



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

**Item No. 15.2.1**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**July 8, 2025**

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

**FROM:** Councillor Deagle Gammon, Chair, Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee

**DATE:** June 26, 2025

**SUBJECT:** **Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 Update**

---

**ORIGIN**

June 26, 2025 meeting of Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee, 13.1.2.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Endorse the Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 (ITMP 2030) (Attachment 1 of the staff report dated June 5, 2025) including consideration for the Municipality's related initiatives as set forth in the ITMP 2030 and as also detailed in the Discussion section of the staff report dated June 5, 2025; and
2. Direct the CAO to work with Discover Halifax to provide annual updates to Regional Council regarding the ITMP 2030.

**BACKGROUND**

Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee received a staff recommendation report dated June 5, 2025 to consider endorsing the Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 (ITMP 2030).

For further information refer to the attached staff report dated June 5, 2025.

**DISCUSSION**

Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee considered the staff report dated June 5, 2025 and approved the recommendation to Halifax Regional Council as outlined in this report.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial implications are outlined in the attached staff report dated June 5, 2025.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

Risk consideration is outlined in the attached staff report dated June 5, 2025.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Meetings of the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee are open to public attendance and members of the public are invited to address the Standing Committee for up to five (5) minutes during the Public Participation portion of the meeting. Meetings are live webcast on Halifax.ca. The agenda, reports, video, and minutes of the Standing Committee are posted on Halifax.ca.

For further information on Community Engagement refer to the attached staff report dated June 5, 2025.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Environmental implications are outlined in the staff report dated June 5, 2025.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Alternatives are outlined in the attached staff report dated June 5, 2025.

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Legislative Authority is outlined in the attached staff report dated June 5, 2025.

### **Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee – Terms of Reference**

#### **Other Duties and Responsibilities**

3. The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee shall have an active interest in the Agencies and Initiatives that support Community and Economic development throughout the municipality by:
  - a. promoting and encouraging the development of programs, policies in initiatives in the municipality that support Community and Economic development throughout the municipality;
  - b. engaging, at a governance level, the agencies, boards and committees funded by the Municipality and under the mandate of the Standing Committee to ensure they meet community needs and expectations including:
    - i. the Greater Halifax Partnership
    - ii. Destination Halifax

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Staff recommendation report dated June 5, 2025.

---

Report Prepared by: Simon Ross-Siegel, Legislative Assistant, Municipal Clerk's Office 902.292.3962

---



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

## Attachment 1

### Item No. 13.1.2

#### Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee June 26, 2025

**TO:** Chair and Members of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Standing Committee

**FROM:** Brad Anguish, Commissioner of Operations

**DATE:** June 5, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 Update

---

#### **ORIGIN**

Staff initiated report request

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 (ITMP 2030) is a comprehensive update to Halifax's tourism development strategy, designed to strengthen economic growth, regional equity, and visitor experiences across the municipality. Building on the foundation of the original 2020 plan, ITMP 2030 was developed through a rigorous, community-informed process led by Discover Halifax in collaboration with government, business, and community partners. The updated plan emphasizes regional differentiation, sustainable and inclusive growth, improved infrastructure, and stronger institutional capacity. It aligns with the Municipality's ["People. Planet. Prosperity"](#) Halifax's Inclusive Economic strategy 2022-2027" and positions tourism as a tool to support broader goals related to population growth, resident well-being, and GDP expansion.

Through 27 actionable initiatives, ITMP 2030 introduces a visitor-first, regionally responsive approach to tourism that reflects Halifax's diverse geography and cultural identities. The plan prioritizes improved access, responsible cruise growth, major event infrastructure, authentic cultural storytelling, and a more balanced year-round visitor economy. By enhancing community participation, modernizing policy, and investing in high-impact areas—from the Dartmouth waterfront to the Eastern Shore and more—the ITMP 2030 ensures Halifax remains a competitive, inclusive, and sustainable destination well into the next decade.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council:

1. endorse the Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 (ITMP 2030) (Attachment 1)

including consideration for the Municipality's related initiatives as set forth in the ITMP 2030 and as also detailed in the Discussion section of this report; and

2. direct the CAO to work with Discover Halifax to provide annual updates to Regional Council regarding the ITMP 2030.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 (ITMP 2030), adopted by HRM Regional Council in 2020, has served as a comprehensive framework for tourism development in Halifax. It has supported economic growth by guiding coordinated investment, marketing, and community engagement across the municipality. As Halifax continues to evolve, an updated plan is needed to reflect new opportunities, emerging challenges, and evolving industry standards.

The ITMP 2030 update was led by Discover Halifax, with oversight from the Discover Halifax Board of Directors and the ITMP Advisory Committee, with input from HRM Staff, and representatives from government, business, and community organizations.

Development of ITMP 2030 followed a structured, three-phase process. The discovery phase gathered insights from industry and community through surveys, interviews, and workshops. The validation phase confirmed key themes through broader engagement, and the final prioritization phase focused on evaluating and ranking proposed initiatives based on impact and feasibility.

The plan is now in its final stage, following a nine-month process informed by extensive engagement. This engagement culminated in the [What We Heard report](#), presented to the Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) Standing Committee in April 2025.

ITMP 2030 (attachment 1), builds on the foundation of the original strategy while incorporating a stronger regional focus, clearer infrastructure priorities, and broader engagement. It offers a practical, evidence-based approach to tourism development that supports sustainable growth, enhances the quality of life for residents, and improves the overall visitor experience across the municipality.

Discover Halifax is evolving from simply promoting the city to actively shaping the visitor experience. The Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP) highlights the importance of a collaborative approach, where local organizations and stakeholders work together to support long-term goals that benefit the entire community. This shift is known as destination management. It means not just attracting visitors, but also managing tourism in a way that supports local culture, infrastructure, and quality of life.

With increased municipal funding and a larger reserve from the Marketing Levy Special Events Reserve (MLSER), Discover Halifax has expanded its role. It has created a new Destination Development department to lead this work. The organization is now more involved in planning and coordinating tourism-related initiatives. It regularly updates Regional Council and has formalized its responsibilities in a new Service Agreement with the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). This reflects its growing role in shaping how tourism supports the region's broader goals.

Some key highlights and advances that relate to the initial ITMP include:

- Implementation of the [Peggy's Cove Master Plan](#) which represents a significant advancement in enhancing one of Nova Scotia's most iconic destinations. This initiative focused on improving infrastructure, accessibility, and visitor experience while preserving the essence of Peggy's Cove as a living community. With nearly \$10 million invested, the plan effectively addressed longstanding challenges, such as traffic congestion and inadequate facilities, by creating pedestrian-friendly spaces, accessible public washrooms, and a new viewing deck. These improvements have not only increased

visitation and business activity but also sparked renewed interest in private investment, ensuring that Peggy's Cove continues to offer an authentic and memorable experience for all.

- Full implementation of the [Harbour Islands Visitor Experience Strategy](#), particularly for Georges Island, has transformed it into a key attraction, drawing over 30,000 visitors since its opening.
- Efforts to establish a permanent national marketing program and expand beyond Atlantic Canada have significantly boosted Halifax's visibility on a broader scale.
- Adoption of ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft has further enhanced accessibility, making it easier for visitors to navigate the region and enjoy its diverse offerings.
- The Wije'winen Centre, part of the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre; designed with sustainability in mind, the turtle-shaped centre will feature solar panels, a green roof, and rainwater harvesting, symbolizing Indigenous teachings. Supported by approximately \$50 million in government funding and a \$1 land sale from HRM, the centre will provide expanded services for Halifax's Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, including a health clinic, community gathering spaces, and Truth and Reconciliation programming. Additionally, a Cultural Tourism Strategy launched in 2024 will promote Mi'kmaq culture through guided tours, traditional performances, and other authentic experiences, fostering both cultural awareness and economic opportunities.

The existing plan can be found at this link <https://discoverhalifaxdmo.com/integrated-tourism-master-plan/>

## **DISCUSSION**

The **Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 (ITMP 2030)** continues Halifax's approach to tourism as a tool for inclusive economic development, cultural representation, and regional integration. This five-year review reaffirms the strength and relevance of the original plan's vision and guiding framework. Rather than overhauling these foundational elements, ITMP 2030 retains and strengthens them, offering stability in direction and alignment with broader municipal objectives.

The guiding vision to make Halifax ***everyone's favourite Canadian city*** remains appropriate and widely supported. It reflects the region's distinct mix of natural assets, cultural depth, and community character. The vision provides a consistent anchor for planning, investment, and communication across all sectors involved in tourism development.

### **HRM's Economic Development Strategy**

Tourism is fully integrated into Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy, *People. Planet. Prosperity*. It is not positioned as a standalone industry, but as a sector that intersects with workforce development, community well-being, infrastructure, and investment attraction. The ITMP 2030 is structured around HRM's economic strategy, with three core goals:

- **Grow GDP by Growing the Travel Industry**
- **Build the Halifax Brand & Support Population Growth**
- **Enrich the Lives of Residents**

These goals remain relevant amid changing travel behaviour, demographic shifts, and environmental considerations. They position tourism as a practical instrument for advancing economic and social policy objectives across the municipality.

Tourism is specifically listed as item #54 within the Inclusive Economic Strategy to support and promote business development and tourism by activating public spaces, fostering special events, and facilitating entertainment programming.

## Themes for Implementation

ITMP 2030 also reaffirms the six themes established in the original ITMP plan. These remain broad enough to adapt to changing conditions, while still offering targeted direction for action and investment:

1. **Make it easy to get here and visit:** Improve transportation, signage, and ease of movement, including information services and tools to support visitor planning
2. **Develop responsible tourism:** Focus on sustainability, accessibility, and environmental protection.
3. **Build and enhance key demand generators:** Invest in events, attractions, and infrastructure that will have the highest ROI and align with consumer preferences.
4. **Establish and strengthen tourism leadership:** Promote coordinated governance and capacity-building.
5. **Attract high-yield and growth markets:** Use targeted marketing to increase return on investment.
6. **Be vibrant and alive, 365:** Extend visitation beyond seasonal, day of week and time of day peaks to grow a more stable economy.

These themes continue to guide both policy and implementation decisions and have proven adaptable to shifts in visitor behaviour, climate considerations, and resident priorities.

## Key Areas of Advancement

ITMP 2030 marks a shift toward a more visitor-focused and locally responsive approach to tourism in Halifax. The plan prioritizes the needs and expectations of today's travellers, who seek accessible, authentic, and seamless experiences, by improving how people move through the region, access information, and connect with local attractions, accommodations, food, and events. It addresses gaps in infrastructure and uneven seasonal activity while introducing a more regionally balanced and coordinated framework. ITMP 2030 moves on to delivering quality experiences that meet customer expectations, support community goals, and ensure that all areas of the municipality can participate in and benefit from a stronger, more inclusive visitor economy.

The following areas reflect where ITMP 2030 advances beyond the original plan.

- **Regional Differentiation and Community Alignment:** ITMP 2030 applies a regional lens, recognizing that Halifax's diverse geographies, urban, suburban, coastal, and rural, require distinct approaches. By tailoring strategies to the characteristics and capacities of each region, the plan supports and encourages broader regional participation.
- **Evidence-Based Planning:** A defining feature of ITMP 2030 is its reliance on specialized studies to guide decision-making. These include assessments of visitor carrying capacity, accommodation and car rental availability, cruise sector impacts, and accessibility challenges. These studies enable policy responses that are grounded in data, realistic in scope, and responsive to both community and market needs.
- **Expanded Role of Major Events:** Events and festivals are now more formally integrated into the region's tourism development framework. The plan calls for a regional events strategy, a comprehensive venue assessment, and a Major Events Policy Framework to ensure Halifax is positioned to attract, support, and sustain high-impact cultural, business, and sporting events across the calendar year.

- **Sustainable Growth and Inclusion:** ITMP 2030 introduces a stronger commitment to long-term sustainability and cultural inclusion. This includes infrastructure investments that improve accessibility, support responsible tourism, and better reflect the diverse stories and identities of the region especially those of Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, and Acadian communities.
- **Stronger Institutional Capacity:** The plan also emphasizes Discover Halifax's ability to provide more leadership, staff resources, and coordination to ensure implementation can be sustained over time. With these additional resources, the municipality and its partners are better equipped to convert intentions into measurable outcomes.

## OUR REGIONS

The update to ITMP 2030 was guided by meaningful engagement with residents, community groups, businesses, and tourism operators across all parts of the municipality. Through surveys, in-person sessions, and targeted discussions, the process captured a wide range of local perspectives. This input helped confirm what is working, identify gaps, and shape new ideas that reflect current needs and realities.

A key outcome of this engagement is a more regionally focused plan. ITMP 2030 recognizes that each part of the municipality offers distinct opportunities for tourism development. The plan reflects the unique identities and priorities of these areas and responds directly to what people said they value, such as better access, support for local events, and development that respects community character.

For clarification, the regions identified in the ITMP are not based on the official HRM designations of Urban, Suburban and Rural. The four regions, urban core, gateway, Peggy's Cove coast region and eastern HRM were specifically selected to create more connectivity with tourism initiatives that align with these areas. The strategic assessment of each region is conducted through the analytical lenses of vision, strategic priorities, decision-making frameworks, and key initiatives. This comprehensive approach integrates community engagement, asset mapping, and strategic analysis to formulate actionable recommendations that align each region's tourism development trajectory with broader regional objectives. Each of the regions is described in greater detail in the ITMP.

This regional approach to tourism planning reflects the diversity of both the municipality and its visitors. It allows each community to develop tourism offerings that respond to their strengths, while ensuring the broader system remains coordinated and accessible. ITMP 2030 provides a consistent framework for supporting meaningful connections between the visitor and the product, whether that product is a meal, a museum, a trail, or a community festival. Doing so ensures that communities across Halifax can see themselves reflected in the plan and play an active role in shaping a tourism economy that is more inclusive, sustainable, and locally grounded.

## ACTION PLAN FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Each initiative in the Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 is designed with a clear objective, a defined lead and partner structure, and a rationale for why it matters to the broader visitor economy. Together, the 27 initiatives (Attachment 1) provide a roadmap for strengthening tourism across the municipality through improved infrastructure, enhanced visitor experiences, cultural representation, and policy modernization.

Discover Halifax is committed to transparency, coordination, and regular communication throughout implementation. Clear goals, defined responsibilities, and measurable outcomes support each initiative. Progress will be monitored to ensure the work remains on track and continues to reflect the needs of residents, visitors, and partners across the municipality.

Together, these 27 initiatives form a practical, regionally informed, and community-driven approach to tourism development, ensuring Halifax continues to evolve as a welcoming, competitive, and sustainable destination.



### **HRM Initiatives: Where HRM is the Lead Organization**

The following initiatives are the ones recognized as the projects Halifax Regional Municipality should be acting as the lead or co-lead to develop.

- **Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project**

**Lead organization:** Halifax Regional Municipality

**Partners:** Build Nova Scotia, Discover Halifax, Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission, Port of Halifax, Landowners and Community Interest Groups

**Overview of Initiative:** HRM is leading the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization (DDWR) Project in response to a recently intensified interest in improving public spaces, mobility connections, potential for cruise facilities and efforts to revitalize the Dartmouth Waterfront as an active, inclusive, and accessible destination for visitors and residents.

- **Establish a National Urban Park in the Halifax Regional Municipality**

**Lead Organization / Partners:** Parks Canada / Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) / Sipekne'katik First Nation / Kwi'mu'kw Maw-klusuaqn / Province of Nova Scotia / Nova Scotia Nature Trust

**Stakeholders:** Discover Halifax, Conservation Organizations

**Updated Description & Quality Enhancements:** Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes is being explored as part of Parks Canada's National Urban Parks Program. With its wilderness landscape minutes from the city, this initiative will create a nature-rich tourism asset. By aligning conservation priorities, reconciliation with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, and visitor experience opportunities, Halifax can strengthen its environmental and cultural stewardship and meaningfully contribute to the local economy by expanding its tourism offering.

- **Create Artistic Nighttime Lighting Installations to Feature Landmarks**

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax / HRM

**Partners:** HRM, Downtown business associations, Parks Canada

**Overview of Initiative:** Introducing a landmark architectural or lighting feature presents a unique opportunity to define Halifax's visual identity and amplify its national and international presence. Inspired by global exemplars, such an installation would reflect the city's distinctive heritage and contemporary urban character, creating a memorable symbol that resonates with both residents and visitors. By embodying local culture in a striking and accessible form, the feature would serve as a point of civic pride and a recognizable icon of Halifax's evolving cityscape.

- **Develop a Business Case Framework for a Large-Scale Professional Performing Arts Venue**

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax / HRM

**Partners:** Music Nova Scotia, private sector, provincial and federal agencies, community organizations

**Overview of Initiative:** As outlined in the 2024 Performing and Visual Arts Venues Study, prepared for the Halifax Regional Municipality by Happy Cities and The Arts Firm Inc., Halifax currently lacks a large-scale professional performing arts venue capable of supporting homegrown talent, hosting major entertainment events, and accommodating business and cultural gatherings. This proposed initiative envisions advancing a business case for a flexible, multi-use facility to strengthen the city's live entertainment ecosystem and attract high-calibre performances and productions throughout the year.

- **Develop a Regional Events Strategy**

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax, HRM

**Partners:** Regional and community organizations, event producers, and cultural institutions

**Overview of Initiative:** This strategy introduces a clear, coordinated framework for event development across Halifax. It ensures that cultural and economic values drive event planning and that events contribute to both community life and visitor economy goals.

- **Pursue Targeted Approach for Modernization of Sport Venues to Support Hosting Competitive Events**

**Lead Organization:** HRM

**Partners:** Various provincial sport organizations, regional and community organizations, and Discover Halifax

**Overview of Initiative:** To realize Halifax's potential as a premier destination for competitive sport hosting and to advance equitable community access to high-quality recreation, it is essential to adopt a vision for sport infrastructure renewal that is both aspirational and strategic. Over the next five years, HRM will consider an approach to facility development that considers national standard, competition-compliant venues designed to meet the evolving needs of athletes, organizers, and the broader community.

- **Develop a Nationally Recognized Marquee Event**

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax, HRM

**Partners:** Various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** Developing a nationally recognized marquee event must be guided by principles that ensure long-term success and meaningful impact. Strategic emphasis should be placed on targeting seasonality, driving increased visitation during historically lower-traffic periods to support a thriving, year-round tourism economy.

- **Develop a Balanced Approach to Short-Term Rental Regulation**

**Lead Organization:** HRM / Province of Nova Scotia

**Partners:** Discover Halifax, Short-Term Rental Association of Nova Scotia (STRANS)

**Overview of Initiative:** Short-term rentals (STRs) contribute significantly to Halifax's accommodation supply but must be balanced with community needs. This initiative supports a regulatory framework that is fair and transparent and supports both visitor demand and housing stability.

- **Simplified Public Transit Fare Systems for Visitors**

**Lead Organization:** Halifax Transit

**Partners:** HRM, Discover Halifax, various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** To create a more welcoming and accessible transit experience, fare systems must be intuitive, transparent, and flexible for first-time users. Visitors benefit greatly from flat-rate, unlimited-use passes that remove the guesswork. A simplified fare experience improves satisfaction and encourages greater use of public transit as a primary mode of discovery.

- **Develop New Washrooms**

**Lead Organization:** HRM/DH

**Partners:** Various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** Access to clean and conveniently located washrooms is foundational to a positive visitor experience. This initiative will assess current facilities, identify service gaps, and provide actionable recommendations to ensure all regions of Halifax are visitor-ready.

