unit residential buildings starting construction before April 1, 2027. Amendments to planning strategies and land use by-laws will allow ground-floor residential uses while ensuring zones that have a ground floor commercial space requirement is lessened to a minimum of 20% and that it directly abuts the streetline. Policy IM-9(2) further ensures no more than 20% ground-floor commercial space is required for discretionary planning applications. This temporary regulation will be removed after the deadline of April 1, 2027.

***(k) permit temporary housing in non-permanent structures as a use in all zones where it can be safely established to allow employees to live on or near their worksite during a work assignment for a period of time that can be reasonably tied to the duration of the project and that is explicitly set out in the development permit;***

- Policy H-2 aims to remove barriers to housing, including temporary housing in non-permanent structures. Most land use by-laws already permit temporary housing associated with construction projects, and amendments will clarify that temporary structures are allowed near worksites with a valid permit.

***(l) permit manufactured housing, including modified shipping containers converted into housing, in all residential zones.***

- Policy H-3(a) updates regulations to allow manufactured housing, including tiny homes and converted shipping containers, as residential uses. While previous amendments during Phase 3 of the Regional Plan Review removed some barriers, further land use by-law changes will clarify that shipping container homes are buildings, not vehicle bodies, and permit them in more zones. These dwellings must still meet Building Code and zoning requirements.

#### Minimum Planning Requirements for Wind Energy Facilities

Staff completed a technical analysis of the Minimum Planning Requirements regulations related to wind turbine setbacks to determine whether any changes to the Municipality's planning documents are required. Both the existing 2014 Regional Plan and the proposed Regional Plan do not set out specific setback requirements, and do not consider visual impact or aesthetic appearance of wind turbines, and therefore meet the intent of the Minimum Planning Requirements. The required setback for large wind facilities (2 MW or greater) currently established in the land use by-laws must be amended to ensure compliance with the provincial requirement. Attachment C includes proposed amendments to applicable land use by-law to change the required minimum setback for habitable buildings for Large Facilities in the Rural Wind Zone, to reflect the language of the MPR. A summary of staff's technical review and proposed amendments is outlined in Attachment A-10.

#### **4. Site-Specific Amendments (Phase 4)**

Throughout the Regional Plan Review, staff have received a number of requests from property owners or their representatives for amendments to the Regional Plan for specific properties or areas of land. This report contains recommendations for seven requests in this report. Phase 5 will consider the remaining forty requests that fall outside the Suburban Area. Details on each site-specific request are available on a dedicated Shape Your City webpage (<https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/site-specific>) and are open for public comment.

Attachment A-4 describes the site-specific requests that were considered during Phase 4.

**Table 2: Phase 4 Site-Specific Requests – Proposed Amendments**

<b>Request(s)</b>	<b>Details of the Proposed Amendments</b>
<b>Purcell's Cove Urban Reserve (Case 22257)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff initiated request to consider an alternative designation and zoning in the Purcell's Cove Backlands, given HRM acquisition of lands in the area since 2014.</li> <li>• HRM-owned lands including Shaw Wilderness Park as well as privately owned conservation lands, are proposed to be redesignated to the Open Space and Natural Resources designation, and zoned Regional Park or Protected Area;</li> <li>• Remaining privately-owned lands in the Urban Reserve designation will retain the designation and the Urban Reserve Zone and be further considered in Phase 5. Proposed Policy RP-12 establishes that a land suitability analysis shall be undertaken to support applying the Rural Commuter designation to the lands, as well as an appropriate Community Plan designation, zone, development density, site design and built form standards for these lands.</li> </ul>
<b>Lands on Purcells Cove Road, Halifax (C025)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed amendments to redesignate and rezone the lands to R-1, to allow low-density residential uses and large lot subdivision with on-site services.</li> <li>• Purcell's Cove Road (Route 253) is a "Schedule K" road that requires lots to have 61m of public road frontage. Given the property's existing frontage, it is anticipated that the proposed amendments will permit subdivision for a maximum of 5 lots.</li> <li>• A watercourse buffer, proposed to be 30 metres under the proposed</li> </ul>