- **Strategic Investment in Event Tourism Infrastructure**

**Lead Organization:** HRM, Events East Group

**Partners:** Province of Nova Scotia (departments of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, and Public Works), ACOA

**Overview of Initiative:** The Scotiabank Centre is Atlantic Canada's leading sports and entertainment venue and a cornerstone of Halifax's downtown economy. To sustain its role as a tourism and cultural anchor, Halifax must develop a comprehensive capital investment strategy to modernize the facility and maintain its competitiveness in the face of aging infrastructure and evolving industry trends.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

No financial implications at this time. The Municipality's initiatives set forth in the ITMP 2030 and above in the discussion section, may be brought before Regional Council in the future to seek appropriate financial support.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

Risks associated with endorsement of the Integrated Tourism Master Plan are low. An Integrated Tourism Master Plan helped to identify strategic risks in the area of tourism. There is a risk that some aspects of the plan may be constrained from a resourcing perspective and would have to be deferred or reduced in scope. Some plan goals, such as growing tourism revenues and employment are also at risk.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken by Discover Halifax in the course of the development of the Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

One of the strategic themes of the Integrated Tourism Master Plan is to Develop Responsible Tourism. This theme speaks to actively protecting our environment. Related strategic initiatives include for example, responsible cruise growth, the sustainable development of ecotourism in the Wild Islands and enhancing conservation and visitor experiences near the city.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee may recommend that Regional Council

1. not endorse the Integrated Tourism Master Plan and the municipality's related responsibilities as noted in the body of this report.
2. endorse the Integrated Tourism Master Plan with amendments. This may require a separate staff report.

If the Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee recommends either not endorsing or amending the Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP 2030), it would risk affecting the momentum, cohesion, and strategic direction Halifax has worked to build.

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

### **Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39 as amended**

70 (1) The Municipality may

- a) beautify, improve and maintain property owned or leased by the Municipality;
- b) pay grants to a body corporate for the purpose of promoting or beautifying a business district and for airport, wharf or waterfront development;
- c) identify and promote a business district as a place for retail and commercial activity;
- d) establish or maintain parking facilities. Business and industrial development

71 (1) The Municipality may

- a) solicit and encourage the establishment and development of new, and the establishment, development and expansion of existing institutions, industries and businesses in and around the Municipality;
- b) publicize the advantages of the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas as a location for the establishment and expansion of institutions, industries and businesses;
- c) pay grants to a body corporate for the purpose of promoting the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas as a location for institutions, industries and businesses;
- d) prepare and disseminate information about the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas for the assistance of institutions, industries and businesses intending to locate or expand in the Municipality or the surrounding area.

## **ATTACHMENT**

Attachment 1 – Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030

---

Report Prepared by: Billy Comer, Manager, Events, 902.943.3810

---

# Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030

MASTER DRAFT: Tuesday, June 24, 2025

## Contents

Preface.....	5
Land and Community Acknowledgement .....	5
Collective Impact in Action: .....	5
Acknowledging our Partners .....	6
Governance that Reflects our Vision .....	7
Purpose .....	8
Introduction.....	10
A COMMUNITY-FIRST APPROACH TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT .....	10
OUR COMMITMENT TO THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES .....	10
ITMP’S VISION AND GOALS .....	11
GOALS.....	11
THEMES FOR ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION .....	12
STABILITY AND LONG-TERM VISION .....	12
Strategic Themes .....	14
Assessing our Regional Tourism Performance .....	17
Key findings.....	17
Tourism will Continue to Grow—But Smart Action will Accelerate It .....	17
Planning for Tourism Stability in the Face of Economic and Political Volatility.....	17
Strong Assets, Experiences, and Community Character .....	17
The Tourism Environment is Strong—But More Can Be Done .....	18
Seasonal Demand Remains a Challenge for Halifax .....	18
Unlocking Tourism Potential Across the Whole Region .....	18
Collaboration is the Foundation of a Sustainable Tourism Industry .....	18
Addressing Gaps in Infrastructure and Offerings Will Enhance Year-Round Potential .....	19
Enabling Tourism Growth Through Modernized Public Policy .....	19
Improved Travel Options Will Connect More Visitors to More of HRM .....	19
Regional Tourism Readiness and Opportunity .....	20
Urban Core: Halifax, Dartmouth, Cole Harbour, and Eastern Passage .....	23
The Gateway: Bedford, Sackville, and the Airport Area .....	26
Peggy’s Cove Coastal Region .....	28
Eastern HRM .....	30
Regional Summary .....	32

Action Plan Initiatives .....	34
Redevelopment of the Dartmouth Waterfront .....	35
Develop a corridor strategy – Rum Runner Trail .....	37
Develop a corridor strategy – Wild Islands Coast .....	38
Develop a corridor strategy – Acadian Coastal Scenic Route .....	40
Establish a National Urban Park in the Halifax Region .....	42
Improve Visitor Amenities on Georges Island .....	43
Create Artistic Nighttime Lighting Installations to Feature Landmarks .....	45
Develop a Business Case Framework for a Large-Scale Professional Performing Arts Venue .....	47
Develop a Regional Events Strategy .....	48
Pursue Targeted Approach for Modernization of Sport Venues to Support Hosting Competitive Events .....	50
Develop a Large-scale Outdoor Event Space .....	52
Develop a Nationally Recognized Marquee Event .....	53
Develop the Africville Marina and UNESCO site .....	55
Provide Marketing Support to Elevate Community Events into Tourism Drivers .....	56
Tourism-Driven Beverage Service & Licensing Reform .....	57
Create a Visitor-Focused Culinary Learning Experience .....	60
Position Halifax as a Shopping Destination .....	62
Enhance Visitor Engagement through AI and Seamless Booking Technologies .....	63
Develop a Balanced Approach to Short-Term Rental Regulation .....	64
Simplified Public Transit Fare Systems for Visitors .....	66
Modernizing Regulation to Support Motorcoach Tourism Growth .....	67
Tell The Authentic Story of Our People & Communities .....	68
Develop New Washrooms .....	71
Establishing Governance for the Music and Tourism Economy .....	72
Strengthening Global Connections: Halifax’s Air Access Investment Plan .....	74
Strategic Investment in Event Tourism Infrastructure .....	75
Background Study & Insights .....	77
Visitor Carrying Capacity .....	79
Accommodations study .....	83
Cruise Industry .....	84
Car Rental .....	87

Accessibility.....90

Final Thoughts .....92

Definitions .....94



# Preface

## Land and Community Acknowledgement

Discover Halifax acknowledges that we operate in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. We recognize the Peace and Friendship Treaties, signed between the Mi'kmaq and the Crown, as enduring agreements based on mutual respect and cooperation. These treaties remain foundational to the relationships and responsibilities that continue to shape our region today.

We also acknowledge the African Nova Scotian communities, whose deep-rooted histories, cultures, and contributions have shaped the identity of this region for over 400 years. We recognize the ongoing impacts of systemic racism and affirm our commitment to listening, learning, and working toward greater equity and understanding.

As an organization that connects people to place, Discover Halifax is committed to acknowledging the full history of this region, including the voices and experiences that have often been underrepresented. We offer this statement as an expression of respect, recognition, and ongoing reflection for the Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities who have long called this land home.

## Collective Impact in Action:

*Halifax's Tourism Future - We're All In This Together*

From its inception, the Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP) was built on the belief that no single organization can advance destination development alone. Drawing from the Collective Impact model, the original ITMP created a framework that aligned the efforts of stakeholders across sectors, levels of government, and communities. It brought people together under a shared vision, promoting a unified approach to decision-making, planning, and execution.

While the plan itself has evolved over time, the guiding philosophy of Collective Impact remains central to how Halifax approaches destination development. The strong partnerships, shared accountability, and cross-sector collaboration that defined its creation continue to shape its implementation. And the spirit of cooperation is embedded in every step forward.

### **FOUNDATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP**

The development of the ITMP was made possible through the vision and investment of the founding partners: Discover Halifax, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), and the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). These organizations recognized the importance of aligning tourism efforts to drive sustainable growth, economic resilience, and community benefits.

Their leadership was complemented by the deep engagement of stakeholders across industries, who contributed knowledge, insight, and lived experience to ensure the plan reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of the entire region.

## Acknowledging our Partners

A broad network of partners played a crucial role in shaping and advancing the ITMP. Discover Halifax extends sincere thanks to the following individuals and organizations for their contributions:

- Alannah Phillips, Parks Canada
- Allegra Swanson, Music Nova Scotia
- Carey Power, Hotel Association of Nova Scotia
- Catherine Martin, Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network
- Cathie O'Toole, Halifax Regional Municipality
- Chuck Maillet, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Darlene MacDonald, Tourism Nova Scotia
- David Benoit, Build Nova Scotia
- Don Bureaux, Nova Scotia Community College
- Doug Townsend, Discover Halifax
- Fulvio Fracassi, Halifax Port Authority
- Gwen LeBlanc, Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse
- Joyce Carter, Halifax International Airport Authority
- Maggie MacDonald, Halifax Regional Municipality
- Mike Petrosoniak, Short-Term Rental Association of Nova Scotia
- Natasha Chestnut, Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia
- Patrick Sullivan, Halifax Chamber of Commerce
- Peter Hackett, Joint Regional Transportation Agency
- Ross Jefferson, Discover Halifax
- Russell Grosse, Black Cultural Centre
- Wendy Luther, Halifax Partnership

Each brought a unique perspective and commitment to a better tourism future for Halifax, helping to ensure the ITMP is not only strategic but also inclusive, practical, and grounded in the community.

## Governance that Reflects our Vision

The Discover Halifax Board of Directors plays a critical role in steering the organization's mission and ensuring alignment with the principles set out in the ITMP. Their strategic leadership, and deep knowledge of the region's economic and cultural landscape, help keep Halifax on a steady course toward becoming a year-round, sustainable, and vibrant destination.

We thank our Board members for their ongoing guidance and support:

- Doug Townsend, Chair – Co-Owner, The Canteen on Portland
- Emily Haynes, Vice-Chair – Executive Director, Taste of Nova Scotia
- Paul Brigley, Treasurer – Vice President, Finance and CFO, Halifax International Airport Authority
- Ifeanyi Emesih, Secretary – Founder and CEO, My East Coast Experience Media INC
- Mayor Andy Fillmore – Halifax Regional Municipality
- Tareq Hadhad – Founder and CEO, Peace by Chocolate
- Ross Jefferson, Ex Officio – President and CEO, Discover Halifax
- Talha Khan – General Manager, the Muir Hotel
- Dean Leland – Owner, Oceanstone Resort & Spa; Fo'c'sle Village Pub; Sunroom Restaurant & Inn
- Maggie MacDonald – Executive Director, Parks and Recreation, HRM
- Ryan Murphy – President/Owner, Murphy's Camping on the Ocean
- Chirag Patel – Director of Operations, Comfort Inn Halifax
- Carey Power – General Manager, Hotel Halifax
- Jean St-Amand – Councillor, Halifax Regional Municipality

## Purpose

Destinations that attract visitors best for leisure, events, business, or sports rely on a master plan to ensure all methods are optimized to address challenges and leverage tourism opportunities to grow sustainably.

Destinations that thrive develop master plans that reflect the entire community of stakeholders and residents, and build the environment for tourism to grow, but not at the expense of the social fabric and communities that support tourism.

With this careful balance, Discover Halifax has developed the Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 (ITMP 2030). ITMP 2030 reflects this balance by expanding opportunities for the municipality, addressing gaps in demand generators, and developing an enabling environment where tourism is prioritized as key driver of the economy and major contributor to community assets, while keeping an eye on the negative impacts that tourism can have on residents, communities, and the environment.

Often, a trip to Halifax for leisure, business, or a special event may be the first visitor experience with our region. That visit can catalyze the achievement of other goals and objectives of the Halifax region, including attracting investors, entrepreneurs, a talented workforce, and students to grow our communities and economies further, while recognizing the balance of housing needs and other key services to support these prospective residents and investors.

### **What's the Same, and What's Different About ITMP 2030?**

The ITMP 2030 marks a bold step forward in Halifax's tourism strategy, focusing on inclusive, community-driven growth and tailored regional improvements. This updated plan directly addresses both long-standing and new challenges, like congestion and accessibility, while empowering local communities to showcase their unique attractions. By commissioning targeted studies on capacity, infrastructure, and accessibility, ITMP 2030 ensures that tourism development is informed, practical, and responsive to real needs.

A key strength of ITMP 2030 is its regional approach, ensuring that every part of Halifax, from vibrant urban centers to picturesque rural areas, contributes to a rich, balanced tourism experience. The plan also places new emphasis on festivals, major events, and venue development, supported by a comprehensive Major Events Policy Framework, further enhancing Halifax's appeal as a top-tier destination.

Importantly, the plan builds on the foundations of its predecessor. While many initiatives from the original ITMP were realized, others were delayed due to the unforeseen impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, these ongoing efforts remain vital to Halifax's future and are being carried forward.

What sets ITMP 2030 apart is its deeper focus on understanding the practical needs of both visitors and residents through in-depth studies and analysis. With increased leadership and dedicated resources, Halifax is now better equipped to turn these strategic goals into reality. Above all, ITMP

2030 champions sustainable tourism growth that delivers lasting benefits for both the community and its visitors, laying the groundwork for long-term prosperity.

### **COMMUNITY-FOCUSED AND REGIONALLY TAILORED**

ITMP 2030 takes a comprehensive approach to meeting the evolving needs of both Halifax's communities and its visitors. The plan introduces long-awaited community amenities, while also confronting emerging challenges such as congestion and overcrowding. At the same time, there is a renewed commitment to welcoming a wider variety of visitors, streamlining policy changes, and resolving persistent bottlenecks that have previously hindered growth.

To ensure tourism flourishes across the entire region, ITMP 2030 tailors its approach to the unique character of each area. Whether it's the vibrant Urban Core, the inviting neighborhoods of Bedford and Sackville, the iconic charm of Peggy's Cove, or the natural beauty of Eastern HRM, every region contributes to a diverse and well-rounded tourism landscape.

Supporting this regional focus, the plan includes in-depth studies on critical topics such as visitor carrying capacity, cruise demand, accommodations, car rentals, and accessibility. These studies are designed to provide actionable insights, enabling informed decisions that benefit both visitors and residents.

Events and festivals are also a cornerstone of Halifax's tourism strategy. ITMP 2030 prioritizes venue assessment, the development of a regional events strategy, and the creation of a Major Events Policy Framework. These initiatives position Halifax as a premier destination for entertainment, sports, and business gatherings, driving economic growth and enriching community life.

Ultimately, ITMP 2030 is about fostering sustainable, meaningful tourism that benefits everyone. By deepening our understanding through targeted studies, elevating the role of major events, and celebrating the unique strengths of each region, Halifax is laying the foundation for long-term prosperity. With enhanced leadership and dedicated staffing, the city is well-prepared to ensure tourism continues to deliver rewarding experiences for residents and visitors alike.

# Introduction

## A COMMUNITY-FIRST APPROACH TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, the role of destination organizations has shifted significantly. Where once the primary focus was on marketing (attracting visitors, increasing hotel occupancy, and driving visitor spending), the scope has now expanded to include broader destination development responsibilities. This evolution reflects a growing global recognition that tourism should be managed intentionally to benefit visitors and residents.

As tourism continues to grow and diversify, so do its impacts. Around the world, the rise in visitation to popular destinations has raised questions about sustainability, livability, and long-term value. In response, many destination marketing organizations (DMOs) have transitioned into destination management organizations - entities responsible for attracting visitors and ensuring tourism contributes positively to the local economy, environment, and community well-being.

Discover Halifax has embraced this expanded role. With the creation of a Destination Development department and the launch of the Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 (ITMP 2030), Discover Halifax is doubling down on a community-first approach and placing residents at the heart of how we plan, manage, and grow tourism.

We recognize that successful destinations are not just great places to visit, they're great places to live. That's why the ITMP 2030 is guided by the belief that tourism should enrich the lives of residents while supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and celebrating what makes the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) unique.

This refreshed plan reaffirms Discover Halifax's leadership in advancing a balanced, inclusive, and sustainable tourism future. As we move forward, we are committed to fostering shared value between communities and the tourism industry, ensuring that Halifax grows as both a beloved destination, and a thriving place to call home.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As we move forward with the next phase of ITMP 2030, Discover Halifax reaffirms its commitment to the guiding principles that continue to shape a sustainable, inclusive, and community-centered tourism sector. Originally developed through extensive collaboration with the Advisory Committee and project leaders, these principles remain relevant and vital as we navigate an evolving tourism landscape.

At the heart of the ITMP 2030 is a shared goal: to generate long-term value and prosperity for all. When tourism thrives, so do our communities - through a stronger tax base, increased revenues for local businesses, inclusive employment opportunities, and the growth of Halifax's global reputation and export potential. Our guiding principles for 2025 and beyond.

- **Community-first focus:** We remain committed to putting communities at the center of tourism development, honouring our region's diversity, values, and voices while acknowledging and managing tourism's social and environmental impacts.

- **Competitive growth:** We will apply a competitive lens to decision-making while prioritizing growth that is equitable, accessible, and beneficial for all.
- **Regional awareness:** We recognize that tourism decisions in Halifax can have broader impacts across Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada. We will continue considering these connections as part of a cohesive regional approach.
- **Collaboration across the ecosystem:** From local stakeholders to regional and national partners, we are committed to working collaboratively across the entire tourism ecosystem to drive meaningful progress.

These principles continue to guide our actions and partnerships as we deliver on the vision of Halifax as everyone's favourite Canadian city and a vibrant, resilient, and welcoming destination, 365 days a year.

## ITMP's VISION AND GOALS

As the original ITMP undergoes a five-year review, it is essential to reaffirm the continuity and validity of its vision, goals, and strategic themes. While the tourism landscape continues to evolve, these foundational elements remain as relevant today as they were at the project's inception. Maintaining them ensures strategic consistency, long-term impact, and alignment with Halifax's broader economic and community objectives.

The vision remains relevant and aspirational. **To be everyone's favourite Canadian city.**

The vision of making Halifax everyone's favourite Canadian city reflects an enduring ambition that guides tourism development, while fostering local pride and global appeal. Halifax's natural beauty, cultural richness, and welcoming community remain strong differentiators, and the vision continues to capture what stakeholders, businesses, and residents aspire to achieve. Maintaining it reinforces Halifax's brand identity and long-term strategic focus.

## GOALS

Tourism is not a standalone sector - it's a dynamic economic driver embedded in the region's broader vision for growth. Framing tourism within HRM's economic development plan, *People. Planet. Prosperity. Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-2027* affirms the sector's role in growing GDP, attracting investment, and strengthening export activity. It bridges priorities across economic development, workforce strategy, and community well-being, creating a shared language and unified purpose. Tourism also plays a vital role in making HRM a desirable, vibrant, and well-recognized place to live, enhancing our brand, amenities, and cultural vitality. By fully integrating tourism into Halifax's long-term planning, we move beyond silos and position the visitor economy as a catalyst for shared prosperity, livability, and global competitiveness.

The ITMP 2030 aligns with the strategic goals of *People, Planet, and Prosperity*, each with measurable objectives critical to achieving the long-term vision.

- **Grow GDP by Growing the Travel Industry**
- **Build the Halifax Brand & Support Population Growth**
- **Enrich the Lives of Residents**

These strategic goals remain timely and necessary amid shifting travel trends, economic uncertainty, and environmental challenges. They offer a framework for aligning ITMP 2030 with municipal, provincial, and national strategies, ensuring Halifax remains a competitive, inclusive, and sustainable destination.

## THEMES FOR ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The six strategic themes established in the original ITMP continue to address key areas critical to Halifax's long-term tourism success:

1. **Make it easy to get here and visit:** Transportation availability and convenient visitor experiences remain fundamental to tourism growth.
2. **Develop responsible tourism:** Environmentally responsible travel, destination sustainability, and accessibility for persons with disabilities continue to grow in importance, and our industry and community must remain committed to it.
3. **Build and enhance key demand generators:** Investment in major events, visitor infrastructure, festivals, experiences, and attractions is crucial for continued visitor interest and economic impact.
4. **Establish, identify, and appoint tourism leadership:** Strong governance and leadership ensure industry resilience, innovation, and coordination.
5. **Attract the highest yield and growth markets:** Focused marketing on high-value markets.
6. **Be vibrant and alive, 365:** HRM has plenty of offerings to many diverse visitors year-round, growing this to a more stable, diversified economy will reduce our dependence on seasonal peaks.

These themes remain broad enough to adapt to new industry developments, yet specific enough to effectively guide action and policy decisions.

## STABILITY AND LONG-TERM VISION

Tourism planning is inherently a long-term endeavor. Changing fundamental aspects of the ITMP, such as the vision, guiding principles, or themes, would introduce uncertainty and potentially disrupt projects, partnerships, and investments made over the past five years.

By maintaining consistency, we can:

- Ensure seamless progress on ongoing initiatives.
- Preserve stakeholder trust and community engagement.
- Strengthen Halifax's reputation as a well-managed, forward-thinking destination.
- Provide a stable framework that allows for adaptation within a structured strategy.

The existing vision, guiding principles, and strategic themes remain strong, adaptable, and reflective of the tourism industry and our community priorities. While new insights and initiatives have been integrated into the ITMP 2030, keeping these core elements intact ensures continuity, strategic focus, and sustainable industry growth. The direction remains sound, and reinforcing its original guiding principles will help Halifax stay on course toward long-term tourism success.



## METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

Gathering input from residents and stakeholders is critical for identifying a community's key issues and opportunities. Recognizing this, the project began with an engagement strategy and an extensive engagement process. The project team hosted a series of activities between September 2024 and March 2025, where participants were invited to share their perspectives and insights on their vision for the future of tourism in the HRM.

## ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

### Advisory Committee and Board of Directors engagement:

- Three engagement sessions were held with the Discover Halifax Board of Directors and Advisory Committee members.
- One-on-one interviews and group engagement sessions were conducted with key stakeholders.

### Stakeholder discovery sessions:

- Hosted 24 group sessions and 20 one-on-one interviews.
- Designed for people working in the tourism industry to share the challenges and opportunities.

### Project website and public survey:

- Survey to hear directly from residents about their views on the challenges and opportunities facing HRM's tourism industry, their vision for tourism development for the region over the next decade, and the programs and policies that are needed to help realize that vision.
- People engaged: 181 (survey), 349 (overall online contributions).
- 1,000+ (unique website visitors).

### Regional engagement sessions:

- Eight in-person, regional meetings were hosted across HRM.
- Designed to get a better understanding of the local issues in all the unique corners of the municipality.
- Over 100 community members participated.

### Stakeholder validation sessions:

- Three final sessions with stakeholders and partners, with over 70 stakeholders.
- Targeted to a specific group: Food and Beverage; Music, Festivals, and Night-time Economy; and Hotels and Business Events.
- This was an opportunity to share what we heard through previous public and stakeholder engagement and explore deeper what initiatives and activities would have the greatest impact on tourism in the HRM.

*The project team engaged with **over 125 stakeholders** from a diverse range of sectors including: Accommodations, Food and Beverage, Entertainment, Transportation, Businesses, Museum and Cultural Spaces, Sports, Festivals and Events, Cultural Groups, and Tourism Operators*

## Strategic Themes

### BUILD & ENHANCE DEMAND GENERATORS

**What is the Opportunity?** Halifax is home to a diverse array of tourism assets, with many of the most prominent concentrated in the urban core, the nucleus of the region's tourism economy and a vital economic engine. There is a significant opportunity to strengthen this core by building on existing assets through a targeted development strategy. This approach should showcase Halifax's standout attractions, shopping, iconic landmarks, and entertainment venues, to world-class culinary and dynamic outdoor events, ensuring they drive visitation and deliver sustained economic benefit.

#### How We Can Succeed:

- Transform the Dartmouth Waterfront into a distinct tourism destination.
- Investment in sports venues and performance venues
- Establish a National Urban Park at Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes.

**Why This Matters for Residents:** Tourism assets don't just attract visitors; they also improve residents' quality of life. Enhancing these assets means more recreational spaces, better facilities, and vibrant cultural sites that everyone can enjoy. Developing areas like the Dartmouth waterfront could also bring new local businesses and job opportunities.

### ATTRACT HIGH-YIELD MARKETS

**What is the Opportunity?** Halifax offers a concentration of urban amenities not found elsewhere in the region, particularly in live entertainment, music, and culinary offerings. These assets distinguish the city within the Atlantic Canadian context. Regional visitors, who constitute a significant portion of total visitation, primarily travel to Halifax to visit friends and relatives, attend events, shop, and access services. These repeat visits represent a stable and recurring economic contribution. There is a strategic opportunity to strengthen Halifax's tourism economy by increasing awareness and uptake of its distinctive urban experiences among this core audience, encouraging higher discretionary spending levels during each visit.

#### How We Can Succeed:

- Develop a strategy to attract more events in the next 10 years.
- Develop indoor and outdoor venues for concerts, shows, and business events.
- Promote Halifax as a premier shopping destination in Atlantic Canada.
- Create culinary learning experiences for food-loving travelers.

**Why This Matters for Residents:** Tourism is a significant economic driver in 2024; visitors spent \$1.4 billion throughout HRM. More visitors mean more support for local businesses, more jobs, and more investment in the community. Residents enjoy the same significant events, attractions, and dining experiences as visitors.

## MAKE IT EASY TO GET HERE & VISIT

**What is the Opportunity?** Halifax's airport is a key asset, but the region also needs more convenient transportation options. Many top destinations offer services like ride-share and car-share, and Halifax should too. Additionally, making it easier for visitors to find information, book services, and navigate the city online can significantly improve their experience.

### How We Can Succeed:

- Adopt new planning and booking apps to help visitors easily arrange trips.
- Modernize short-term rental regulations to increase accommodation options.
- Implement mobile transit and parking payment systems.
- Develop a visitor services plan to address public washrooms and other essential amenities.

**Why This Matters for Residents:** Investing in better transportation and visitor services benefits everyone, from making parking easier to find to having more accessible public washrooms and improved transit systems.

## BE VIBRANT & ALIVE 365

**What is the Opportunity?** Halifax offers many attractions and experiences, but many are concentrated in specific seasons, peak days of the week, or limited to daytime hours. This uneven activity distribution contributes to periods of low demand, particularly during weekdays, evenings, and winter months. Addressing these gaps presents an opportunity to strengthen the tourism economy by encouraging a more consistent flow of visitors and greater local engagement throughout the year. Expanding year-round, evening, and shoulder-season programming, including events, culinary offerings, and cultural or recreational experiences, can help reduce volatility, increase overall visitation, and enhance the sustainability of tourism-related businesses.

### How We Can Succeed:

- Create a signature lighting display downtown to attract visitors year-round.
- Develop a large outdoor event space for major concerts and festivals.
- Launch a marketing program that promotes year-round events and activities.

**Why This Matters for Residents:** Tourism supports 34,000 jobs in Halifax. Expanding year-round attractions could mean more job opportunities, more events to enjoy, and more chances to show off what Halifax has to offer – even in the colder months.

## DEVELOP RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

**What is the Opportunity?** Halifax's natural landscapes and cultural heritage are major draws for visitors, but they also need to be protected. Responsible tourism means managing growth to ensure that tourism doesn't negatively impact local communities or the environment.

### How We Can Succeed:

- Create a plan for sustainable growth of the cruise sector.
- Highlight the authentic stories of Halifax's diverse cultures in marketing campaigns.
- Simplify and modernize motorcoach regulations to encourage more sustainable transport options.

**Why This Matters for Residents:** Protecting Halifax’s natural beauty and cultural sites means preserving what makes the city special for residents and visitors alike. It also helps keep the area safe and enjoyable for future generations.

#### **ESTABLISH LEADERSHIP IN TOURISM**

**What is the Opportunity?** Tourism initiatives in Halifax are often fragmented, making it hard to coordinate efforts effectively. By appointing leadership to oversee tourism strategy, Halifax can better connect policies, streamline event approvals, and identify opportunities for growth in areas like event space and nightlife.

#### **How We Can Succeed:**

- Develop a regional events strategy that leverages arts, sports, and business events to drive visitation across communities and throughout the year.
- Advocate for updates to provincial tourism regulations to reduce barriers for operators, encourage entrepreneurship, and enhance sector-wide economic resilience.
- Strengthen leadership and governance frameworks to support the growth and sustainability of the music sector as a tourism economic driver.

**Why This Matters for Residents:** Strong tourism leadership means more effective resource use, better events, and more economic opportunities for the community, for instance, in 2019, events confirmed by Discover Halifax generated over \$58 million in direct economic benefits, which went back into the local economy.

## Assessing our Regional Tourism Performance

### Key findings

As part of the ITMP 2030 development process, an assessment was made to determine current drivers of tourism performance in Halifax, areas where tourism is thriving, and areas where tourism falls short in meeting its potential. The following highlights some of the key findings in the areas of drivers of tourism demand, infrastructure, the tourism-enabling environment, and regional tourism potential.

### Tourism will Continue to Grow—But Smart Action will Accelerate It

- Tourism in the Halifax region is performing very well. It has grown in almost every metric, including a 12 per cent increase in visitor spend from January to September of 2023 at \$1.1 billion in total spend.
- The tourism sub-sectors in Halifax have performed equally as well with significant increases in total spending and total revenue supporting accommodation, food and beverage, recreation and entertainment, and retail and transportation.
- Hotel revenue per available room (RevPAR) has increased by 1.5 per cent since 2024, with revenue per available room at \$149 per night surpassing Ottawa's and Calgary's RevPAR of \$142 and \$122 per night.
- For the cruise sector, there has been significant 18.5 per cent growth since 2023 in ships and passengers, with Halifax welcoming 203 boats in 2024 and 376,000 passengers.

### Planning for Tourism Stability in the Face of Economic and Political Volatility

- Canada is navigating increasing economic and geopolitical uncertainty resulting from recent shifts in U.S. political leadership, which is contributing to volatility across North America and globally.
- As people are traditionally cautious about making travel decisions during uncertain economic and political times, it is unclear how this will affect the visitor economy in Canada and Halifax.
- There is new evidence that fewer Canadian and international travellers are interested in traveling to the US, but are very interested in traveling to Canada. Canadian provinces and cities may have the highest pool of prospective travellers in history.

Early evidence suggests that some business and sporting events in the US have been canceled, which could present opportunities for Halifax.

### Strong Assets, Experiences, and Community Character

- Halifax holds many strong assets that support drivers of visitation. Hard assets include the Halifax Waterfront, museums, historical and cultural assets, charming villages and neighbourhoods, Peggy's Cove, many beaches, coves, parks, and an international airport.
- The Halifax region also has a strong energy that draws visitors, enhanced by its brand position, authenticity, culinary experiences, vibrant downtowns, major music, theatre, sporting events, and friendly and hospitable residents.

## The Tourism Environment is Strong—But More Can Be Done

- The enabling environment for tourism is the engine that makes tourism happen across the Halifax region. From the destination's tourism development to the policies that support tourism, to the marketing, the enabling environment is the glue that guides the industry to success.
- For the Halifax region, the enabling environment has improved to support the sustainable growth of tourism throughout the area and throughout the year. Destination development, events, entertainment, business, and sports are prioritized under a strong marketing and brand platform that inspires visitors to choose Halifax.
- Weaknesses in the broader enabling environment, including antiquated policies and legislation and organizations that support the development of infrastructure, transportation, and assets, remain and impede tourism's potential.

## Seasonal Demand Remains a Challenge for Halifax

- The Halifax region faces challenges similar to those faced by many other Canadian cities - a high level of demand for the peak summer season and weaker demand for the shoulder season.
- This imbalance is inefficient as many tourism assets, including accommodations, restaurants, and attractions, are underutilized in the shoulder season. They rely primarily on transient seasonal labour, reducing the total tourism revenue.
- Seasonal shifts and the lack of demand generators that can support a flattening of the peaks and valleys of visitation challenge tourism in the Halifax region. This includes the need to improve assets and create an enabling environment to support business events, major events, and sports tourism, in addition to additional assets to drive leisure travel.

## Unlocking Tourism Potential Across the Whole Region

- Regions outside Halifax's urban core offer tourism-ready assets such as cultural sites, parks, beaches, and coastal landscapes that align with visitor demand for nature-based and community-rooted experiences. However, many of these assets remain underdeveloped or underutilized as tourism products.
- There is an opportunity to assess and develop regional offerings to align with visitor demand. By focusing on market-ready experiences, Halifax can diversify its tourism product and attract visitors seeking a wider range of activities beyond the urban core.

## Collaboration is the Foundation of a Sustainable Tourism Industry

- Collaboration across groups representing business, key stakeholders in the tourism industry, local and regional government, transportation, communities, cultural groups, and others continues to be a priority of Discover Halifax.
- There are opportunities to engage with additional stakeholders across other tourism adjacent sectors, including retail, to develop further support for tourism and more drivers of demand.

## Addressing Gaps in Infrastructure and Offerings Will Enhance Year-Round Potential

- While the tourism industry will benefit from the many infrastructure and development projects, including the Cogswell interchange, the tourism industry needs additional investment in infrastructure, assets, and experiences to help drive visitation year-round.
- Priorities include a mid-sized music venue, off-site spaces for conferences, additional accommodation in all categories of hotel, event spaces, and public washrooms and parking particularly in regional parks.
- The HRM punches above its weight with culinary and beverage scene, and with major events and sporting events to complement the Vibrant and Alive, 365 theme and drive visitation, but are limited with access to labour, antiquated rules, liquor laws, and venues.

## Enabling Tourism Growth Through Modernized Public Policy

- Tourism relies on several support industries to help drive visitation and align with its strategic theme of Vibrant and Alive, 365. These include the transportation industry, which helps visitors, cruise passengers, conference delegates, and event attendees explore the entire region.
- There is great potential for both the culinary and major events industries to thrive and help drive tourism demand for Halifax. Still, some policy issues are holding back these industries from meeting their full potential.
- Liquor laws in Halifax have not kept pace with those in other provinces, which creates challenges for restaurants or major events where alcohol can or should be served. As well, they are inconsistently applied and subject to interpretation.
- The motor coach industry is essential to efficiently transporting visitors across the region, however, regulations are uncompetitive and place the onus on a potentially new motor coach entrant to prove the demand and need for a new service.

## Improved Travel Options Will Connect More Visitors to More of HRM

- Transportation networks are critical to helping visitors explore the entire Halifax region, but there remain some challenges in these networks.
- Rental cars remain scarce during the peak summer season, limiting the ability of visitors to explore the Halifax region and other regions in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.
- Regulation of the motorcoach industry impedes new entrants from supporting mass transportation of visitors to regional sites.
- Public transit is lacking in some parts of the urban core and in rural and remote areas with high tourism potential, and it remains challenging to pay for these services seamlessly.
- Wayfinding and signage are lacking, particularly in rural areas with limited cell and Wi-Fi services.
- Congestion in the downtown core, particularly when coaches and taxis collect passengers from multiple cruise ships.

## Regional Tourism Readiness and Opportunity

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) represents a region characterized by diverse geography and various people with rich cultures. It encompasses dynamic urban centers, welcoming suburban neighborhoods, quaint rural villages, and striking coastal landscapes. With its varied natural landscapes, including forests, lakes, and rugged coastlines, Halifax is strategically positioned to capitalize on the growing demand for tourism experiences that seamlessly blend metropolitan sophistication with rural charm.

Despite these inherent assets, each region within HRM occupies a distinct position in its tourism development trajectory. While specific communities (Mi'kmaq, African Nova Scotian, Acadian) exhibit obvious tourism potential, they have yet to fully integrate tourism as a strategic priority in their respective communities. Conversely, other areas that have established themselves as inviting tourist destinations, characterized by beaches, parks, cultural landmarks, and scenic routes, remain constrained by infrastructural limitations such as inadequate accommodations, limited dining options, insufficient public amenities, and fragmented transportation networks.

### TOURISM FUNDAMENTALS: THE FIVE A'S

The **Five A's of Tourism** framework, widely referenced in tourism management and strategic planning, provides a broad structure for assessing destination readiness by focusing on Attractions, Accessibility, Accommodation, Amenities, and Activities. Originating from academic and industry practice, it is crucial for identifying infrastructural and experiential gaps, aligning regional tourism assets with broader strategic objectives, and enhancing the overall visitor experience. The Five A's serve as a fundamental paradigm for analyzing tourism readiness within a destination.

The Five A's encompass:

- **Attractions:** Distinctive natural beauty, historical and cultural landmarks, and signature experiences that differentiate the destination.
- **Accessibility:** Efficient transportation networks, clear wayfinding systems, and welcoming gateways that facilitate ease of movement.
- **Accommodation:** A diverse array of lodging options that cater to varied visitor demographics, ranging from budget to luxury offerings.
- **Amenities:** Essential public services, well-maintained rest areas, visitor conveniences, and recreational facilities that enhance the visitor experience.
- **Activities:** Compelling events, festivals, and recreational offerings that transform the destination into a vibrant, engaging locale.

When these components converge, tourism evolves from mere visitation to an immersive experience that tells a compelling narrative and fosters economic development and community engagement. The Five A's framework offers a structured lens through which to assess tourism readiness across HRM's diverse regions, each of which presents distinct assets and challenges:



- **Urban Core:** This region is characterized by a robust concentration of Attractions and Accommodations, but it could substantially enhance its Activities and Amenities to foster a more comprehensive visitor experience that extends beyond daytime hours.
- **The Gateway:** As the primary point of entry via the airport, The Gateway is inherently strong in Accessibility. However, it lacks sufficient Attractions and Activities to motivate extended stays, signaling an opportunity for strategic investment in event-driven tourism.
- **Peggy's Cove Coastal Region:** Renowned for its iconic Attractions, Peggy's Cove faces critical gaps in Accessibility and Amenities, particularly during peak tourist seasons. Strategic infrastructure improvements are essential to support sustainable visitor management.
- **Eastern HRM:** With abundant natural Attractions, Eastern HRM remains underdeveloped in terms of Accommodation and Accessibility. Strategic investments in eco-tourism and nature-based activities could unlock significant tourism potential in this region.

### OUR DIVERSE REGION & COMMUNITIES

The regional review segments HRM into specific regions to analyze tourism activity, identify each area's strengths, and explore development opportunities. The regions are categorized as follows:

1. **Urban Core:** Halifax, Dartmouth, Cole Harbour, and Eastern Passage.
2. **The Gateway:** Bedford, Sackville, and the Airport Area.
3. **Peggy's Cove Coastal Region:** Peggy's Cove, St. Margaret's Bay, and Hubbards.
4. **Eastern HRM:** Eastern Shore and Musquodoboit Valley.

### VISION, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS

The strategic assessment of each region is conducted through the analytical lenses of Vision, Strategic Priorities, Decision-Making Frameworks, and Key Initiatives. This comprehensive approach integrates community engagement, asset mapping, and strategic analysis to formulate actionable recommendations that align each region's tourism development trajectory with broader regional objectives.

### IMPACTS ACROSS HRM - REGION-WIDE INITIATIVES

Beyond region-specific strategies, the ITMP 2030 includes broader initiatives that will impact the entire municipality:

- Develop a comprehensive **Regional Events Strategy**
- Pursue Targeted approach for modernize **sport venues** for competitive events
- Create **large-scale outdoor event spaces**
- Launch a **nationally recognized marquee event**
- Support marketing to elevate **community events** into tourism drivers
- Reform **provincial alcohol regulations**
- Develop a **culinary learning experience** for visitors
- Enhance visitor engagement using **AI and seamless booking technologies**
- Implement a balanced **short-term rental regulation** approach
- Simplify the **public transit fare system** for tourists
- Improve motorcoach access and regulation

- Promote authentic storytelling of **local communities**
- Expand **public washroom facilities**
- Develop **governance for music** and tourism-related events
- Strengthen Halifax's **air access investment plan** to elevate Atlantic Canada's global connections

### LOOKING AHEAD

The following chapters will delve deeper into each initiative, outlining actionable strategies and potential impacts across the HRM. The objective is to build a cohesive, inclusive, and economically sustainable tourism landscape that leverages the unique attributes of each region while aligning with overarching municipal goals.

## Urban Core: Halifax, Dartmouth, Cole Harbour, and Eastern Passage

### VISION

To establish the Urban Core as a vibrant, inclusive, and year-round tourism destination that showcases Halifax's rich cultural heritage, dynamic waterfronts, and urban experiences, drawing locals and visitors alike into an interconnected and inspiring cityscape.

### OVERVIEW

The Urban Core is where Halifax's energy is most palpable. It's the region's beating heart—where culture, history, food, and the waterfront come together in a vibrant, evolving story. From the bustle of the Halifax Waterfront and the charm of Downtown Dartmouth to the rich legacies of the North End and the community feel of Cole Harbour and Eastern Passage, this area is home to many experiences visitors associate with Halifax.