	Regional Plan, will apply from Williams Lake (which may be eligible for relaxations).
<b>300 Prince Albert Road at Lake Banook, Dartmouth (C602)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed amendments to permit a special area to be established at this site (PID 00209544) through the Regional Centre Plan to allow limited recreational and commercial uses within the riparian buffer, by development agreement.</li> <li>The riparian buffer at this site has been infilled or altered prior to 2006, and the shoreline is supported by an existing rock retaining wall.</li> <li>A development agreement will require Community Council to consider whether the proposal is designed in an environmentally sensitive manner, water quality mitigation measures, and potential impacts on the Lake Banook Canoe Course.</li> </ul>
<b>1246 Ketch Harbour Road, Ketch Harbour (C027/ Case 22212)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request to enable a multi-unit residential development and an adaptive reuse of the existing building for commercial and residential uses.</li> <li>The proposed Regional Plan includes policy that would enable adaptive reuse of existing buildings for residential purposes. This would allow a future development agreement for the existing building.</li> <li>There are also opportunities to pursue additional development through existing policy and land use regulations on this site.</li> </ul>
<b>Burnside Phase 14, Dartmouth (Case 22008)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesignate these lands from Rural Commuter to Urban Settlement, apply the Business/ Industrial sub-designation to the lands, and zone the lands Urban Settlement-Employment (US-E).</li> <li>The proposed amendments will enable HRM to initiate study on this area under proposed Policy HC-12, related to Future Serviced Communities, which will require background studies including a watershed study, land suitability analysis (that considers environmental constraints and heritage and cultural assets and constraints), and a baseline infrastructure study (for mobility, water and wastewater services).</li> </ul>
<b>Lands North of Frederick Lake, Hubley (C882)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request to rezone PID 40053654 to the Protected Area Zone, consistent with the donor's wishes that the lands remain a wilderness region open for public recreational purposes and undeveloped for residential or commercial purposes.</li> </ul>
<b>Twin Brooks Subdivision Phase 4C (C948), Middle Sackville</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request to expand the Urban Service Area boundary to include an additional +/- 0.9 ha (2.2 acres) of PID 40140501 to enable the construction of a wastewater main to service the Twin Brooks subdivision, which has been proceeding in phases through an as-of-right subdivision process.</li> <li>Amendments are proposed to the Regional Plan and Regional Subdivision By-Law to adjust the Urban Service Area boundary and redesignate the affected portion of the subject site from Rural Commuter to Urban Settlement. This would enable an estimated 20 additional residential lots.</li> <li>The proposed adjustment to the Urban Service Area boundary is considered minor in nature. The Urban Settlement Designation and Urban Service Area boundary in this portion of Middle Sackville were drawn in a generalized nature to reflect the general location and estimated servicing capacity of the municipal piped water and wastewater systems. Halifax Water has provided written confirmation of their support for this adjustment of the Urban Service Area boundary as it will enable a better wastewater system connection for Halifax Water to operate and maintain compared to the servicing options currently available within the existing boundary.</li> <li>It should be noted that should Regional Council choose not to approve the proposed amendments, the subdivision process can continue to</li> </ul>

	proceed through the as-of-right process, without the 20 additional lots.
--	--

## 5. Responses to Motions of Council and Committees

Over the course of the Regional Plan Review, motions of the Community Planning & Economic Development and Environment & Sustainability Standing Committees, and Regional Council were directed to the Regional Plan Review process. This section provides an overview of Regional Plan policy response to the items. Motions can be found in Attachment A-13 of this report. In some instances, additional policy work will be completed in subsequent planning projects, such as Phase 5 of the Regional Plan or the Suburban or Rural Planning process.

**Table 3: Responses to Motions of Council and Committee**

Motion Topic	Summary Regional Plan Response
<b>Lands Near Williams Lake/ Purcells Cove Backlands</b> Regional Council June 8, 2021	This 2021 motion of Council referenced lands to the west of Shaw Wilderness Park and south of Williams Lake (PIDs 00323139, 00271585 and 00323147) which were at the time privately owned. Since the motion of Council, HRM has purchased these properties. As outlined above, the lands currently designated and zoned Urban Reserve are proposed to be redesignated to the Open Space/ Natural Resource Designation and zoned Regional Park. Lands within the Urban Settlement Designation, zoned RDD under the Halifax Mainland Land Use By-Law, will be considered for appropriate community plan designation and zoning as part of the Suburban Planning process.
<b>Ecological Function of Wetlands in Urban Areas</b> Regional Council August 31, 2021	Chapter 6 contains policy related to wetlands (see Policies EN-39 to EN-45). To support this work, staff participated in an interdepartmental and interjurisdictional working group over 2021 and 2022, with work expected to continue in support of the Halifax Green Network Plan and HalifACT. It should be noted that the Municipality's legislative authority to protect wetlands is limited, as the Provincial Department of Environment & Climate Change is responsible for issuing wetland alteration permits. Future work will involve working with the Province to improve the overall approach to wetland protection, as well as considering additional wetland protection strategies. To respond to this motion, and provide more opportunities to protect the environmental and ecological function of wetlands within the jurisdictional abilities of the Municipality, the following changes have been made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A definition of wetlands has been added to all Land Use By-Laws and the Regional Subdivision By-law;</li> <li>• Development is to be prohibited within all wetlands unless the province issues a wetland alteration approval permit;</li> <li>• A 30 metre buffer applies to Wetlands of Special Significance, and for wetlands that share hydrology and soils with watercourses and coastal areas, including buffers that have been established in the Regional Plan and all supporting Land Use By-Laws;</li> <li>• Where it can be demonstrated that a property cannot be reasonably developed by complying with the requirements, alternative approaches for development may be considered by development agreement.</li> <li>• Outdated wetland maps found within the Land Use By-Laws have been deleted.</li> </ul>
<b>Coastal Shorelines</b> Regional Council September 28, 2021	In Chapter 6, the proposed Regional Plan establishes that the Municipality will complete a spatially-based risk and vulnerability analysis of the Municipality's coastal waterfront and shoreline area and may consider adopting a coastal-specific adaptation policy using a PARAEBAs (Protect, Accommodate, Retreat,



	<p>Avoid or Ecosystem Based Adaptation) Framework or other suitable framework for climate change adaptation planning to plan for hazards and increase resilience to those hazards.</p> <p>With the increased risk of coastal hazards from climate change, avoiding hazards is the most effective method to prevent losses of property and lives by not establishing development or infrastructure in hazardous areas. Zoning plays a vital role in ensuring the secure placement of development by keeping development away from coastal dangers through setbacks and easements.</p> <p>Policy and regulations for coastal development proposed in the Regional Plan and amendment package include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Coastal Horizontal Buffers:</i> As the impacts of climate change accelerate and as more coastal flood risk data becomes available, it is expected that regulations along the coast will differ from inland watercourses. The proposed Regional Plan therefore separates the coastal horizontal buffer and inland watercourse buffer, in anticipation of a need to change the approach to coastal buffers over time. The Land Use By-Laws continue to treat inland watercourse buffers and coastal horizontal buffers in the same manner, as the Atlantic Ocean meets the definition of a watercourse. Development on existing lots will be required to provide a buffer consistent with the regulations that were in place when the lot was created. Where it can be demonstrated that a property cannot be reasonably developed by complying with the requirements, the policy provides alternative approaches for development through the development agreement process.</li> <li>• <i>Island Development:</i> Development of islands can be problematic for a variety of reasons, including access and servicing, in addition to recognizing increasing risks of climate change. To remove the risk of coastal hazards and the problems of access issues and emergency evacuation, the ability to subdivide islands by development agreement will be limited through a development agreement option. Property owners may still be eligible for exemptions under the Regional Subdivision By-Law to create a maximum of 2 or 3 lots on an island, depending on the eligibility criteria of individual plan areas.</li> <li>• <i>Coastal Elevations (Vertical):</i> The coastal regulations will be updated from the old standard (CGVD28) to the new standard (CGVD2013). Current regulations for coastal elevation applied only to residential buildings, but changes will apply the coastal elevation to commercial and institutional uses. Relaxation will be permitted where a professional engineer has identified measures to mitigate risks of flood damage and public safety on the development site, including confirmation that the proposed development does not increase the risk or hazard for surrounding buildings, adjacent uses, or adjacent coastlines.</li> </ul> <p>Regarding coastal access, the proposed Regional Plan highlights opportunities for the Municipality to take action to facilitate public access to the coastline in support of rural tourism (Policy EC-35), and through parkland acquisition for recreational use (IM-52, and as already established in the Regional Subdivision By-Law's parkland classification system).</p>
<p><b>Urban, Suburban and Rural Classifications</b> Community Planning and Economic</p>	<p>Chapters 2 and 3 of the Regional Plan sets out classifications for the current Suburban and Rural Areas of the municipality. As part of Phase 5 of the Regional Plan Review and the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan, further assessment will occur of these boundaries and how they relate to settlement patterns and the delivery of transit, water and wastewater, service</p>