But while the Urban Core draws attention with its signature assets, Citadel Hill, the Public Gardens, the Halifax Waterfront, Pier 21, and more, it isn't yet functioning as a fully integrated destination. Visitors are often drawn to one part of the Core, but disconnected infrastructure, limited signage, and inconsistent transit options make exploring beyond that first stop difficult. That lack of connectivity between the physical and narrative districts dampens the broader visitor economy.

There's also work to do in how we present our stories. While the Urban Core includes celebrated institutions and historic landmarks, many voices remain underrepresented. Greater attention to Indigenous and African Nova Scotian narratives and local cultural expression support can help paint a fuller picture of who we are—and who we've always been.

Just as important is how the Urban Core performs after dark. Retail hours, entertainment options, and public programming tend to taper off in the evenings, particularly outside of peak summer. Extending the vibrancy of our city into the evenings—and throughout the year—will require coordination between businesses, municipalities, and tourism partners to activate streets and invite locals and visitors to stay a little longer.

There are also infrastructure gaps. Halifax is missing key cultural venues that could host mid-sized performances, community arts events, and shoulder-season festivals. Filling these gaps will require targeted investment, but the payoff could be considerable, not just in economic terms but in creating the kind of shared cultural experiences that help define a place.

Finally, our waterfront remains a major draw—but not all parts are pulling their weight. While districts like the Salt Yard and Queen's Marque are thriving, areas like Purdy's Wharf, McNab's Island, and Dartmouth remain underutilized. A more intentional approach to waterfront planning that balances development with heritage and ecological protection can unlock new opportunities and make the entire harbourfront more accessible and inclusive.

At its best, the Urban Core tells a layered, authentic story about Halifax. Getting there means improving infrastructure and amenities, deepening the experiences we offer, and making sure everyone feels welcome in how we share them.

Growth opportunities exist across five core dimensions:

**1. Connectivity and Movement:**

Improved pedestrian, cycling, and transit infrastructure—along with a unified signage strategy—would enable visitors to experience the full range of offerings on both sides of the harbour. Enhanced ferry linkages, active transportation trails, and harbour-spanning visitor itineraries could address the existing disconnection between districts such as the North End and Eastern Passage.

**2. Cultural Inclusion and Storytelling:**

The Urban Core holds untapped potential to represent the stories of Mi'kmaq communities more fully, African Nova Scotians, and other historically underrepresented voices. While some cultural institutions exist, greater visibility, programming, and interpretation are needed to move from symbolic presence to immersive experience. This would also align with increasing visitor demand for authentic, place-based narratives.

**3. Evening Economy and Retail Vitality:**

The Core's appeal as a nightlife destination is currently under-leveraged. Retail hours remain limited in the evenings, particularly outside of the summer peak, reducing vibrancy and economic activity. Strategic interventions such as incentives for extended retail hours or pop-up programming could activate downtown streetscapes year-round and better support festivals, cruise traffic, and conference delegates.

**4. Venue Infrastructure and Programming Capacity:**

Existing performance and event venues serve core audiences well, leaving mid-tier programming underserved. Gaps between small venues and large arenas like the Scotiabank Centre make it challenging to host specific genres of cultural or touring acts. New venue development should aim to fill this capacity gap, particularly with a view to year-round activation and shoulder season appeal.

**5. Waterfront Revitalization and Mixed-Use Activation:**

While Halifax's waterfront continues to attract investment, parts of the harbour, such as Africville, McNab's Island, and most notably the Dartmouth waterfront, remain underutilized or disconnected. A more integrated and equitable approach to waterfront planning could ensure that these areas contribute more fully to the tourism economy while respecting their historical and cultural significance.

Critically, the Urban Core must be understood as a set of high-performing destinations and an integrated system. Maximizing tourism's contribution to economic and cultural development requires thoughtful infrastructure planning, support for the visitor economy beyond the summer months, and a commitment to telling a fuller story of Halifax's complex and layered identity.

### **Strategic Priorities & Supporting Initiatives**

Linking strategic priorities to specific initiatives strengthens the overall coherence and clarity of the tourism plan. It demonstrates how individual actions, such as trail enhancements, venue

investments, or cultural programming, are not isolated efforts but purposeful contributions to broader goals like improved accessibility, inclusive storytelling, and year-round economic activity. This alignment allows stakeholders, from policymakers to community partners, to clearly see how each initiative advances the region's long-term vision. It also reinforces transparency, supports coordinated decision-making, and ensures that investments are guided by a shared framework rooted in measurable outcomes and community value.

### **Cultural Representation and Storytelling**

- *Africville Marina and UNESCO site* – elevates African Nova Scotian history
- *Music governance strategy* – supports inclusive cultural expression across communities

### **Waterfront Enhancement**

- *Dartmouth Waterfront* – continued investment in public space and visitor access
- *Nighttime lighting installation* – animates both sides of the harbour after dark
- *Georges Island* – expanded programming celebrates community heritage

### **Connectivity and Wayfinding**

- *Corridor Strategy: Rum Runner Trail* – improves active transportation links
- *Urban National Park* – links green space and waterfront access between districts
- *Halifax Air Access Investment Plan* – ensures access to a national and global market

### **Evening Economy and Retail Activation**

- *Scotiabank Centre* – anchor for nighttime events and nighttime economy
- *Cruise Growth Strategy* – expands off-ship spending

### **Venue and Event Infrastructure**

- *Large-Scale Performing Arts Venue* – fills mid-size capacity gap for year-round programming

## The Gateway: Bedford, Sackville, and the Airport Area

### VISION

To position The Gateway as Halifax's front door—welcoming, well-connected, & increasingly vibrant—serving as a memorable entry and departure point for visitors, & a thriving suburban region rich in hospitality, cultural, and recreational offerings.

### OVERVIEW

The Gateway is where it all begins for the visitors to Halifax who arrive by air. Welcomed by the Halifax Stanfield International Airport, just 30 minutes from the rich tourism assets and experiences of downtown Halifax, the region comprises rural and suburban communities never far from the ocean or the many lakes and rivers that are found in the area. The suburban communities that make up this region, including Fall River and Waverley, are home to coffee shops and bakeries, local pubs, farmers markets, and plenty of trails. With several accommodation options and attractions, like the Atlantic Canada Aviation Museum, this region is ideal for travellers looking to stay close to the airport on a short stopover or start or end their stay in the Halifax region.

The Bedford and Sackville regions are family-friendly communities centred around the deepest point of Halifax Harbour. The area is mainly residential, although Bedford has several small hotels and short-term rentals. Bedford sits at the northwestern end of the Bedford Basin and offers incredible views of the Halifax Harbour from DeWolf Park. Sackville has several great parks, lakes, and local museums to visit.

This region's priority is to bring these many natural and cultural assets to life. Museums, local parks, charming cafes, community halls, sports fields, courts, arenas, and other recreational facilities to support opportunities in sports tourism. The priority is also to engage these communities around the opportunities that tourism provides to develop additional tourism assets that double as community amenities, additional accommodations, more transit and integrated mobility, particularly around the new ferry service into downtown Halifax from Bedford, and support for local and community events while bringing attention to these regional and authentic communities through storytelling and marketing.

### GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES EXIST ACROSS FIVE CORE DIMENSIONS:

#### ACCOMMODATION GROWTH:

The Gateway region could benefit from additional options for accommodations, particularly where the Halifax downtown core is becoming increasingly expensive, with limited land availability to support additional accommodations. Additional accommodations in suburban areas would support additional options for when downtown hotels run at full occupancy and at higher rates, or when there are events, festivals or sport tourism activities in the Gateway region. Finally, while accommodations investment could be in hotels, additional accommodations, including lodges, B&Bs, and resorts, are also valued.

#### INTEGRATED MOBILITY AND TRANSIT:

The Gateway region could also benefit from improving intermodal transportation to connect it to the airport, city centre, and other parts of the region to support visitor and resident movement. With the

Gateway community of Bedford getting a ferry that will link Bedford with downtown Halifax in 2027/28, there are new transportation routes to link these communities to bring visitors and residents to the downtown core and back again.

#### **FAMILY AND STOPOVER TRAVEL:**

The Gateway suburban communities have an opportunity to develop tourism assets, products, and experiences that reflect the needs of families. Whether travelling to participate in or watch a sporting event, attend a local festival or event, or as part of a more extended trip across the Halifax region or Atlantic Canada, the Gateway area offers a stopover opportunity for families. There is an opportunity to help amplify this opportunity through additional product and experience development and marketing.

#### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & SUPPORTING INITIATIVES**

The Gateway region will benefit from several Halifax-wide initiatives and others that specifically represent these communities. With an additional focus on this region, there will be additional opportunities for review and exploration to support tourism development and reflect the vision for this part of the Halifax region.

#### **Cultural Representation and Storytelling**

- *Music governance strategy* – supports inclusive cultural expression across communities
- *Tell the authentic story of our communities*

#### **Connectivity and Wayfinding**

- *Corridor Strategy: Rum Runner Trail* – improves active transportation links
- *Urban National Park* – links green space and waterfront access between districts
- Halifax Air Access Investment Plan* – ensures access to a national and global market
- *Review the potential opportunity for additional integration of the airport and downtown and inter-modal connectivity, particularly with the new ferry from Bedford to downtown.*

#### **Events**

- Develop a regional events strategy to drive year-round visitation.
- Promote Halifax as a premier retail shopping destination.
- Expand accommodation options to support tourism growth.

#### **Sports tourism**

- Pursue targeted approach for *modernization of sport venues to support hosting competitive events*

## Peggy's Cove Coastal Region

Peggy's Cove, St. Margaret's Bay, Hubbards

### VISION

To preserve and evolve the Peggy's Cove Coastal Region as a world-class, environmentally responsible coastal destination that celebrates artistic culture, maritime heritage, and the extraordinary natural beauty of Nova Scotia's Atlantic shoreline.

### OVERVIEW

The Peggy's Cove Coastal Region is comprised of many oceanside communities and villages, including St. Margaret's Bay, Prospect, Sambro, and Hubbards. Most prominently, this region is known for its namesake, the famous Peggy's Point Lighthouse, one of the most photographed lighthouses in the world and an iconic Canadian attraction.

Breathtaking ocean views and clear blue waters make the area's numerous coastal hikes some of Halifax's most popular, along with the rails-to-trails system including the Rum Runner Trail that connects the Halifax region to the UNESCO World Heritage community of Lunenburg. Kayak tours, bike rentals, stand-up paddle boarding, and boat tours are popular activities throughout this region.

Long Lake Provincial Park offers exceptional access to water-based recreation and trail networks, all just 15 minutes from downtown Halifax. Further along the coast, the community of Hubbards stands out as a vibrant summer destination, featuring a variety of restaurants, shops, and accommodations clustered around the scenic Hubbards Cove and anchored by the iconic Shore Club, renowned for its lobster suppers and community events. In Sambro, visitors can experience authentic coastal tourism through maritime boat tours, the historic Sambro Island Lighthouse (the oldest operational lighthouse in the Americas), and the white-sand beaches and trails of Crystal Crescent. Prospect complements the region's coastal appeal with its popular hiking routes along Prospect Bay, dramatic granite shorelines, and opportunities for kayaking, wildlife viewing, and immersive nature exploration.

While the iconic Peggy's Cove draws global admiration and significantly benefits Nova Scotia and the Atlantic region's tourism industry, its popularity creates issues for residents during peak travel months. Developing the surrounding area could alleviate pressure on Peggy's Cove, broaden visitor opportunities across seasons, and better highlight the region's unique culture.

### GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

#### PRODUCT & EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The Peggy's Cove Coastal region could benefit from expanding visitor experiences beyond Peggy's Cove to include surrounding trails, communities, and coastal attractions, including island and ocean excursions. Community experience development would include elevating the visibility and accessibility of opportunities for cultural tourism experiences through artist studios, local galleries, and historic sites.



### TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Introducing low-impact transportation options such as seasonal shuttles, EV infrastructure, ride-sharing service availability, and ferry services would help visitors move in and around the region more efficiently.

### TRAIL AND COASTAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Investing in the upkeep and promotion of trails, scenic lookouts, and recreational access points will help to sustainably and protectively maintain access to natural areas.

Adopt planning approaches that protect sensitive coastal areas and manage visitor capacity sustainably.

### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

The Peggy's Cove region will benefit from a number of Halifax-wide initiatives and others that specifically represent these communities. With additional focus on this region, there will be additional opportunities for review and exploration to support the development of tourism and reflect the vision for this part of the Halifax region.

#### **Cultural Tourism Experiences**

- Tell the authentic story of our communities
- Develop a regional events strategy
- Marketing support to elevate community events

#### **Transportation Infrastructure & Services**

- Modernizing motorcoach access & regulation
- Simplified Public Transit Fare Systems for visitors
- Preparation for Cruise growth
- Improved regulations around Short-term Rentals

#### **Trail & Coastal Infrastructure**

- Develop a Corridor Strategy: Rum Runner Trail
- Develop new washrooms

## Eastern HRM

### Eastern Shore and Musquodoboit Valley

#### VISION

To transform Eastern HRM into Halifax's signature rural escape, a destination defined by pristine nature, adventure experiences, Acadian and agricultural heritage, and peaceful coastal living, offering visitors a chance to unplug and reconnect.

#### OVERVIEW

Eastern HRM is where Halifax's natural beauty and rural charm shine brightest. Stretching from the Eastern Shore to the Musquodoboit Valley, the region offers a compelling blend of coastal adventures, Acadian cultural experiences, and agricultural heritage. From the serene shores of Lawrencetown Beach and Martinique Beach to the lush, sprawling landscapes of the Musquodoboit Valley, the area is a haven for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike.

However, despite its inherent appeal, Eastern HRM remains a relatively untapped tourism destination. Infrastructure gaps, limited visitor amenities, and the absence of a cohesive experience strategy have hindered its ability to attract and retain visitors. Connectivity challenges also limit exploration, as transportation services, wayfinding, and accommodation options are less developed than in the Urban Core.

Cultural representation also presents a significant opportunity. The area is home to some of Halifax's most historically rich communities, including the Acadian enclave in Chezzetcook, but these stories remain underleveraged in visitor programming and cultural interpretation.

Seasonality further compounds these challenges. While summer draws visitors to beaches and hiking trails, the potential for shoulder season and winter experiences remains unrealized. Developing strategic programming and year-round attractions could provide significant economic uplift while establishing Eastern HRM as a compelling destination in all seasons.

#### GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

##### CONNECTIVITY AND MOVEMENT

Expanding seasonal transportation options such as shuttles or regional services, improving wayfinding along the Acadian Coastal Scenic Route, and enhancing trail connections to the Wild Islands Coast can significantly enrich the visitor experience.

##### CULTURAL INCLUSION AND STORYTELLING

Eastern HRM holds rich stories of Acadian, Mi'kmaw, and rural farming communities, yet these narratives remain underrepresented. New cultural programming, heritage interpretation initiatives, and partnerships with local artisans and cultural centers could bring these stories to life, creating immersive, place-based experiences that resonate with visitors.

##### EVENING ECONOMY AND RETAIL VITALITY

While daytime activities are well-established, the region's evening economy remains underdeveloped. Initiatives to extend retail hours, introduce pop-up markets featuring local

artisans, and activate key community spaces with nighttime events can help create a more vibrant, inclusive atmosphere after dark.

#### VENUE INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMMING CAPACITY

Eastern HRM lacks sufficient venue infrastructure to support mid-sized events, performances, and community gatherings. Developing versatile event spaces, promoting the Musquodoboit Valley Bicentennial Theatre as a cultural anchor, and establishing seasonal performance schedules can address these gaps.

#### WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION AND MIXED-USE ACTIVATION

The Eastern Shore's extensive coastline presents untapped potential for waterfront activation. Investment in public space improvements, boat launch facilities, and water-based activities such as guided kayaking tours or seafood-themed events can attract more visitors while promoting sustainable tourism practices.

#### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

Strategic initiatives in Eastern HRM will focus on enhancing visitor experiences, leveraging cultural assets, and improving regional connectivity. Key initiatives include:

##### **Adventure and Nature Tourism**

- Wild Islands Coastal Corridor – Guided eco-tours and kayaking expeditions.
- Seasonal Dark Sky Preserve programming – Stargazing and night hiking events.

##### **Cultural and Heritage Interpretation**

- Acadian Coastal Scenic Route – Cultural storytelling and artisan markets.
- Chezzetcook Acadian House Museum – Expanded seasonal programming and interpretive tours.

##### **Agritourism and Culinary Trails**

- Musquodoboit Valley Farm Trail – Seasonal farm tours, local culinary workshops.
- Halifax County Exhibition – Expansion to multi-day, themed events with local vendors.

##### **Experience Packaging and Connectivity**

- Enhanced Signage Program – Multilingual signage highlighting cultural and natural assets.
- Seasonal Transportation Service – Includes options such as regional shuttles and tour-based transport connecting Downtown Halifax with Musquodoboit Harbour and Lawrencetown.
- Preparation for Cruise growth
- Improved regulations around Short-term Rentals

##### **Basic Infrastructure Investment**

- Public washroom facilities along key routes.
- EV charging stations and public boat launches at strategic locations.

## Regional Summary

Halifax is a region of diverse landscapes, each with a distinct identity, cultural heritage, and tourism potential. From the energetic Urban Core to the quiet shores of the Eastern HRM, the region presents a mosaic of experiences that, when strategically aligned, can position Halifax as a cohesive, compelling tourism destination.

### **URBAN CORE: HALIFAX, DARTMOUTH, COLE HARBOUR, AND EASTERN PASSAGE**

At the heart of Halifax lies the Urban Core, a vibrant confluence of culture, history, and waterfront charm. Here, the city's energy is palpable – from the historic streets of Halifax and Dartmouth to the community-oriented districts of Cole Harbour and Eastern Passage. Yet, despite its rich assets, the Urban Core remains a fragmented destination, with disconnected districts and untapped narratives.

Enhanced pedestrian and transit infrastructure, coupled with a unified wayfinding strategy, could bridge these districts, enabling visitors to experience the full spectrum of offerings – from the historic Citadel Hill to the emerging artistic enclaves of Dartmouth. This connectivity would also support waterfront revitalization, transforming underutilized areas such as Africville, McNab's Island, and the Dartmouth waterfront into vibrant cultural and recreational hubs.

The Urban Core quiets during the evening, revealing an under-leveraged opportunity to activate a nighttime economy. Extending retail hours, animating streets with light installations, and creating dynamic evening events can infuse life into the city after dark, attracting residents and visitors year-round.

### **THE GATEWAY: BEDFORD, SACKVILLE, AND THE AIRPORT AREA**

For many visitors, Halifax begins at The Gateway, the welcoming entry point characterized by the Halifax Stanfield International Airport and the suburban communities of Bedford and Sackville. This region serves as a natural bridge, connecting the urban intensity of downtown Halifax with the natural allure of rural Nova Scotia.

While The Gateway is well-positioned to capture stopover traffic and family travelers, it requires strategic investment to elevate its tourism profile. Accommodations are limited, and the region lacks cohesive visitor experiences that tie together its lakes, parks, and community assets. Developing diverse lodging options, including B&Bs, lodges, and short-term rentals, can cater to overflow from the downtown core while creating new avenues for extended stays.

Upcoming transit enhancements, such as the Bedford-Halifax ferry, present an opportunity to integrate suburban attractions with downtown Halifax, creating seamless visitor journeys. Highlighting local stories and events through targeted marketing can transform The Gateway from a transient stop to a remarkable destination.

### **PEGGY'S COVE COASTAL REGION: PEGGY'S COVE, ST. MARGARET'S BAY, AND HUBBARDS**

Moving from the urban to the coastal, the Peggy's Cove Coastal Region exemplifies the rugged maritime beauty that defines Nova Scotia. Renowned globally for its iconic lighthouse, Peggy's Cove draws significant tourist attention – yet this acclaim has also created challenges in managing visitor volume and protecting sensitive coastal environments.

Expanding the narrative beyond Peggy's Cove to include surrounding areas such as St. Margaret's Bay and Hubbards can alleviate pressure on the lighthouse while promoting equally captivating coastal experiences. New programming around the Rum Runner Trail, enhanced transportation options, and curated cultural experiences can disperse visitors more evenly, extending the economic benefits across the region.

Furthermore, the potential to leverage artist studios, local galleries, and maritime heritage sites can position the Peggy's Cove Coastal Region as a hub for cultural and eco-tourism, where visitors can engage with both the natural landscape and the artistic legacy of Nova Scotia.

#### **EASTERN HRM: EASTERN SHORE AND MUSQUODOBOIT VALLEY**

Extending eastward, the Eastern HRM offers a striking contrast to the densely populated Urban Core. Defined by sprawling coastlines, Acadian cultural enclaves, and untamed natural beauty, this region is poised to become Halifax's signature rural escape.

Despite its picturesque landscapes, Eastern HRM remains underdeveloped in terms of tourism infrastructure. Connectivity is limited, with few transportation options and inconsistent signage. Investing in trail networks, seasonal shuttle services, guided access, and improved wayfinding can open up the region to adventure tourism, while new cultural programming can amplify the narratives of Acadian, Mi'kmaq, and rural farming communities.

The Eastern Shore's potential for waterfront activation, including guided kayak tours, seafood events, and stargazing experiences, presents an opportunity to draw visitors year-round, establishing Eastern HRM as a destination for both relaxation and adventure.

#### **A COHESIVE TOURISM STRATEGY FOR HRM**

Halifax's tourism potential lies in the interplay between its distinct regions. By enhancing connectivity, elevating cultural narratives, and strategically investing in infrastructure, the Region can craft a compelling, integrated visitor experience that resonates across seasons. From the vibrant Urban Core to the serene shores and islands of Eastern HRM, Halifax is well-positioned to offer a diverse tourism landscape that invites visitors to explore, experience, and stay.

## Action Plan Initiatives

Each ITMP 2030 tourism action plan initiative is a guide to a specific, clear goal. It spells out what needs to get done, who will, and who will assist. It also describes the rationale explaining how or why the initiative is essential, and how to measure success. Along the way, Discover Halifax is committed to keeping everyone in the loop and thinking ahead about how to assist and keep things on track.

### PREPARE AND MANAGE FOR RESPONSIBLE CRUISE GROWTH

**Lead Organization:** Halifax Port Authority / Discover Halifax

**Partners:** ACCA, Tourism Nova Scotia, BIDs, Build Nova Scotia, various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** Cruise visitation to Halifax has grown dramatically, requiring a balanced approach to manage congestion, protect the resident experience, and optimize visitor outcomes. This initiative seeks to implement data-informed, collaborative strategies to ensure long-term sustainability in this vital tourism channel.

#### DESCRIPTION:

The cruise sector has experienced sustained and significant growth in Halifax over the past five years, with increasing numbers of vessels across various sizes and international brands, choosing the city as a port of call. This rise in demand reflects Halifax's appeal as a destination, its well-situated downtown cruise terminal, and its convenient access to iconic regional attractions such as Peggy's Cove via a robust motorcoach network.

Although year-to-year cruise ship calls vary, Halifax continues to experience long-term growth in cruise visitation. Passenger volumes are projected to increase from 328,000 in 2025 to 348,000 in 2026—a 6% rise—driven by larger vessels and higher average capacities. Compared to pre-pandemic levels, the 2024 record of 376,000 passengers reflects a strong recovery and positions Halifax for sustained growth as a key port in the Canada–New England cruise market.

While this growth offers substantial economic benefits, it also presents complex challenges that must be addressed through a balanced and future-focused strategy. On high-volume days, the simultaneous arrival of multiple ships can lead to congestion in the downtown core, overcrowded attractions, traffic bottlenecks, and logistical complications, particularly when tendering is required. These pressures impact both visitor satisfaction and quality of life for residents.

Local businesses must have the capacity and support to scale in line with projected visitation, particularly in transportation, retail, food service, and attractions. This includes addressing persistent labour shortages, expanding bus and coach infrastructure, ensuring adequate parking and staging areas, and strengthening workforce readiness. Without strategic investment in these enabling systems, the region risks operational strain and missed economic opportunities.

Halifax is committed to managing cruise tourism in a sustainable, inclusive way, and aligned with broader destination priorities. Learning from global peers such as Dubrovnik, Juneau, and Reykjavik—where proactive scheduling caps, timed disembarkation, and infrastructure upgrades have been introduced—Halifax aims to implement data-informed, collaborative strategies that preserve the integrity of both the visitor and resident experience.

Ensuring the long-term health of the cruise sector will require close coordination among the Port of Halifax, Discover Halifax, municipal planners, business associations, and community stakeholders. By investing in smart planning and scalable systems, Halifax can continue to welcome cruise passengers while safeguarding the city’s livability, character, and long-term economic resilience.



#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Develop responsible tourism
- Make it easy to get here and visit

#### **OUTCOME:**

A healthy managed cruise industry that welcomes visitors, provides them with unforgettable experiences, while supporting residents and businesses in the downtown, waterfront, and port facilities.

#### **ACTION:**

- Establishing a Cruise Growth Task Force will bring together tourism, municipal, business, and community stakeholders to coordinate land-based cruise planning, ensuring shore excursions, local infrastructure, and resident concerns are managed collaboratively and sustainably.
- Developing a Cruise Management Framework will provide a strategic plan to guide how Halifax manages onshore cruise impacts—addressing transportation, workforce readiness, visitor flow, and community well-being while aligning with broader tourism and economic goals.

## **Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project**

**Lead Organization:** Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)



**Partners:** Build Nova Scotia, Discover Halifax, Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission, , Port of Halifax, Landowners and Community Interest Groups.

**Overview of Initiative:** HRM is leading the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization (DDWR) Project in response to a recently intensified interest in improving public spaces, mobility connections, potential for cruise facilities and efforts to revitalize the Dartmouth Waterfront as an active, inclusive, and accessible destination for visitors and residents.

### DESCRIPTION

The downtown Dartmouth waterfront is primed for development. With its unique vibe, culture, theatre, and restaurants, Dartmouth has the potential to grow tourism and provide another easily accessible choice: a short ferry ride or drive across the bridge from downtown Halifax.

Should redevelopment of the downtown Dartmouth Waterfront proceed it holds considerable potential to **support the strategic dispersal of visitors throughout the region**. Adding new attractions, amenities, and public spaces could incentivize tourists to explore beyond the traditional tourism centres. In doing so, such a redevelopment could contribute to a more balanced distribution of economic activity, reduce pressure on established visitor areas, and enhance the overall destination experience.

Dartmouth needs more tourism assets, like hotels, a more coordinated approach, better wayfinding and transportation support, and additional infrastructure and tourism assets to realize its full potential. These catalyst assets will come with extra small and medium-sized business investments, adding even more vibrancy to the community. The advancement of this initiative would align with broader efforts to diversify and strengthen the regional tourism offering.

### ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators
- Vibrant and alive, 365
- Develop responsible tourism

### OUTCOME:

A significant additional urban destination with the potential to disperse visitors across the region, provides differentiating experiences for visitors to enjoy the vibe of Dartmouth, the culture, culinary, entertainment, and nightlife scene.

### ACTION:

- Complete the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project as a foundational step toward future redevelopment.
- Leverage the revitalization plan to identify and prioritize tourism assets and experiences, guided by needs analysis, to support tourism growth and regional distribution of visitors.



## Develop a corridor strategy – Rum Runner Trail

**Lead Organization:** Trans Canada Trail

**Partners:** Discover Halifax, volunteer groups, Tourism Nova Scotia, Lunenburg County Communities, Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)

**Overview of Initiative:** The Rum Runner Trail is a 119-kilometre multi-use path stretching from Halifax to Lunenburg. Its proximity to the urban core and the scenic South Shore makes it ideal for hiking and biking tourism. Despite this, key gaps in tourism services—like lodging, dining, and guided tours—limit its potential. With focused development, this corridor can support multi-day visits and attract higher-yield, active travelers.



### DESCRIPTION:

The Halifax region has many developed but underutilized amenities that, with some additional support, would be strong drivers of destination choice for visitors to the region. These assets would also attract higher-yield segments of visitors and provide them with additional activities that may increase their length of stay in the region.

One of these assets is the Rum Runner Trail in Halifax, to the Nova Scotia South Shore region. A gravel trail on former rail beds that spans 119 kilometers from Halifax to Lunenburg, supporting cycling, hiking, and winter activities. The trail in full can take visitors 1 to 3 days to bike and 3 to 4 days to hike.

The Halifax portion of the Rum Runners Trail serves as a key starting point for one of Nova Scotia's most scenic recreational routes. This section features a smooth, crushed gravel surface ideal for walking and cycling, beginning near the Chain of Lakes Trail in Fairview, just west of downtown Halifax. Within Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), the trail spans approximately 52 kilometers,

passing lakes, wetlands, and forests as it moves through communities such as Beechville, Lakeside, and Timberlea. From there, it continues westward toward Tantallon, Hubbards, and eventually Lunenburg. Well-maintained and clearly signed, the Halifax segment not only offers easy access to nature but also strategically promotes active tourism, encouraging visitor dispersal from the urban core to the coastal communities of the South Shore.

The trail currently spans some towns and villages with supporting amenities, including cafes, restaurants, and shops, but with support from tourism, it could be further developed to attract new tourism experience providers and tourism amenities and assets, including more frequent intervals, bike and hiking experience touring providers, additional lodging, or even spa and wellness facilities. Support and prioritization from tourism can attract a new, higher-yield visitor to an active tourism experience while on vacation or business, and the potential to attract events and races using the trail for their competitions.

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators
- Attract Highest Yield and Growth Markets

#### **OUTCOME:**

A fully developed biking and hiking trail experience that supports multiple-day visits, additional tourism amenities, experiences, and lodging along the route.

#### **ACTION:**

- Work with the TransCanada trail (TCT) team to support the Rum Runner trail candidacy to become part of the TCT network.
- Develop a gap analysis of the tourism assets and amenities needed to fully support the trail as a tourism experience to attract entrepreneurs and investors.
- Develop a marketing plan to support visitor attraction

## **Develop a corridor strategy – Wild Islands Coast**

**Lead Organization:** To Be Determined

**Partners:** Discover Halifax, Wild Islands Tourism Advancement Project (WITAP), HRM, community Chamber(s) of Commerce(s), Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, Nova Scotia Nature Trust, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)

**Overview of Initiative:** The Wild Islands, located off Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore, represent a significant ecotourism opportunity. This pristine archipelago needs careful, sustainable development guided by residents, conservationists, and tourism strategists to attract ecologically responsible visitors and support local economic growth through nature-based tourism.

The Wild Islands present a significant opportunity to support the strategic dispersal of visitors throughout the Eastern Shore region. Through the careful development of new attractions,

amenities, and public spaces, the Wild Islands could provide meaningful incentives for visitors to explore beyond our traditional tourism centres. In doing so, the initiative would contribute to a more balanced distribution of economic activity, reduce pressure on established visitor areas, and enhance the overall destination experience. Advancing the Wild Islands aligns with broader efforts to diversify and strengthen the wider regional tourism offering.

#### **DESCRIPTION:**

The Halifax region has many developed but underutilized amenities that with some additional support, would be strong drivers of destination choice for visiting the region as well as additional assets that will attract higher yield segments of visitors and provide them with additional activities that may increase the length of stay in the region.

One of these assets is just over an hour from Halifax, off Nova Scotia’s Eastern Shore, a remote and wild group of islands and headlands with over 7,000 acres of diverse and ecologically rich coastal habitats called the “Wild Islands”.

The archipelago of coastal islands stretches over 30 km along the coast, forming a pristine wilderness within an hour of the hustle and bustle of downtown Halifax.

The Wild Islands are a significant, currently under-recognized asset with high potential for tourism, but only for the most responsible and discerning prospective visitors. Additional assets, experiences, tourism amenities, and infrastructure are required to carefully develop and manage these protected places to support responsible tourism development and growth on the Eastern Shore.



#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Build and enhance Halifax’s key demand generators
- Develop responsible tourism
- Establish, identify, and appoint tourism leadership

**OUTCOME:**

A significant tourism asset and high potential driver of destination choice for high-yield, responsible, ecologically aligned visitors with developed tourism amenities and infrastructure to support visitors, including more choice on transportation, parking, washrooms, trail heads, and places to stay, eat, and guided experiences.

**ACTION:**

- Conduct a comprehensive inventory of existing tourism assets, amenities, and services linked to the Wild Islands and surrounding communities, and identify clear opportunities and gaps for business development, product expansion, and visitor servicing.
- Engage local entrepreneurs, tourism operators, residents, and key stakeholders to build a collaborative, responsible tourism strategy that supports business growth while protecting the natural environment.
- Develop a targeted investment attraction plan to encourage the development of tourism small-medium enterprises (T-SME) in accommodations, guided experiences, transportation services, and visitor amenities.

## Develop a corridor strategy – Acadian Coastal Scenic Route

**Lead Organization:** Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDENE) / L'Acadie de Chezzetcook

**Partners:** HRM, Trans Canada Trail, Discover Halifax, Tourism Nova Scotia

**Overview of Initiative:** Starting from Dartmouth-Cole Harbour and travelling east along the coast to Chezzetcook, key tourism areas include Lawrencetown, Seaforth, Grand Desert, and West Chezzetcook. These communities offer a mix of coastal recreation, Acadian cultural experiences, wildlife attractions, and scenic outdoor activities that together create a rich visitor corridor along the Eastern Shore.

The “Acadian Coastal Scenic Route” corridor provides a mix of cultural and nature-based experiences. It allows visitors to learn about Acadian history and landscapes and offers scenic beaches and salt marshes. By enhancing the tourism amenities and leveraging the cultural heritage of the Chezzetcook Acadian Centre, this initiative seeks to build a compelling regional attraction.

A successful corridor tourism strategy requires the coordinated development of strong, visitor-ready communities along the route. By enhancing local capacity, promoting differentiation, and improving connectivity, communities can collectively strengthen the corridor’s appeal and contribute to sustainable regional tourism growth.

- Building community capacity ensures that each point along the corridor offers compelling attractions, experiences, and visitor services.

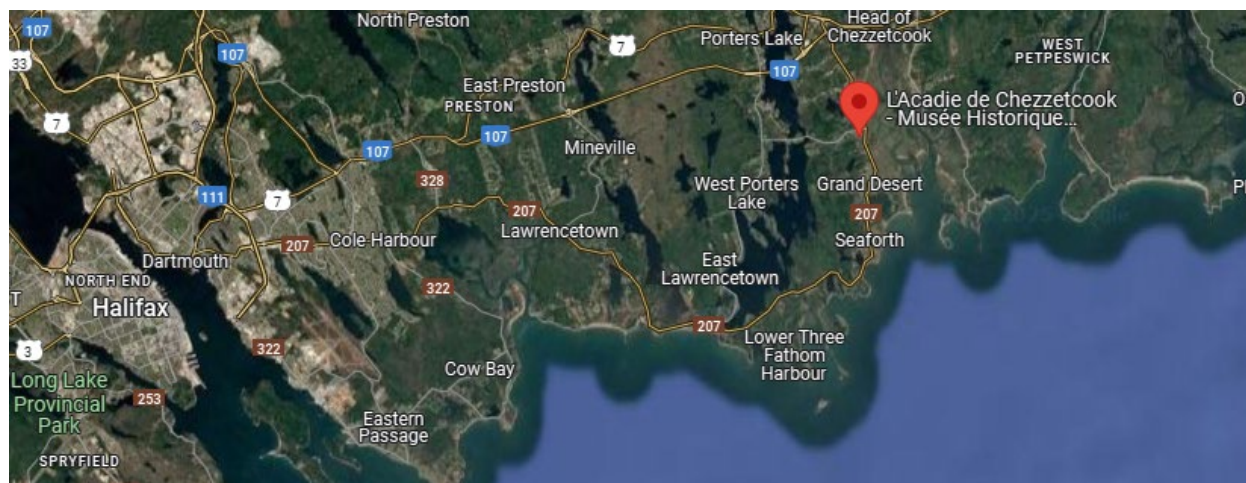


- Differentiated tourism products across communities create a diverse and engaging visitor journey.
- Accessible and cohesive online information facilitates visitor navigation and encourages exploration throughout the corridor.
- Strong local leadership and ownership of tourism initiatives support sustainable development and ensure a welcoming visitor experience.

#### DESCRIPTION:

The Halifax region has many developed but underutilized amenities that, with some additional support, would be strong drivers of destination choice for visitors to the region. These assets would also attract higher-yield segments of visitors and provide them with additional activities that may increase their length of stay in the region.

Another major underutilized tourism asset on the Eastern Shore is the Acadian Coastal Scenic Drive. Just a 20-minute drive from downtown Dartmouth, this region offers visitors breathtaking scenery, surfing opportunities, beautiful beaches, parks, headlands, and salt marshes. Along the way, travelers can explore local communities and villages, immersing themselves in the life of Acadian settlers with visit to L'Acadie de Chezzetcook Musée Historique Acadian and Cultural Centre, located in Head of Chezzetcook.



#### ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators
- Easy to get here and visit

#### OUTCOME:

A drive within close proximity to Halifax that will reward visitors with spectacular nature and cultural experiences, complete with tourism assets and amenities, including places to stay, eat, shop, and visit.

**ACTION:**

- Complete a focused asset and gap analysis for the Cole Harbour to Chezzetcook corridor to identify and develop priority tourism business opportunities, including new accommodations, food services, guided outdoor activities, and cultural experiences.
- Create and implement an investment attraction strategy to support SME development, job creation, and infrastructure growth, leveraging public funding and private sector partnerships to fill critical tourism service gaps.
- Expand and reposition the Acadian House Museum and Chezzetcook Acadian cultural centre as a multi-purpose venue for events, business meetings, and tourism experiences, generating new revenue streams and supporting local employment.

## Establish a National Urban Park in the Halifax Region

**Lead Organization / Partners:** Parks Canada / Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) / Sipekne'katik First Nation / Kwiilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn / Province of Nova Scotia / Nova Scotia Nature Trust

**Stakeholders:** Discover Halifax, Conservation Organizations

**Updated Description & Quality Enhancements:** Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, consisting of a provincially designated wilderness area, Nova Scotia Nature Trust conservation lands, and lands administered by HRM, is being explored as part of Parks Canada's National Urban Parks Program. This initiative will create a nature-rich tourism asset with its wilderness landscape minutes from the city's urban core. By aligning conservation priorities, reconciliation with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, and visitor experience opportunities, Halifax can strengthen its environmental and cultural stewardship and meaningfully contribute to the local economy by expanding its tourism offering.

**DESCRIPTION:**

National Parks in Canada, and particularly those within reasonable proximity to major transportation networks and high-population areas, are strong drivers of destination demand. They can leverage the significant brand awareness and marketing support from Parks Canada and are a significant potential asset for tourism in Halifax.

The opportunity for the Halifax tourism industry is to get engaged at the early stages of Parks Canada's designation process for the Halifax candidate national urban park to ensure that the capital investments, assets, and experiences developed are informed by the visitor economy to optimize the opportunity.

The Halifax region, in collaboration with project Partners has engaged with Parks Canada to assess the feasibility of an area within the HRM region to be designated as a National Urban Park. The Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) area is located on the western edge of the Halifax urban core. It includes Acadian forest, wetlands, and a system of lakes and headwaters, offering wilderness hiking and other recreational opportunities to many residents and visitors.

The steps involved with achieving the National Urban Park designation align with the HRM's ongoing planning to support the establishment of a park in the BMBCL area. Parks Canada announced in the Spring of 2023 that the BMBCL candidate site had met the requirements of the Pre-Feasibility Phase of the national urban park designation process and can begin Planning Phase activities, including the development of a park establishment plan.

As the candidate national urban park remains under serious consideration, it is important that tourism begins to play a role at defining the opportunity to support the Halifax tourism industry.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**OUTCOME:**

A new nature and culture-based "brand name" tourism asset for Halifax with the potential to drive significant visitation to the region.