Development November 18, 2021	delivery and taxation.
<b>Parkland Dedication Requirements</b> Community Planning and Economic Development April 21, 2022	<p>Requirements for parkland dedication as a part of subdivision have been adjusted in Chapter 10 of the proposed Regional Plan and the Regional Subdivision By-Law. Currently, the Regional Plan and RSBL require 10% of the area of the land to be subdivided, or cash-in-lieu, to be provided for parkland dedication; however, the policy also allows dedication for the first three lots to be reduced to 5%. This leads to a reduction in parkland dedication as well as difficulty in administering the requirements. The Regional Subdivision By-Law will be amended to standardize the Parkland Dedication to 10% with a few, targeted exemptions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reduction to 5% for a two-lot subdivision;</li> <li>• A reduction to 5% for Classic Conservation Design because these developments already provide open space;</li> <li>• No parkland dedication requirement for subdividing lots containing multiple buildings in Land Title Clarification Areas in African Nova Scotian communities, given no increase in density results.</li> </ul>
<b>Size Thresholds for As-of-Right Commercial Uses in the MU-1 Zone</b> Regional Council May 17, 2022	<p>This 2022 motion of Council directed staff to consider amendments to enable larger-scale commercial development as-of-right on properties zoned MU-1 along Hammonds Plains, Lucasville, and Beaver Bank Roads. An intent of this motion was to encourage businesses that offered recreation for children. The existing Beaver Bank, Hammonds Plains and Upper Sackville Municipal Planning Strategy includes options for larger developments by rezoning and development agreement. A policy review and survey with residents found further analysis of existing road connectivity and capacity is needed to inform whether this area has the supportive infrastructure in place to accommodate denser commercial development and related traffic activity. As part of Phase 5 of the Regional Plan Review and the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan, further assessment will occur of the existing transportation infrastructure and demand to understand whether larger-scale commercial uses should be permitted in the MU-1 Zone as-of-right. It is also noted that a significant portion of the historic African Nova Scotian Community of Lucasville is zoned MU-1. In <a href="#">September 2024</a>, Council directed that staff to undertake a Lucasville Planning Strategy Review and Community Action Plan, which will involve a review of the uses permitted in the zoning applied in this community.</p>
<b>Market Gardens</b> Regional Council September 13, 2022	<p>Chapter 4, Section 4.6 of the proposed Regional Plan identifies measures to remove barriers to support food security at various scales. Amendments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removing barriers and enabling the sale of plants and food products produced on-site by the property owner or occupant in residential zones;</li> <li>• Permitting greenhouses and soft landscaping on rooftops and to project through height restrictions. These regulations were modeled after regulations that already exist in the Regional Centre.</li> <li>• Permitting Farmers' Markets in commercial zones, industrial zones, and residential zones (excluding low-density residential areas);</li> <li>• Permitting accessory beekeeping across the region;</li> <li>• Permitting indoor food production as-of-right in industrial zones and in shipping containers in zones that permit agricultural and industrial uses. In commercial and mixed-use zones, indoor agricultural uses may be considered by Development Agreement in some By-Laws.</li> </ul>
<b>Short-term Rentals in the Rural Area</b>	Chapter 5, Section 5.5.4 of the proposed Regional Plan has been revised to recognize the unique housing challenges and needs of the tourist industry in the

Regional Council January 24, 2023	<p>Rural Area. In Chapter 8, Section 8.7.1, the proposed Regional Plan identifies measures to support tourism as an economic driver in rural areas, including policy to consider amendments to support increased small-scale commercial opportunities and home-based businesses, such as small-scale short-term accommodations, in rural parts of the Municipality.</p> <p>Amendments are proposed to the Land Use By-Laws of Eastern Shore (West), Eastern Shore (East), Lawrencetown, Musquodoboit Valley &amp; Dutch Settlement, and Planning Districts 8 &amp; 9 to allow up to one dwelling unit per lot to be used as a short-term rental, provided all other requirements of the Land Use By-Law are met. This is already enabled in the plan areas of Planning Districts 1 &amp; 3 (St. Margarets Bay), 4 (Prospect), and 5 (Chebucto Peninsula) and so the amendments will align this approach between more plan areas that share a similar rural context for residential density and tourism.</p> <p>Further analysis and additional engagement will be required for the remaining Rural Area land use by-laws prior to any additional changes to short term rental regulation. A separate report will come to Council at a later date with recommendations for these remaining areas.</p>
<b>Establishing a Park and Open Space Zone for all Municipal Parks</b> Regional Council February 7, 2023	<p>In Chapter 4 of the proposed Regional Plan, new Policy CI-3 states that where Municipal lands are identified for park use, appropriate park and institutional zoning shall be applied through the applicable Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law as part of the Community Planning programs, primarily the Suburban Plan and Rural Planning process.</p>
<b>Advancing the Middle Sackville Master Planning Process</b> Regional Council March 19, 2024  <i>See also Attachment A-8</i>	<p>Chapter 2 of the proposed Regional Plan directs most new serviced development within the Urban Area and directs that the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priorities Plan will guide long-term planning. Before designating additional areas for serviced development, this new Priorities Plan will be used to identify and assess different scenarios for locating future housing and employment growth, and the implications for infrastructure investments needed for different settlement patterns (including water and wastewater, transit and mobility, and community infrastructure). This new Priorities Plan will be a key deliverable of Phase 5 of the Regional Plan and will require close coordination with all service and infrastructure providers.</p> <p>Consistent with this approach, all site-specific requests for expanding the Urban Service Area boundary have been directed to Phase 5 of the Regional Plan Review, as outlined in Attachment A-6. A detailed background of the Middle Sackville Master Planning process and the rationale for this recommendation, as well as two alternative approaches are included in Attachment A-8.</p>
<b>Bird-Friendly Design</b> Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee August 1, 2024	<p>Chapter 6 of the proposed Regional Plan includes policy establishing the intent to reduce the risk of bird mortality caused by collisions with buildings. As existing community plans are considered for amendments or new plans are developed, Bird Safe Design measures for mid-rise to high-rise buildings shall be considered to increase bird survival.</p>

## **6. Minor Housekeeping Amendments and Readoption**

In addition to the amendments described in the sections above, Attachments C through F include a range of minor housekeeping amendments to clarify language, update or correct numbering, and correct typos throughout the documents. In addition to minor housekeeping amendments and major amendments, Attachment C includes required amendments to readopt policies and regulations associated with the

Regional Plan. Readoption is required to fulfill the requirements of the HRM Charter under Subsection 234(1) to retain a policy connection to the 2014 Regional Plan once it's been repealed and replaced by a new Regional Plan.

#### Millwood Planned Unit Development

In 1982, an agreement between the Nova Scotia Housing Authority and the Municipality of the County of Halifax was signed for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) in Millwood, Lower Sackville, to outline terms and conditions to develop a land assembly of 434 acres. The agreement originally outlined the residential development type, which evolved over time to include various housing forms. When the Halifax County Charter was adopted, the Municipality could no longer utilize Planned Unit Development; however the practice has been to release the lands from the PUD and apply appropriate zoning as the phases of the PUD were completed and the agreements were discharged. This is enabled through Policies UR-12 and UR-13 of the Sackville Municipal Planning Strategy. In 2025, the Province discharged the PUD in the Millwood area, leaving the area unzoned and resulting in a need to apply zoning to the affected properties. An inventory of the affected properties was conducted, and zoning was assigned to match properties to appropriate zones including park zones, R-1-0, R-1, R-2, R-6, and CDD. This was viewed as a housekeeping measure, to ensure that properties would have a zone, as the agreement has been discharged, no longer applies, and there are no PUD requirements in the Sackville Land Use By-law. The Suburban Plan may review this area in further detail to determine if more significant amendments are required.