**ACTION:**

- Complete research and analysis to support the HRM and partners with additional opportunities to inform the National Urban Park designation process.

## Improve Visitor Amenities on Georges Island

**Lead Organization:** Parks Canada

**Partners:** TBD, HRM, Discover Halifax, TBD

**Overview of Initiative:** Since Georges Island was made accessible to the public in 2020, there has been growing interest, particularly from the business community and tourism operators, in exploring how to make hosting events on the Island easier while enhancing the overall guest experience. This presents an opportunity for partners to lead early exploration, grounded in research and community engagement, to assess how thoughtful improvements could support sustained visitation and strengthen Halifax’s appeal as a vibrant cultural and tourism destination.



#### DESCRIPTION:

Georges Island, designated as a National Historic Site, was made accessible to the public in 2020 through collaborative efforts of the federal and provincial governments with the installation of a new wharf. Since then, it has become a valued part of Halifax’s cultural and tourism landscape. With increased access, there is growing interest in exploring how the Island might further support opportunities for public appreciation, storytelling, and cultural connection, while remaining true to its historical and ecological integrity.

Additionally, community members and the business events sector have expressed interest in how the Island could serve as a unique setting for learning, gathering, and celebration. This enthusiasm presents an opportunity to explore the Island’s potential through careful consultation, research, and inclusive dialogue.

As guardians of this nationally significant place, Parks Canada is open to conversations about how such ideas might evolve. This initiative welcomes the leadership of all interested partners in undertaking early-stage exploration and assessment of opportunities.



**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Build and enhance Halifax’s key demand generators
- Easy to get here and visit

**PROPOSED OUTCOME:**

A thoughtfully developed and optimized cultural site in Halifax Harbour that supports a wide range of events and visitor experiences, while safeguarding the heritage values and environmental integrity of Georges Island.

**RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS:**

- Undertake a collaborative feasibility study to explore potential opportunities for Georges Island, ensuring all considerations are grounded in research, respectful of the site’s heritage values, and shaped through inclusive dialogue.

## Create Artistic Nighttime Lighting Installations to Feature Landmarks

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax / HRM

**Partners:** HRM, Downtown business associations, Parks Canada

**Overview of Initiative:** Introducing a landmark architectural or lighting feature presents a unique opportunity to define Halifax’s visual identity and amplify its national and international presence. Inspired by global exemplars, such an installation would reflect the city’s distinctive heritage and contemporary urban character, creating a memorable symbol that resonates with both residents and visitors. By embodying local culture in a striking and accessible form, the feature would serve as a point of civic pride and a recognizable icon of Halifax’s evolving cityscape.

Beyond its symbolic value, this initiative holds considerable potential as a driver of economic and tourism activity. A well-designed lighting or architectural landmark can extend dwell time in the downtown core, boost foot traffic during evening hours, and stimulate surrounding hospitality and retail sectors. In doing so, it supports the growth of Halifax’s night-time economy while contributing to a vibrant, inclusive public realm. Strategically implemented, this project can catalyze further investment, reinforce Halifax’s brand as a dynamic urban destination, and align with broader city-building objectives.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Many destinations invest in installations that highlight cultural features of their cities through the development of architectural features or specialized lighting installations.

Montréal’s Luminothérapie event features interactive light installations, often paired with soundscapes, public art, and projection mapping on nearby architecture. Luminothérapie offers a valuable example for Halifax to consider in developing its nighttime economy and year-round tourism strategy. Tourisme Montréal says events like Luminothérapie have strengthened the city’s position as a four-season destination and helped sustain hotel occupancy during traditionally slower winter months. Furthermore, studies conducted by the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership demonstrate that artistic light-based installations can significantly extend visitor dwell time,

improve perceptions of safety after dark, and enhance the vitality of public spaces for both economic and social benefit. A similar approach in Halifax could support greater evening activity, encourage broader seasonal visitation, and contribute to downtown vibrancy.

These lighting installations help drive visitation, add context and storytelling to the region, and encourage visitors to stay out after dark and enjoy the many nighttime activities Halifax offers, from music venues to bars and restaurants.

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators
- Vibrant and alive, 365

#### **OUTCOME:**

A cultural asset and lighting or architectural feature that will draw visitors and residents of all ages into the Halifax region during the evening and support the nighttime economy of Halifax.



Example of the Sound and Light Show on Canada's Parliament Buildings in Ottawa

#### **ACTION:**

- Research a potential location and installation that aligns with the city's energy, brand and local culture and history
- Potentially develop seed funding and seek partner funding to support the development of a business case and partners.

## Develop a Business Case Framework for a Large-Scale Professional Performing Arts Venue

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax / HRM

**Partners:** Music Nova Scotia, private sector, provincial and federal agencies, professional arts and community organizations

**Overview of Initiative:** As outlined in the 2024 Performing and Visual Arts Venues Study, prepared for the Halifax Regional Municipality by Happy Cities and The Arts Firm Inc., Halifax currently lacks a large-scale professional performing arts and cultural venue capable of supporting homegrown talent, hosting major entertainment events, and accommodating business and arts & cultural gatherings. This proposed initiative envisions a flexible, multi-use facility to strengthen the city's live entertainment ecosystem and attract high-calibre performances and productions throughout the year. Such a venue's development represents a vital cultural investment and a significant economic catalyst for the region. With thoughtful planning, robust community engagement, expert-led design, and a well-structured business case, this project can establish Halifax as a premier destination for performing arts in Atlantic Canada—active and vibrant, 24/7, 365 days a year.

### DESCRIPTION:

The Halifax region has a strategic opportunity to strengthen its tourism economy and cultural sector by developing a centrally located, large-scale **Professional Performing Arts Venue** with a minimum capacity of 1,800 seats. This facility would address a longstanding infrastructure gap, enabling Halifax to compete more effectively with peer cities such as Victoria, Winnipeg, and Quebec City in attracting major national and international touring productions. A fully equipped, modern venue—featuring essential elements such as a fly tower, large stage wings, specialized flooring, and advanced technical systems—would not only serve as a critical cultural asset but also as a powerful driver of year-round economic activity. Centrally locating the venue within the regional centre would enhance Halifax's capacity to function as a vibrant, dynamic destination 365 days a year, supporting broader goals for downtown revitalization, cultural tourism development, and the growth of a sustainable creative workforce.

To advance this vision, it is recommended that preliminary work begin on building a comprehensive business case, securing broad community and stakeholder support, and undertaking detailed site planning and feasibility studies. Engagement activities should highlight the venue's potential to activate Halifax's tourism economy year-round, particularly by creating new demand in traditionally low-traffic seasons and extending visitor stays through a more robust and continuous slate of cultural offerings. Feasibility assessments should examine market demand, economic and tourism impacts, site suitability, and financial sustainability to ensure the project delivers lasting value to both residents and visitors. Through careful planning, expert design, and strategic investment, the development of a Professional Performing Arts Venue can play a central role in establishing Halifax as an active, 24/7, 365-day cultural destination of national prominence.



#### ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators
- Attract highest yield and growth markets
- Vibrant and alive, 365

#### OUTCOME:

A new venue in Halifax that supports the music and entertainment scene in Halifax, helps local talent “graduate” from small venues to mid-sized venues, and adds much-needed off-site venue space for business events and sporting events that support drawing visitors to the region in all seasons.

#### ACTION:

- Undertake preliminary design, site analysis, and capital costing to establish a proposed professional performing arts venue's physical, technical, and financial parameters.
- Develop a comprehensive business case and operating model that outlines projected usage, community impact, governance structure, and long-term financial sustainability.
- Discover Halifax Pursue a diversified funding strategy by engaging senior government partners, private investors, and cultural institutions to support capital and operational requirements.

## Develop a Regional Events Strategy

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax, HRM

**Partners:** Regional and community organizations, event producers, and cultural institutions

**Overview of Initiative:** This strategy introduces a clear, coordinated framework for event development across Halifax. It ensures that cultural and economic values drive event planning and that events contribute to both community life and visitor economy goals.

A formal event strategy enables Halifax to align its investments, infrastructure, and programming efforts across departments, tourism partners, and cultural organizations. Without a guiding strategy, decisions around venue development, funding allocation, or event attraction can remain ad hoc, missing opportunities for collaboration and long-term impact.

#### **DESCRIPTION:**

Halifax is advancing its position as a premier event destination by developing a Regional Event Strategy and Major Event Policy, led by Discover Halifax in partnership with HRM. This coordinated, values-driven framework will improve how events are planned, supported, and delivered across the municipality. It provides a 10-year vision, and a 5-year action plan focused on attracting and supporting events that reflect Halifax's cultural identity, economic priorities, and community values.

The Strategy emphasizes inclusivity, sustainability, and local benefit, ensuring that events contribute meaningfully to the visitor economy and community life. The Major Event Policy introduces clear operational and funding guidelines to enhance transparency and consistency for organizers and partners. These initiatives aim to position Halifax as a vibrant, well-managed, year-round event destination.

Events are proven drivers of tourism, local spending, and economic growth. A strategic, coordinated approach will enable Halifax to target events with the highest return on investment, strengthen year-round visitation, and enhance the city's global competitiveness. Informed by clear market projections, the Strategy will also guide infrastructure and venue planning to ensure future investments meet evolving event demands. Halifax will foster cultural vibrancy, community pride, and sustained economic benefit by promoting inclusive programming and supporting both marquee and community-based events.

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Attract highest yield and growth markets
- Establish, identify, and appoint tourism leadership
- Build and Enhance Key Demand Generators

#### **OUTCOME:**

A coordinated, inclusive, and sustainable event strategy that strengthens Halifax's position as a premier, year-round event destination by aligning investments and policies to maximize cultural, community, and economic benefits.

#### **ACTION:**

- Establish a unified event governance model to coordinate planning and decision-making across HRM, Discover Halifax, and key partners.
- Introduce a clear, tiered funding policy that aligns support with event type, impact, and strategic priorities.



- Develop a 10-year event strategy and 5-year action plan to guide event attraction, infrastructure investment, and year-round tourism growth.

## Pursue Targeted Approach for Modernization of Sport Venues to Support Hosting Competitive Events

**Lead Organization:** HRM

**Partners:** Various provincial sport organizations, regional and community organizations, and Discover Halifax

**Overview of Initiative:** The vision for sport infrastructure renewal aims to develop core facilities that enhance the municipality's ability to host competitive sporting events and support inclusive community recreation.

### DESCRIPTION:

To realize Halifax's potential as a premier destination for competitive sport hosting and to advance equitable community access to high-quality recreation, it is essential to adopt a vision for sport infrastructure renewal that is both aspirational and strategic. Over the next five years, HRM will consider the opportunities for facility development that includes national standard, competition-compliant venues designed to meet the evolving needs of athletes, organizers, and the broader community. This includes a rethinking of how facilities are planned and built, informed by feedback gathered through public engagement. Among the projects identified are a modern aquatic centre capable of hosting high-level competition, a purpose-built field house gymnasium, and a flexible multisport venue that supports a wide range of disciplines and user groups. While not limited to these examples, this approach emphasizes designing with the potential for national or international event hosting in mind, ensuring Halifax is positioned as a leading destination for competitive sport in Canada. These projects are not immediate operational directives but represent high-value aspirations to guide future capital investment, intergovernmental funding alignment, and policy planning to support competitive sport and community wellness.

Firstly, a renewed aquatic centre within HRM designed with a 50-meter, 10-lane competition pool, a supplementary 25-meter warm-up pool, and integrated spectator seating would not only satisfy event-hosting standards (including Canada Games eligibility) but also create a dual-purpose space for high-performance training and inclusive community use. As a flagship facility, it would be foundational to Halifax's positioning in the sport tourism landscape.

Second, the envisioned **field house gymnasium** would provide a dedicated, climate-controlled venue for various gymnasium-based sports, including basketball, volleyball, badminton, and indoor training. Currently, a deficit of multi-court gym space limits both recreational programming and Halifax's capacity to host larger-scale competitive events. A field house with multiple configurable courts, athlete support amenities, and spectator accommodation would resolve this gap while

facilitating consistent programming access for schools, clubs, and regional tournaments. As with other successful jurisdictions, such a facility would act as both a community anchor and a tourism asset.

Third, a **multisport complex** capable of hosting field sports, track events, and adaptable training zones would dramatically expand Halifax's year-round sport-hosting capabilities. Envisioned as a flexible, dome- or arena-style facility, it would meet numerous sports' training and competition needs (e.g., soccer, rugby, athletics) while enhancing indoor recreation offerings for residents during winter and shoulder seasons. Including integrated athlete amenities, modular spectator seating, and accessible design would further support inclusive, broad-based use. As part of a regional strategy, such a facility would offer scheduling continuity, cost efficiencies, and enhanced capacity to bid on multi-sport events.

These three aspirational facilities represent more than capital projects—they signify a commitment to a healthier, more vibrant, and economically resilient Halifax. Through phased planning, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with emerging provincial and national sport hosting priorities, this vision can catalyze transformational change in Halifax's sport and recreation landscape.



#### ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators
- Attract Highest Yield and Growth Markets

**OUTCOME:**

A pool to support a needed community amenity and venue to support aquatic sports tourism that aligns with the national and international standards to host top aquatic events.

**ACTION:**

- Ensure the provision of a new approach that requires consideration of venue specifications that align with national and international technical standards for competitive events, thereby supporting the facility's eligibility to host sports tourism activities.
- Facilitate tourism sector alignment and strategic support to position the facility as a critical asset for attracting and hosting sporting events, which will contribute to Halifax's broader tourism objectives.

## Develop a Large-scale Outdoor Event Space

**Lead Organization:** HRM / Discover Halifax

**Partners:** Various levels of government agencies, regional and local community partners, including private sector stakeholders

**Overview of Initiative:** Halifax lacks an outdoor stage with the infrastructure required to support large-scale events, including a permanent stage, roof structure, electrical services, and washroom facilities. This deficiency imposes significant logistical and financial burdens on event organizers. A new venue with permanent infrastructure would support major cultural events, elevate Halifax's tourism offering, and drive off-peak and multi-day visitation.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Large-scale outdoor event spaces provide destinations with venues to attract the biggest names in music and entertainment. They also allow the tourism industry to attract residents from across the Halifax region and visitors worldwide to experience concerts, festivals, and events.

Halifax lacks a large-scale venue to support facilities for large-scale events. While Halifax does have the Garrison grounds, which host some significant events, there are no facilities or storage areas to support permanent infrastructure like stages and seating. To compete with major tourism-driven concerts and events, Halifax could benefit from a purpose-built, ample outdoor event space.





#### ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators
- Attract highest yield and growth markets
- Vibrant and Alive, 365

#### OUTCOME:

A more competitive asset is required to host major events for Halifax residents and visitors.

#### ACTION:

- Conduct a comprehensive market assessment to evaluate demand and guide the development of a centrally located, large-scale outdoor event venue. This will include business planning to define the operational model, cost estimates, governance structure, and long-term asset management strategy.
- Undertake a detailed feasibility study to assess potential sites, technical and infrastructure requirements, accessibility considerations, and projected economic, tourism, and community impacts, emphasizing opportunities to integrate the project within upcoming municipal capital initiatives.

## Develop a Nationally Recognized Marquee Event

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax, HRM

**Partners:** Various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** Developing a nationally recognized marquee event must be guided by principles that ensure long-term success and meaningful impact. Strategic emphasis should be placed on targeting seasonality, driving increased visitation during historically lower-traffic periods to support a thriving, year-round tourism economy. The event should reinforce the unique cultural identity and strengths of Halifax, offering an authentic expression of the region’s character and enhancing its national and international brand. A commitment to scalable growth is essential, establishing a strong initial foundation while building capacity for expansion and greater influence over time. The initiative must be rooted in broad-based partnership and community engagement, securing the active participation of local businesses, cultural institutions, and residents to foster a sense of collective ownership and pride. Above all, the event must be distinctive and aspirational, offering a memorable experience that is singular to Halifax and positioning the city as a destination of choice for visitors seeking unparalleled cultural and event experiences.

#### **DESCRIPTION:**

Across Canada and beyond, many destinations have developed signature events that drive tourism, extend visitation, and reinforce cultural identity. Ottawa’s Winterlude, created by the National Capital Commission, draws thousands each year to celebrate Canadian winter culture through ice sculptures, skating, and outdoor festivities. In Montreal, the International Jazz Festival has grown into one of the largest events of its kind globally, strengthening the city’s summer tourism economy and cultural brand. Cape Breton’s Celtic Colours International Festival successfully extends the island’s tourism season into autumn, celebrating music, culture, and natural beauty. Similarly, the Shediac Lobster Festival has positioned the town as the “Lobster Capital of the World,” blending culinary tourism with community pride. These Canadian examples demonstrate how targeted event development can transform local identity into global appeal.

The lessons are clear: a flagship event must be strategically timed to maximize tourism and economic impact, whether by strengthening off-peak seasons or amplifying existing strengths. It should celebrate the destination’s distinctive character, be designed for scalable growth, and engage the community and key partners to ensure authenticity and broad support. Above all, a successful event must deliver a memorable, place-specific experience that reinforces the destination’s brand and drives sustained tourism growth.

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Build and enhance Halifax’s key demand generators

#### **OUTCOME:**

A major marquee event for Halifax that is aligned with the Halifax brand and differentiates from other major events to help differentiate Halifax and draw visitors and residents.

#### **ACTION:**

- Develop a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria—including anticipated economic impact, alignment with Halifax’s cultural identity, capacity to drive year-round tourism, and potential for sustainable growth—to guide the identification of a strategically significant recurring major event.

- Establish a formal assessment framework to determine whether the identified event should enhance an existing initiative or launch a new one, ensuring alignment with Halifax's broader economic, cultural, and tourism objectives.

## Develop the Africville Marina and UNESCO site

**Lead Organization:** Africville Museum and Africville Heritage Trust

**Partners:** Discover Halifax, Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (CCTH), HRM, Canadian Heritage, and Community partners.

**Overview of Initiative:** The Africville Museum and the Africville Heritage Trust are dedicated to preserving and honoring the legacy of Africville, the historic Black community in Halifax, displaced in the 1960s. The Museum, located at Africville Park in a replica of the Seaview United Baptist Church, shares the stories and contributions of Africville's residents. The Trust, established following the 2010 Africville Apology, oversees the Museum's operations and the stewardship of Africville's legacy, with governance and decision-making led by former residents and their descendants. Africville's international significance has been recognized through its designation as a site of memory by the UNESCO Slave Route Project, ensuring its story inspires respect, resilience, and remembrance.

Africville holds deep cultural significance, and enhancing this site, including the potential development of a marina, would amplify its tourism draw, support cultural storytelling, and strengthen African Nova Scotian heritage tourism in Halifax.

### DESCRIPTION:

UNESCO designations are globally recognized markers of cultural and historical significance. Sites acknowledged through the UNESCO World Heritage and Memory of the World programs often become focal points for cultural tourism, drawing visitors seeking deeper understanding through meaningful travel experiences. **Africville**, a former Black community in Halifax, has been designated as Canada's first UNESCO-recognized Place of History and Memory linked to Enslavement and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. This designation honours the community's profound cultural legacy, its



resilience in the face of systemic racism, and the enduring contributions of its former residents and descendants.

While the UNESCO designation does not prescribe specific future use of the surrounding area, it may influence how future initiatives or developments near the site are considered. It is essential to recognize that **any decisions related to Africville must be led by the Africville community**, with governance and direction resting with former residents and their descendants. Respecting this leadership is fundamental to ensuring that the site's commemoration, interpretation, and future stewardship remain grounded in the community's values, vision, and lived experience.

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators
- Develop responsible tourism

#### **OUTCOME:**

An elevation of a significant cultural and tourism asset and centre for education supports one of Canada's most important cultural facilities, and stories of African Nova Scotian resilience support a driver of tourism demand and experience.

#### **ACTION:**

- Offer technical, planning, and advisory support, including assistance with funding applications and grant navigation, strictly upon request and under the direction of the Africville Heritage Trust and community leadership.
- Collaborate with the Africville Heritage Trust to promote Africville's cultural and historical significance within broader tourism initiatives, ensuring that all messaging, interpretation, and public representation are determined and approved by the community.
- When invited, assist in building organizational capacity through training, knowledge-sharing, and connections to relevant heritage, tourism, and funding networks, fully respecting the leadership and governance of the Africville community.