#### Lake Loon Golf Centre CDD

Phase 3 of the Regional Plan Review applied the Comprehensive Development District (CDD) Zone, Dartmouth SMPS and LUB to lands on Main Street, Dartmouth near the Forest Hills Parkway at the Lake Loon Golf Centre. The intent of this amendment was to allow mixed use development including multi-unit residential development at this location. As part of the Urgent Changes to Planning Documents in spring 2024, the policy was further adjusted for the Lake Loon Golf Centre to facilitate a proposed development under this policy. Upon submission of the application, Planning Applications staff determined that Policy H-3A requires that prior to considering any agreement within a CDD, a concept plan for the entire land holding is required. This would require all property owners within the CDD to coordinate and submit a development proposal together so it can be evaluated by staff in a comprehensive manner. Because the proposed development does not include the entire CDD area, this application has been unable to proceed as expected.

The transportation network for this proposal is a major consideration due to the surrounding road network. HRM's Development Engineering group has undertaken a preliminary review of the proposal and indicated that the issues can be managed through a development agreement process without needing a concept plan for the entire CDD area. Transportation studies will still be required through the DA process as described in other policies within the Dartmouth SMPS and the Regional Plan and off-site improvements can be a condition of the agreement. Amendments are proposed (included in Attachment C) to remove the requirement to meet Policy H-3A, so that the development can proceed by development agreement as envisioned. A future proposal would be considered by Community Council, and will include a public engagement process.

#### Seton Ridge

In 2018, Halifax Regional Council approved amendments to the Bedford Highway Secondary Plan to enable the Seton Ridge development. During the adoption process, required boundary adjustments between the development lands and the adjacent property were inadvertently omitted. These adjustments are now necessary to implement the approved development concept as intended. The proposed boundary modification will not result in any increase to the planned density or number of buildings.

#### Bedford Mainstreet Commercial

The Bedford Plan Area Mainstreet Commercial designation and zone includes controls that limit the gross floor area for residential dwelling units. These controls predate the Regional Plan and present unique challenges for the conservation and adaptive re-use of heritage properties. A new policy enables Council

to consider modifying select zone requirements for renovations and expansions to existing heritage buildings, in accordance with the Heritage Development Agreement policies of the Regional Plan.

## 7. Next Steps: Phase 5

Should Regional Council choose to approve the proposed Regional Plan and supporting amendment package, staff will continue the Regional Plan Review project in Phase 5 which will consider future development potential outside of the Urban Service Boundary including opportunities for water and sewer service extension. This phase will draw on the policy direction established in the proposed Regional Plan, with a focus on long-term future growth and infrastructure planning and updating the planning framework to reflect this work. Attachment A-5 includes a high-level work plan for Phase 5, which staff will use as a framework to develop a detailed work plan and a public participation program for Council's consideration. The main components of Phase 5 are outlined in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Regional Plan Phase 5 Work Plan Framework (see Attachments A-5 and A-8)**

Component	Overview
<b>Develop Future Growth Scenarios and the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priorities Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing population, housing, and employment projections and modelling scenarios for future growth</li> <li>Identifying important natural and cultural places, climate hazards and critical infrastructure, and directing development away from vulnerable places</li> <li>Identifying potential future new areas for serviced development, which will require assessing Urban Reserve Areas and other site-specific requests (Refer to Attachments A-6, A-7, A-8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Throughout the Regional Plan Review process, staff have accepted requests from property owners for adjustments to the Urban Service Area boundary. To date, 53 separate requests have been submitted and are located on properties throughout the region.</li> <li>13 requests on 46 existing lots are within the Middle Sackville community, including requests related to the Margeson Drive area. Additional detail on the recommended approach for the Margeson Drive lands is included in Attachment A-8.</li> <li>Council has previously directed staff to review submitted requests as part of Phase 5. Urban Service Area Boundary expansions are significant municipal projects that must be considered carefully in relation to the Regional Plan's strategic growth objectives and consider long-term infrastructure. It requires a holistic approach to identify where, when and how future infrastructure and services will take place to accommodate population and employment growth across the region.</li> <li>This process ensures that the Municipality and all service providers, including Halifax Water, can review all requests in a fair and comprehensive manner. This work will be aligned with Halifax Water's Integrated Resource Plan process, which will develop a "big picture" understanding of the overall infrastructure demands from potential development already enabled within the Urban Service Area, from lands identified as Future Serviced Communities, and any potential new expansion areas.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Assessing Urban Areas and Rural Centres to confirm expected population and employment densities</li> <li>Assessing locations for water and wastewater infrastructure, which will involve collaboration with Halifax Water</li> <li>Assessing mobility needs, which will involve considering the Joint Regional Transportation Agency's Regional Transportation Plan</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessing community infrastructure, including parks, outdoor and indoor recreation, libraries, school, and emergency services</li><li>• Consider financial tools to support investment in infrastructure</li></ul>
<b>Update the Planning Framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the Regional Land Use Structure</li><li>• Coordinate with the Suburban Planning process as it progresses and consider adjustments to the boundary between the Urban Area and Rural Area, and how it relates to the planning framework</li><li>• Review the location and boundaries of Rural Centres, and consider appropriate forms of development outside of Centres</li><li>• Update the Regional Subdivision By-Law and supporting development regulations to clarify and improve Regional Plan policy implementation</li></ul>

## **Conclusion**

This report presents a new Regional Plan framework to guide growth and development in HRM. Should Regional Council choose to approve the proposed Regional Plan and the associated package of amendments, this will represent the conclusion of Phase 4 of the Regional Plan Review project.

Phase 5 will be focused on future growth and infrastructure planning and will begin immediately following approval of this report. It is expected that further amendments to the Regional Plan will be required to reflect the outcome of Phase 5, particularly once areas for future growth are identified and the proposed Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priorities Plan has been completed. Further amendments to the Regional Plan may also be needed to support the Suburban and Rural Community Planning processes, as they progress.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The costs associated with the recommendations of this report can be accommodated within the approved 2025-2026 operating budget.

Any projects resulting from the adoption of the policies set out in the proposed Regional Plan will have alignment with Regional Council's 2025-2029 Strategic Priorities Plan and prioritized accordingly in the Capital plan and Business Plans. Financial implications will be developed and incorporated in future Capital and Operating Budgets.

## **RISK CONSIDERATION**

This report involves adoption of a new Regional Plan and amendments to the Regional Subdivision By-law, all secondary municipal planning strategies and land use by-laws. Such amendments are at the discretion of Regional Council and are not subject to appeal to the N.S. Utility and Review Board. Amendments to planning documents are subject to review by the Province under Section 223 of the *HRM Charter*.

### **Risks related to failure to implement the Minimum Planning Requirements**

Under the HRM Charter, a municipal planning strategy must fulfill the Minimum Planning Requirements. Subsection 4A(3) requires the Municipality to implement the requirements by December 30, 2024. The Minister of Growth and Development provided an extension to the Municipality to June 30, 2025. Should Regional Council choose not to approve the amendments in support of the MPRs, the HRM Charter states:

#### ***Failure to meet minimum planning requirements***

***229A (1) Where a municipal planning strategy does not fulfill the minimum planning requirements,***



*the Minister may request that the Council, within the time prescribed by the Minister, amend the municipal planning strategy to fulfill, or adopt a new municipal planning strategy that fulfills, the minimum planning requirements.*

*(2) Where the Council does not comply with a request pursuant to subsection (1), the Minister may, by order, establish an interim planning area for an area prescribed by the Minister.*