## **Provide Marketing Support to Elevate Community Events into Tourism Drivers**

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax

**Partners:** Various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** This initiative supports high-potential, community-led events by providing targeted marketing and packaging assistance to enhance their appeal to out-of-town visitors and drive incremental tourism, particularly during shoulder and off-peak seasons.



**DESCRIPTION:**

This initiative recognizes that many events in the Halifax region, especially those organized by local community groups, have untapped potential to attract tourists but are currently limited by minimal budgets, volunteer-led operations, and a lack of marketing expertise. While these events are often created for local enjoyment, their content, uniqueness, or cultural relevance could appeal to visitors outside the region and influence their decision to travel to Halifax.

The challenge is that many event organizers lack the financial resources or knowledge to effectively promote their events beyond the local audience or package them with other tourism offerings such as hotels, attractions, or dining experiences. As a result, the tourism value of these events is not fully realized.

This initiative proposes identifying community-led events with high tourism potential and providing targeted support, especially in marketing and tourism packaging (e.g., event + hotel bundles, cross-promotion with attractions). The goal is to transform select events into tourism drivers, encouraging travel to Halifax, particularly during shoulder seasons (spring and fall) and off-peak periods when visitor numbers and hotel occupancy are typically lower. The initiative seeks to increase overnight stays, stimulate local economic activity, and build a more resilient, year-round tourism economy.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators
- Vibrant and Alive, 365

**OUTCOME:**

Increase visitation to the Halifax region through packaging, promoting, and marketing events as the primary driver of the visit.

**ACTION:**

- Develop a framework of criteria to evaluate those events that are deemed to have the highest potential to attract overnight visitors
- Identify a pool of funds to support marketing of these events
- Develop packaging and marketing plans to support

## Tourism-Driven Beverage Service & Licensing Reform

**Lead Organization:** Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia (RANS)

**Partners:** Discover Halifax, other Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** Nova Scotia has made meaningful progress in modernizing its liquor regulations, but further reforms could significantly enhance the province's competitiveness as a culinary and nightlife destination. The ongoing collaboration between industry and the provincial alcohol regulatory leadership provides a foundation for continued improvement.

By extending service hours, simplifying event permitting, supporting beverage tourism, and implementing thoughtful expansion of retail options, Nova Scotia can create a more dynamic and visitor-friendly hospitality scene while maintaining appropriate safeguards for public health and safety. These changes would benefit tourists, create new opportunities for local entrepreneurs, and enhance the quality of life for residents.

As the province contemplates additional regulatory updates, maintaining a balance between business flexibility and responsible service should remain a priority. The success of recent changes demonstrates that thoughtful modernization can achieve both economic and public safety goals.

#### **DESCRIPTION:**

Nova Scotia's wine and craft brewing sectors offer significant tourism potential. Wine visitors stay longer and spend more than average tourists, while craft beer sales have grown 136% since 2018 despite national declines, highlighting strong sectoral momentum. Continued modernization of liquor regulations can unlock further economic and tourism benefits.

While progress has been made, particularly through collaboration between industry and government, opportunities remain to improve regulatory efficiency. The current special occasion licensing system has multiple categories, complex approval pathways, and lengthy filing timelines, creating unnecessary barriers to hosting dynamic, community-based events.

By modernizing its approach, Nova Scotia can enhance its reputation as a culinary and nightlife destination, foster local entrepreneurship, and deliver broad-based economic and quality-of-life benefits. Continued regulatory evolution—grounded in stakeholder input—will ensure a balanced approach supporting public safety and business innovation.

Halifax is a thriving tourism destination with incredible potential, but regulations are holding the industry back. In today's fast-evolving and very competitive travel landscape, policies need to reflect the expectations of modern visitors and the needs of businesses working to deliver exceptional experiences while staying true to their original intent and not compromising safety.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Make it easy to get here and visit
- Develop Responsible Tourism

**OUTCOME:**

A more competitive environment for restaurants, bars, and events to support the Halifax nighttime economy and improve its atmosphere.

**ACTION:**

Undertake a series of case studies examining policy approaches in comparable jurisdictions to support advocacy efforts by stakeholders in Halifax's restaurant and events sectors. The studies will provide evidence-based insights into regulatory practices that can inform policy reform in the following areas:

- Analyze models that enable extended alcohol service to support a more dynamic, flexible, and competitive nightlife economy.
- Examine administrative innovations in event regulation that reduce barriers to entry for festivals, concerts, and seasonal activations, thereby fostering a more vibrant urban cultural landscape.
- Investigate frameworks that allow all-ages attendance at events where alcohol is present, balancing public safety with broader access to cultural and community programming.

- Explore policies that support craft breweries, distilleries, and wineries through expanded licensing, promotional opportunities, and reduced regulatory friction, positioning Halifax as a leading destination for beverage tourism.
- Identify best practices for enhancing event-based alcohol service, including allowances for batch cocktails, welcome drinks for tour operators, and alcohol-related street closures for public festivals.

## Create a Visitor-Focused Culinary Learning Experience

**Lead Organization:** Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia (RANS)

**Partners:** Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), Discover Halifax, private sector, community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** A cookery school dedicated to Atlantic Canadian cuisine would serve as both an attraction and an economic catalyst. This initiative would offer immersive culinary experiences to position Halifax as a top-tier food tourism destination while supporting local producers, chefs, and entrepreneurs.

### DESCRIPTION:

Cookery School offers a variety of courses for amateur cooks, ranging from introductory one-day classes to longer, more in-depth certificate programs. They cater to beginners and experienced amateur cooks, providing hands-on experience and expert guidance.

Developing a cookery school in Halifax represents a strategic opportunity to diversify the city's tourism offering and stimulate local economic growth. Culinary tourism is a growing global trend, with increasing demand for authentic, place-based experiences. A cookery school would provide visitors with immersive opportunities to engage with Atlantic Canadian cuisine, such as seafood traditions, Acadian influences, and Mi'kmaq foodways, enriching the visitor experience, extending the length of stay, and encouraging repeat visitation.

Economically, the school could generate direct and indirect benefits, including job creation, increased local procurement, and expanded visitor spending across accommodation, dining, and retail sectors. It would also offer professional opportunities for local chefs, artisans, and food producers, and serve as a venue for group tourism and corporate programming.

From a destination branding perspective, a cookery school would strengthen Halifax's culinary identity and enhance its appeal as a year-round tourism destination. It would provide a platform for storytelling, media promotion, and alignment with global tourism values such as sustainability and cultural authenticity.

To attract private sector investment, the initiative must be underpinned by robust market research. This includes assessing demand, identifying key visitor segments, and evaluating competitive positioning within the broader culinary tourism landscape. Market research can also reduce



investment risk by offering clear data on pricing models, visitor interest, and revenue potential, while supporting alignment between the cookery school concept and existing tourism infrastructure.

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

#### **OUTCOME:**

A significant local and tourism asset for Halifax that will simultaneously attract visitors and help brand the region as an important culinary destination.



#### **ACTION:**

To advance this opportunity, a targeted market research initiative should be undertaken to validate demand and guide business development. Recommended steps include:

- Demand forecasting and scenario modeling to evaluate financial viability and investment potential
- Visitor and resident surveys to assess interest, preferred offerings, and pricing tolerance
- Stakeholder interviews with local chefs, producers, tour operators, and hospitality businesses
- Benchmarking analysis of similar cookery schools in comparable tourism destinations

This evidence base will support informed decision-making, encourage private sector engagement, and ensure that any proposed cookery school responds to market conditions and community values. These steps allow Halifax to position itself for sustainable, experience-based tourism growth and continued leadership in Atlantic Canada's culinary sector.

## Position Halifax as a Shopping Destination

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax

**Partners:** Various regional and community partners, including Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), major retail destinations

**Overview of Initiative:** Halifax's unique mix of boutiques, malls, and specialty shops offers a competitive shopping experience in Atlantic Canada. This initiative seeks to position Halifax as a retail tourism hub through targeted marketing campaigns and partnerships with key retail stakeholders.

### DESCRIPTION:

Shopping is widely recognized as a key component of the tourist experience and a significant factor in destination choice. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2014) notes that shopping ranks among the top activities for urban travellers worldwide. Similarly, the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC, 2018) reports that most tourists engage in retail activity, with shopping-related expenditures making up a substantial portion of total tourism spending.

Halifax possesses a competitive advantage within the Atlantic Canadian region due to its concentration of retail offerings unavailable in nearby cities or provinces within an eight-hour travel radius. These include nationally branded outlets, urban malls, and locally owned specialty shops that enhance the visitor experience.

This initiative will capitalize on those assets by:

- Integrating retail themes into destination marketing campaigns
- Promoting co-branded partnerships between retailers and tourism operators
- Developing shopping-related visitor packages and itineraries
- Collecting and analyzing retail spending data as part of tourism impact studies

By strategically positioning retail within the broader visitor economy, Halifax can attract a wider range of domestic and regional tourists, boost economic activity, and strengthen its identity as a vibrant urban destination.

### ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators
- Attract highest yield and growth markets

### OUTCOME:

An expanded range of destination choice factors for Halifax, contributing to increased year-round visitation, especially during traditionally lower-demand winter and shoulder seasons.

### ACTION:

- Engage the top 4-5 Halifax retailers, shopping mall REITS with partnership opportunities and co-investment opportunities to position Halifax as a retail tourism destination

- Develop special tourism programming and campaigns to attract visitors to shop in the region.

## Enhance Visitor Engagement through AI and Seamless Booking Technologies

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax

**Partners:** Various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** Adopting AI-driven trip planners and one-click reservation systems can elevate Halifax's tourism experience, offering frictionless planning and booking while positioning the region as a tech-forward, competitive destination. Emerging digital tools such as AI trip planners and one-click reservation systems can transform visitors' engagement with Halifax. By adopting cutting-edge technologies, the region can provide seamless booking experiences and stand out in a competitive tourism market.

### DESCRIPTION:

The integration of emerging digital technologies, such as AI-powered trip planners and one-click reservation systems, presents a significant opportunity for Halifax to elevate its tourism offering. These tools enable personalized, seamless travel experiences by simplifying itinerary planning, optimizing booking processes, and improving visitor engagement across digital platforms.

As consumer expectations continue to shift toward convenience and personalization, destinations that adopt such innovations are better positioned to compete in the evolving tourism landscape. For instance, **Destination Vancouver** has introduced AI-enhanced content delivery through its digital channels, offering customized recommendations based on user preferences and real-time data. Similarly, **Tourism Calgary** has incorporated intelligent trip planning features into its mobile platforms, allowing visitors to build tailored itineraries with direct booking integration for hotels, events, and experiences.

These examples illustrate how Canadian destinations are already capitalizing on technology to increase visitor satisfaction and market reach. By following suit, Halifax can modernize its digital infrastructure to deliver a frictionless and engaging experience that begins long before a visitor arrives. This not only enhances the region's reputation as a tech-forward destination but also supports broader tourism growth by attracting digitally savvy travelers and improving operational efficiency for local tourism partners.

Investing in these technologies will enable Halifax to stay competitive, foster deeper visitor connections, and position itself as a leader in digital tourism innovation within Atlantic Canada and beyond.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Make it easy to get here and visit

**OUTCOME:**

A more competitive destination supported by seamless transactions by prospective visitors, leveraging state-of-the-art technologies.

**ACTION:**

- Explore new AI tools and platforms available
- Develop a business case to adopt one of these tools or consider developing our own tool
- Incorporate these tools into the Discover Halifax website, social and digital media platforms.

## Develop a Balanced Approach to Short-Term Rental Regulation

**Lead Organization:** HRM / Province of Nova Scotia

**Partners:** Discover Halifax, Short-Term Rental Association of Nova Scotia (STRANS)

**Overview of Initiative:** Short-term rentals (STRs) contribute significantly to Halifax's accommodation supply but must be balanced with community needs. This initiative supports a regulatory framework that is fair and transparent and supports both visitor demand and housing stability.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Short-term rentals (STRs) offer diverse and flexible accommodations, a key factor in attracting modern travelers. From families seeking home-style stays to remote workers choosing Halifax as a temporary base, STRs play an essential role in tourism. However, inconsistent regulations have led to housing concerns, taxation disparities, and operational uncertainties for hosts and businesses.

A well-regulated STR market will benefit visitors, local hosts, and the broader community, ensuring accommodations remain diverse, safe, and competitive.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Develop Responsible Tourism
- Make it easy to get here and visit

**OUTCOME:** More accommodation and more choice of accommodation during the peak season and in rural and remote areas of the Halifax region as they develop into tourism destinations.

**ACTION:**

- Review current policies and licensing and identify where these are challenging, ambiguous, or dissuading adding short-term rentals to the inventory
- Establish clear, fair licensing and taxation policies to ensure STRs contribute equitably to the tourism economy.
- Implement balanced zoning rules that protect housing availability while allowing responsible short-term rentals.
- Enforce safety and quality standards to enhance the visitor experience.



## Simplified Public Transit Fare Systems for Visitors

**Lead Organization:** HRM

**Partners:** Halifax Transit, Discover Halifax, various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** To create a more welcoming and accessible transit experience, fare systems must be intuitive, transparent, and flexible for first-time users. Visitors benefit greatly from flat-rate, unlimited-use passes that remove the guesswork from navigating fare zones or calculating costs. A simplified fare experience improves satisfaction and encourages greater use of public transit as a primary mode of discovery.

### DESCRIPTION:

Visitors often prefer public transit as a practical and affordable way to explore the city, particularly those without access to a personal or rental vehicle. At the same time, those who do drive may encounter confusion around parking regulations and limited guidance on where and how to park.

While Halifax has made meaningful strides in transit accessibility, some visitors' perceptions of limited convenience persist. One common concern is the requirement to download a specific mobile app to pay fares, an action that short-stay travelers may hesitate to take. However, many visitors use the app successfully, and feedback from those who downloaded it is generally favorable. Moreover, a new and unique airport bus ticket is now available at the ground transportation desk at Halifax Stanfield International Airport, and the municipality has been actively collaborating with the airport authority to improve the end-to-end visitor transit experience, reducing friction associated with cash fares.

Still, the most frequently cited gap is the lack of a contactless "tap" payment option directly on buses, a convenience visitors increasingly expect based on experiences in other cities. Work is underway to address this gap and modernize fare collection. In the meantime, options like mobile ticketing and pre-purchase at key locations (airports, hotels, transit hubs) are helping to reduce barriers.

### ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:

- Make it easy to get here and visit

### OUTCOME:

The goal of providing a near-seamless travel experience while in the city is to encourage public transportation to see other parts of the Halifax region in an efficient and environmentally friendly way.

**ACTION:**

- Conduct comparative research on how similar city destinations have successfully enhanced the visitor experience through public transit improvements, with a focus on payment systems, wayfinding, and service design.
- Establish a collaborative relationship with public transit and transportation authorities to offer tourism-sector insights and support the co-development of visitor-friendly transit solutions.

## Modernizing Regulation to Support Motorcoach Tourism Growth

**Lead Organization:** TBD

**Partners:** Discover Halifax, Atlantic Canada Cruise Association (ACCA), Motor Coach Operators

**Overview of Initiative:** Modernizing Halifax’s motorcoach regulations will improve access for group travel, while enabling greater participation by small and mid-sized operators. A more flexible and coordinated approach will enhance connectivity across urban and rural destinations, supporting a more inclusive and resilient tourism economy.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Group travel plays a vital role in Halifax’s tourism economy, serving as a primary mode of transportation for motorcoach tours, conference delegates, and cruise ship passengers. This sector is supported by several long-standing, high-capacity operators whose ongoing success is essential to maintaining Halifax’s competitiveness as a destination for large-scale, organized travel.

However, current motorcoach regulations create significant inefficiencies affecting established companies and potential new entrants. Challenges include limited designated parking and staging areas, complex and time-consuming permitting processes, and inflexible routing policies, such as vehicle requirements to exit and re-enter Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) boundaries under certain conditions. These barriers restrict operational efficiency and limit the city’s ability to respond to the growing demand for group travel infrastructure.

A reformed regulatory environment would address these constraints by facilitating more streamlined licensing procedures, optimizing vehicle access points, and allowing more adaptable routing, benefiting incumbent providers and smaller, emerging operators. Importantly, modernized regulations would protect the viability of established companies while encouraging innovation, diversification, and the creation of bundled tourism experiences.

These reforms would also enable stronger links between motorcoach operators and rural, cultural, or niche attractions, expanding the geographic spread of tourism activity. By fostering sector-wide collaboration and ensuring that infrastructure investments serve a wider range of market participants, Halifax can create a more competitive, resilient, and inclusive motorcoach tourism sector that works for legacy businesses and future players.



#### ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:

- Make it easy to get here and visit

#### OUTCOME:

More coach operators are needed to serve visitors, particularly during peak periods of the year, and more efficient use of coach assets is required to transport visitors.

#### ACTION:

- Review the current policies for coach operations and compare them to other competitor destinations to determine any inefficiencies or challenges
- Introduce dedicated motor coach drop-off and pick-up zones to improve accessibility for tour groups.
- Simplify permit processes to reduce unnecessary red tape for tour operators.
- Enhance wayfinding and signage to support smooth navigation.

## Tell The Authentic Story of Our People & Communities

**Lead Organization:** Discover Halifax

**Partners:** Various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** Halifax's diverse people and communities, Mi'kmaq, Acadian, African Nova Scotian, and newcomers, offer powerful cultural narratives. This initiative will amplify these stories through inclusive content development, creating a more authentic and responsible destination brand.



**DESCRIPTION:**

There is an opportunity to tell a more authentic story of Halifax from multiple points of view. Indigenous people, settlers, Acadians, Black Nova Scotians, and new Canadians all have perspectives on the culture and history of the Halifax region.

Our region presents an exceptional cultural environment characterized by the convergence of the distinct histories and ongoing traditions of the Mi'kmaq people, Acadian, and African Nova Scotian communities. The city represents an intersection of longstanding Indigenous heritage, the cultural perseverance of Acadian settlers, and the historical significance of Canada's largest and oldest African Nova Scotian population. Each group contributes significantly to the region's complex and multifaceted cultural identity.

Visitors to Halifax can engage directly with the ancestral lands of the Mi'kmaq, understand the historical resilience and contemporary cultural practices of Acadian communities, and explore sites deeply tied to the heritage of African Nova Scotians. This integration of cultures is evident throughout the city's museums, festivals, historical landmarks, and daily cultural interactions, providing visitors with insightful, educational, and culturally enriching experiences.

Research indicates a strong correlation between visitor satisfaction with cultural and heritage experiences and subsequent tourist loyalty. This loyalty encompasses both intentions to revisit the destination and to recommend it to others. Several key factors have been identified:

Visitors who perceive cultural heritage experiences as high-quality and authentic are more inclined to return and advocate for the destination. The distinctiveness and depth of cultural offerings, positive visitor experiences, and established trust in the destination greatly enhance the probability of repeat visitation.

Active engagement in cultural events, rituals, festivals, and heritage-focused activities fosters deeper emotional and cultural connections among visitors, increasing the likelihood of return visits. We will develop a more fulsome story of our people and culture with our partners.



#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Develop responsible tourism

#### **OUTCOME:**

A more authentic narrative of Halifax and an offering of experiences that cannot be found elsewhere position our destination as one travellers want to return to and share with others, maximizing both social and economic tourism benefits.

#### **ACTION:**

- Develop a cultural heritage authenticity framework to assess and enhance the quality, inclusiveness, and emotional impact of cultural experiences, fostering visitor satisfaction, trust, and destination loyalty.
- Partner with Mi'kmaq, Acadian, African Nova Scotian, and newcomer communities to co-create interpretive materials and cultural narratives that reflect diverse perspectives through community-led content.
- Expand the integration of inclusive cultural programming across the tourism sector, such as festivals, guided tours, and heritage experiences, to facilitate deeper visitor engagement and support year-round visitation.