### **Constructive Taking**

The Regional Plan introduces flexibility to allow the development officer to relax certain restrictions regarding watercourse, wetland and coastal buffers, as well as allowing Council to consider development agreements to address these circumstances.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Regional Plan includes a range of policies that deal both directly and indirectly with the natural environment. The environmental implications of the proposed amendments are outlined in the Discussion section of this report, Attachment A-2 summarizing the amendment package, as well as Attachments A-4 and A-6 regarding site-specific development requests. The direction contained in the Halifax Green Network Plan and HalifACT have been considered when preparing the proposed Regional Plan for Council's consideration.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Regarding Recommendations #1 to 6 of this report, Regional Council may:

1. Modify the proposed amendments as set out in Attachments B, C, D, E, F and G of this report. If this alternative is chosen, specific direction regarding the requested modifications is required, and may require a supplementary report from staff. Substantive amendments may require another public hearing to be held before approval is granted.
2. Refuse the proposed amendments as set out in Attachments B, C, D, E, F and G of this report. A decision of Council to approve or refuse the proposed amendments is not appealable to the N.S. Utility & Review Board as per Section 262 of the HRM Charter; however, as identified in the Risk Considerations section above, the HRM Charter requires the Municipality to comply with the Minimum Planning Requirements.

Regarding Recommendation #8 of this report, Regional Council may:

3. Initiate the consideration of a policy review process that would differ from that outlined in Attachments A-5, A-6, and A-8 of this report. This may require a supplementary report from staff.

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

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

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

13 (1) Notwithstanding the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, an applicable municipal planning strategy or any by-law, policy or practice of the Halifax Regional Municipality, where the Halifax Regional Municipality Council is considering adopting or amending a planning document, the Council may not refer the matter to a community council for a recommendation prior to the council's decision on the matter.

(2) Subsection (1) ceases to have on and after November 25, 2026.

14 (1) Notwithstanding the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, an applicable municipal planning strategy or any by-law, policy or practice of the Halifax Regional Municipality, where the Halifax Regional Municipality Council is considering any planning decision under Part VIII of the Act or a community council is considering any planning decision it is empowered to make under the policy establishing the community council, the Council or community council may not refer the matter to a planning advisory committee or any other advisory committee of the Council for a recommendation prior to the Council's or the community council's decision on the matter.

(2) Subsection (1) ceases to have effect on and after November 25, 2026.

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

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A-1:	Summary of Adjustments Responding to Public/Internal Feedback
Attachment A-2:	Amendment Package Summary Table
Attachment A-3:	Minimum Planning Requirements Summary Table
Attachment A-4:	Phase 4 Site-Specific Requests
Attachment A-5:	Phase 5 Regional Plan Review Work Plan Framework
Attachment A-6:	Phase 5 Site-Specific Requests
Attachment A-7:	New Site-Specific Request Letters
Attachment A-8:	Recommended Approach for Margeson Drive Area, Middle Sackville
Attachment A-9:	What We Heard: Minimum Planning Requirements Engagement
Attachment A-10:	Proposed Approach to Address Wind Energy Minimum Planning Requirements
Attachment A-11:	Update to Population & Housing Issue Paper
Attachment A-12:	Regional Plan Review Completed Work Plan
Attachment A-13:	Regional Plan Review Origin Motions
Attachment B:	Proposed Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Regional Plan)
Attachment C:	By-Laws to Amend the Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-Laws of the Halifax Regional Municipality to Implement the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy
Attachment D:	Proposed Amendments to Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies
Attachment E:	Proposed Amendments to Land Use By-Laws
Attachment F:	Proposed Amendments to the Halifax Regional Subdivision By-Law
Attachment G:	Proposed Amendments to the Land Use By-Laws and Municipal Planning Strategies for Minimum Planning Standards

---

A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Leah Perrin, Manager, Regional Planning, 902.476.3792  
Anne Winters, Principal Planner, Regional Planning, 902.497.3798  
Kate Greene, Director, Regional & Community Planning, 902.225.6217  
Shilo Gempton, Planner III, Regional Planning, 902.943.9158  
Telina Debly, Planner II, Regional Planning, 782.640.6120  
Kate Clark, Planner II, Regional Planning, 902.478.2339  
Justin Smith, Planner II, Regional Planning, 902.478.2339

---