## Develop New Washrooms

**Lead Organization:** HRM / Discover Halifax

**Partners:** Various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** Access to clean and conveniently located washrooms is foundational to a positive visitor experience. This initiative will assess current facilities, identify service gaps, and provide actionable recommendations to ensure all regions of Halifax are visitor-ready.

### DESCRIPTION:

With population growth and high visitor volumes, Halifax already faces an urgent need for modern, accessible, and well-maintained public washrooms. These amenities are fundamental to the visitor experience, directly influencing dwell time, satisfaction, and perceptions of Halifax as a world-class destination.

Comparable North American cities offer valuable lessons. Stratford, Ontario expanded and winterized facilities to support year-round tourism. Edmonton's Borden Park Pavilion integrated accessible washrooms into a high-use public space with strong design elements. Portland, Maine, developed a downtown Public Restroom Master Plan to ensure safe, strategically located infrastructure. Newport, Rhode Island, is facing seasonal surges, so it upgraded its facilities to reduce pressure on businesses and meet visitor expectations.

These examples demonstrate that public washrooms are not secondary but essential infrastructure. Well-planned facilities extend visits, improve flow, support repeat tourism, and benefit residents by enhancing hygiene and accessibility.

Halifax must now integrate public washroom infrastructure into its broader destination development strategy. A regional audit is needed to identify service gaps, particularly in rural or underserved areas, and to guide investment. Visitor surveys consistently rank washroom access among top concerns. In Halifax, insufficient public facilities undermine the visitor experience and shift the burden to private businesses. A coordinated plan with priority locations, sustainable funding, and reliable maintenance is critical to delivering a more equitable and visitor-ready region.



#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Make it easy to get here and visit

#### **OUTCOME:**

Access to clean and safe public washrooms throughout the Halifax region

#### **ACTION:**

- Map and assess existing public washroom facilities to identify gaps, usage trends, and priority locations based on tourism demand.
- Begin phased implementation of priority sites with confirmed locations, funding, and design plans focused on high-traffic and cruise-sensitive areas.
- Develop a sustainable operations model with clear maintenance standards, monitoring systems, and public-private partnership opportunities.

## **Establishing Governance for the Music and Tourism Economy**

**Lead Organization:** Music NS

**Partners:** Discover Halifax, HRM, Tourism Nova Scotia, private sector (venue operators, event producers), various regional and community partners

**Overview of Initiative:** Establish a permanent governance structure to coordinate, champion, and grow Halifax's music sector, ensuring it is effectively integrated into tourism, cultural, economic, and placemaking strategies.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Drawing on the Halifax Music Sector Growth Strategy, this initiative focuses on building the leadership, frameworks, and collaboration mechanisms necessary for the sector's sustainable and inclusive development.

Formation of a Halifax Music Governance Council, a representative body composed of key stakeholders from across the music, tourism, municipal, and cultural sectors, will be established to provide strategic oversight, advise municipal leadership, monitor sector development, and promote cross-sector collaboration.

Develop a plan to integrate Halifax and Nova Scotia music into all aspects of tourism, supporting festivals, entertainment, and events while supporting Music Nova Scotia's strategic priorities.

Formalized partnerships will be pursued to integrate music sector development with broader urban, tourism, education, and economic strategies, enhancing the sector's role in placemaking, workforce development, and destination competitiveness.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Attract highest yield and growth markets
- Establish, Identify, and appoint Tourism Leadership

**OUTCOME**

A resilient, well-governed music sector embedded within Halifax's tourism and economic development ecosystem—driving growth, strengthening community ties, and reinforcing Halifax's brand as a dynamic cultural destination.

**ACTION:**

- Form and operationalize the Halifax Music Governance Council, composed of representatives from the music industry, tourism bodies, municipal departments, event producers, and community leaders, with a defined mandate, terms of reference, and reporting structure.
- Design and implement an intersectoral integration plan that outlines how Halifax and Nova Scotia's music assets will be embedded into tourism programming, event strategies, economic development initiatives, and cultural policy, complete with timelines, responsibilities, and measurable performance indicators.
- Conduct targeted stakeholder consultations with municipal (HRM) and provincial (Tourism Nova Scotia, Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage) partners, ensuring the Council's work aligns with public sector priorities and planning frameworks, including the Cultural Strategy and Destination Development Plans.

## Strengthening Global Connections: Halifax's Air Access Investment Plan

**Lead Organization:** Halifax International Airport Authority (HIAA)

**Partners:** HRM, Province of Nova Scotia (departments of Economic Development, CCTH, and Public Works), ACOA

**Overview of Initiative:** Halifax Stanfield International Airport (YHZ) is Atlantic Canada's leading air gateway and a key economic driver for Nova Scotia. With over \$4.2 billion in economic output and \$1.4 billion in tourism spending generated in 2023 alone, the airport plays a vital role in facilitating trade, tourism, and employment. Strategic investment in air access is now required to sustain this growth and ensure long-term competitiveness in global aviation markets.

### DESCRIPTION

Halifax Stanfield International Airport (YHZ) serves as the region's premier international air hub, supporting more than 24,500 jobs and facilitating over \$4.2 billion in economic output in 2023. Its influence extends well beyond passenger travel, with high-value seafood exports and trade activity playing a major role in Nova Scotia's broader economic success. In the same year, the airport generated \$1.4 billion in tourism spending, underscoring its importance to the province's visitor economy.

Significant infrastructure upgrades are currently underway, including the new International Connections Facility and long-term terminal expansions. These developments position Halifax to meet future air travel demand and strengthen its role in both tourism and trade. By 2025, Halifax Stanfield anticipates record levels of transborder and international airline seat capacity, with 11 European destinations accessible via non-stop service.

This growth trajectory is made possible by the provincial Air Access Fund, which allows Halifax International Airport Authority (HIAA) to share risk with airline partners when launching new routes and promoting them in key inbound markets. However, all funds in the current program must be committed by 2028, after which no new agreements can be signed using this mechanism.

### OUTCOME:

Secure new air access funding by 2028 to sustain Halifax Stanfield's growth through expanded U.S. and European connections, boosting tourism, trade, and infrastructure ROI.

### ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:

- Make it easy to get here and visit
- Attract Highest Yield and Growth Markets

### ACTION:

- Convene community leaders, major employers, economic development agencies, and municipal/provincial officials to champion coordinated, year-round advocacy for strategic air access investment.



- Pursue funding partnerships with the Province of Nova Scotia (e.g., Air Access Fund), ACOA, and relevant federal tourism and infrastructure programs to secure long-term financial commitments aligned with airport growth plans.
- Prioritize funding to attract and sustain new direct flights to top priority markets, focusing on key U.S. hubs, European gateways, and high-value cargo destinations, fully utilizing Halifax Stanfield's upgraded infrastructure.
- Strengthen Halifax's role as a central air cargo hub by supporting new routes that facilitate the export of seafood, agri-food, and other high-value goods critical to Nova Scotia's economy.
- Build public and political support for air access investment by highlighting the broad economic benefits, including job creation, tourism growth, export opportunities, and enhanced community connectivity.

## Strategic Investment in Event Tourism Infrastructure

**Lead Organization:** HRM, Events East Group

**Partners:** Province of Nova Scotia (departments of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, and Public Works), ACOA

**Overview of Initiative:** The Scotiabank Centre is Atlantic Canada's leading sports and entertainment venue and a cornerstone of Halifax's downtown economy. To sustain its role as a tourism and cultural anchor, Halifax must develop a comprehensive capital investment strategy to modernize the facility and maintain its competitiveness in the face of aging infrastructure and evolving industry trends.

### DESCRIPTION

Scotiabank Centre is recognized as the region's premier venue for major sporting and entertainment events, hosting up to 500,000 attendees and generating \$40M annually in economic impact. As a central pillar of Halifax's downtown economy, the facility significantly contributes to tourism and urban vibrancy. Originally constructed in 1978, the venue is nearing its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To maintain its competitive position and continue to meet the needs of organizers, fans and the community, a comprehensive approach to revitalizing the venue is needed.

The potential investment in revitalizing Scotiabank Centre would enhance the attendee experience, and ensure the venue meets contemporary standards for accessibility, safety, and energy efficiency. Reinvestment in Scotiabank Centre aligns with Halifax's broader tourism, cultural, and downtown development objectives. To continue attracting high-profile events and meet the needs of tenants, Halifax must initiate a capital investment strategy that includes securing multi-level government funding and engaging key stakeholders in a long-term infrastructure and programming plan.

Aligning this investment with broader municipal goals, cultural development, economic resilience, and downtown revitalization will reinforce the Centre's role as a strategic asset in Halifax's long-term tourism, economic and urban planning agenda.



**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC THEMES:**

- Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**OUTCOME:**

Develop an approach towards strategic investment in a modern, accessible, sustainable venue that meets HRM and stakeholder needs into the future and that attracts high-profile events, enhances visitor experiences, and aligns with Halifax's broader tourism and downtown development goals.

**ACTION PLAN:**

- In partnership with HRM, develop a multi-year plan for Scotiabank Centre revitalization.
- Collaborate with municipal, provincial, and federal stakeholders to establish funding partnerships, ensuring financial support for phased investments aligned with long-term event attraction and downtown development goals.

## Background Study & Insights

The ITMP 2030 report commissioned five strategic background studies to better inform, assess, and address critical challenges in Halifax's tourism sector: **Visitor Carrying Capacity, Accommodations, Cruise Industry, Car Rental, and Accessibility**. These studies collectively emphasize the need for comprehensive infrastructure planning, sustainable growth strategies, and targeted management interventions to ensure Halifax's continued success as a tourism destination while safeguarding community, cultural, and environmental assets.

The **Visitor Carrying Capacity Study** investigates the physical and operational limits of three major tourism sites: the Halifax Waterfront, Dartmouth Waterfront, and Peggy's Cove. The study highlights capacity constraints exacerbated by post-pandemic tourism recovery and cruise ship activity by employing daily capacity and peak load metrics. To mitigate overcrowding and maintain visitor satisfaction, recommendations include expanding infrastructure at the Halifax Waterfront, implementing crowd management systems in Dartmouth, and introducing timed entry systems and shuttle services in Peggy's Cove.

The **Accommodations Study** examines the mismatch between supply and demand for accommodations in Halifax, particularly during peak and shoulder seasons. The study underscores the risk of displacing tourists due to insufficient hotel inventory, compounded by mega projects that may absorb existing hotel capacity for transient workers. Strategies for addressing this include promoting investment in alternative accommodations, enhancing transportation links to distribute visitor demand regionally, and incentivizing year-round tourism to stabilize demand across all seasons.

The **Cruise Industry Study** analyzes the impact of the rapidly growing cruise sector, with Halifax projected to experience a 60% increase in passenger volumes by 2029. While the cruise sector has significantly bolstered local tourism revenues, it has also led to congestion and infrastructure strain, particularly during peak months. Proposed measures include expanding berthing facilities, improving transportation networks, optimizing visitor distribution to less frequented areas, and implementing shore power and waste management systems to mitigate environmental impacts.

The **Car Rental Study** identifies a significant seasonal imbalance in the availability of rental vehicles in Halifax. Fleet shortages during the peak summer season result in elevated prices and limited availability, potentially deterring tourists from visiting. To address these challenges, the study recommends expanding the vehicle fleet, streamlining regulatory and insurance frameworks, investing in electric vehicle infrastructure, and encouraging the adoption of car-sharing services to diversify visitor transportation options.

The **Accessibility Study** assesses Halifax's tourism sector's readiness to meet evolving accessibility standards, identifying significant gaps in the provision of accessible infrastructure, information, and services. Recommendations focus on developing a comprehensive accessibility audit of key sites, enhancing public transportation and tourism infrastructure, implementing centralized digital resources for accessible travel information, and training front-line staff to better accommodate visitors with disabilities.

Collectively, these studies highlight critical areas where strategic interventions can significantly enhance Halifax’s tourism capacity, infrastructure resilience, and overall visitor experience. By addressing these key challenges in a coordinated manner, Halifax can position itself as a model for sustainable, inclusive, and data-driven tourism development in the region.

## Visitor Carrying Capacity

This study on visitor carrying capacity is an early-stage investigation and effort toward understanding how to ensure visitor satisfaction, safety, infrastructure sustainability, and the preservation of cultural and community resources. Proactive strategies and timely analysis of visitor dynamics are essential for anticipating and mitigating issues that might otherwise negatively impact local communities, environmental integrity, or the overall visitor experience.

Effective destination management requires forward-looking analysis of visitation trends and the potential implications of increased visitation on infrastructure capacity, public safety standards, environmental sustainability, and community well-being. Proactively addressing potential overcrowding ensures high-quality visitor experiences and preserves the destination's long-term attractiveness without compromising local resources or resident quality of life.

### Guiding Considerations

- **Data-Driven Insights:** Employ precise visitor data and analytical techniques to accurately understand capacity constraints and visitation patterns.
- **Peak Period Awareness:** Identify and anticipate peak visitation periods to effectively manage infrastructure and service delivery pressures.
- **Visitor Safety and Satisfaction:** Prioritize research into factors significantly influencing visitor safety and overall satisfaction.
- **Infrastructure and Public Space Planning:** Evaluate existing infrastructure and public spaces for their capacity to handle visitor flows, identifying areas requiring strategic intervention.
- **Inclusivity and Accessibility:** Ensure equitable and adequate accommodation of diverse visitor needs within tourism planning and management practices.
- **Community Impact Mitigation:** Investigate methods to minimize negative impacts on local residents, such as congestion or resource depletion.
- **Regional Distribution of Visitors:** Assess opportunities to redistribute visitation across the broader region to reduce pressure on heavily visited sites.
- **Environmental and Cultural Resource Sustainability:** Examine approaches to safeguard environmental and cultural assets to maintain long-term destination sustainability.

### Research and Monitoring Approaches

Utilizing advanced methodologies—including real-time visitor monitoring technologies, visitor flow analyses, evaluation of educational outreach effectiveness, and systematic review processes—will enhance analytical accuracy. Employing pedestrian counters, mobile data analytics, and digital communication platforms supports robust research and monitoring while respecting visitor privacy.

The document specifically addresses capacity concerns at three major tourism locations in Halifax: the Halifax Waterfront, Dartmouth Waterfront, and Peggy's Cove. These sites are experiencing record visitation due to post-pandemic recovery, regional population growth, and increased cruise ship activity, resulting in overcrowding and infrastructure strain.

## Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

- Quantify the theoretical physical carrying capacities of key tourism sites.
- Identify practical constraints (e.g., parking, sanitation facilities, transportation access) limiting actual visitor capacity.
- Inform strategic infrastructure investments, event planning, and crowd management practices that sustain tourism growth while maintaining visitor quality experiences.

## Methodology and Formulas

Two primary capacity metrics are employed:

**Daily Capacity** reflects the number of people who pass through a destination over the course of a typical 8-hour high-use day (10 AM to 6 PM). It accounts for visitor turnover and changing use levels throughout the day.

Visitor throughput within an 8-hour operational day, calculated via Boullon's model. The formula is as follows:  $PCC = (A \times V) / (S \times R)$  Where:

$PCC$  = Physical carrying capacity (number of visitors per day)

$A$  = Area available for visitor use (in square metres)

$V$  = Number of hours the site is open to visitors per day

$S$  = Space required per person (in square metres)

$R$  = Average time a visitor spends at the site (in hours)

**Peak Load** reflects the maximum number of people who can safely and comfortably occupy the space at a single moment. Recognizing the limitations of spatial assumptions and temporal flow, particularly for outdoor public spaces that are difficult to define, we have modified the Boullon model's formula to calculate the **peak load** capacity at any given time, rather than the **daily capacity**. The maximum number of visitors safely accommodated at any given time. The formula is as follows:  $PCC = A / S$  Where:

$PCC$  = Physical carrying capacity (number of visitors **at any given time**)

$A$  = Area available for visitor use (in square metres)

$S$  = Space required per person (in square metres)

## Peak Load Capacity Findings

Based on calculations of peak load capacity that account for optimal visitor distribution across both interior and exterior spaces, the maximum number of visitors that can be safely accommodated at a given time are as follows:

- Halifax Waterfront: approximately 25,976 visitors
- Dartmouth Waterfront: approximately 3,854 visitors
- Peggy's Cove: approximately 1,409 visitors

These figures reflect spatial thresholds aligned with safety, comfort, and functional use standards for public areas during periods of peak demand.

## Detailed Site Analysis

The Halifax Waterfront serves as Nova Scotia's most heavily trafficked tourist destination, with visitor numbers that can surpass 50,000 per day during significant major events. However, the realistic daily visitor capacity is limited by practical constraints such as parking availability, ferry access, restroom facilities, emergency access routes, and spatial bottlenecks. Infrastructure strain becomes particularly evident when daily visitors reach 50,000, emphasizing the need for targeted visitor management strategies to mitigate congestion and maintain service quality. Expanding infrastructure, including restroom facilities and transit capabilities, is essential to manage crowd flows effectively. Implementing real-time communication systems, such as digital signage and congestion alerts, can optimize visitor management, particularly during peak periods. Additionally, establishing emergency access routes during high-capacity events and revitalizing Visitor Information Centres to facilitate effective visitor distribution can alleviate localized congestion while maintaining overall visitor satisfaction.

In contrast, the Dartmouth Waterfront is a smaller but increasingly popular site that has witnessed heightened visitation, especially during large-scale events such as Natal Day and Canada Day. The optimal daily visitor range is approximately 10,000 to 15,000, yet spatial constraints limit further capacity expansion. Despite these limitations, significant potential for growth exists through strategic development toward Dartmouth Cove and Kings Wharf. Expanding public spaces, enhancing green spaces, and integrating performance or pop-up event programming can maximize space utilization and elevate visitor experiences. Moreover, improving amenities, including restroom facilities, food services, and ferry connectivity, will better accommodate rising visitor numbers.

Peggy's Cove, characterized by its iconic rural setting and seasonal visitation peaks, particularly during cruise ship season, presents a unique set of challenges. The site typically accommodates 1,900 to 2,000 visitors daily, yet peak days can see visitor volumes ranging from 5,000 to 10,000, significantly exceeding calculated capacity limits. Key constraints include limited parking facilities, narrow roadways, inadequate restroom infrastructure, and pedestrian safety concerns. To address these challenges, implementing visitor management strategies such as timed entry systems or bus permit regulations is crucial to regulating site visitation effectively. Developing remote parking solutions combined with shuttle services can mitigate parking congestion, while improving

pedestrian infrastructure can address safety risks. Additionally, strengthening emergency preparedness through enhanced telecommunications, including Wi-Fi and cellular coverage, and expanding emergency response capabilities will support overall site management during high visitation periods.

Collectively, addressing capacity challenges across these three tourism destinations requires an integrated approach encompassing infrastructure expansion, enhanced visitor management, and strategic communication systems. Aligning these strategies with broader regional planning frameworks can further optimize visitor flows, distribute visitation pressures more evenly, and sustain the long-term viability of Halifax's key tourism assets.

### **Region-wide Strategic Actions**

- **Short-term (0–2 years):** Deploy modular infrastructure (restrooms, signage), pedestrian flow studies, and real-time visitor monitoring systems.
- **Medium-term (2–5 years):** Establish formal visitor dispersion policies, implement transportation demand management strategies, develop comprehensive carrying capacity frameworks, and create a Dartmouth Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project.
- **Long-term (5+ years):** Integrate carrying capacity metrics into broader regional tourism planning, introduce regulated access or ticketing models, and cultivate alternative attractions to distribute visitation more evenly across the region.

Addressing these carrying capacity challenges through strategic foresight, targeted investment, and adaptive management practices will ensure that Halifax's tourism destinations remain attractive, sustainable, and enjoyable for visitors and residents alike.



## Accommodations study

**Opportunity:** To better understand drivers of the mismatch between accommodation supply and demand by season, its impact on availability, rate and types of accommodation, and the opportunity to drive additional investment to meet future demand.

### *Background*

Like many cities across Canada, the potential of the tourism industry in Halifax is challenged by supply and demand during peak and shoulder seasons. For the peak season, this means that HRM may be turning away potential visitors who cannot get their desired accommodations for their visit, or due to pressures on the labour force, not have the best visitor experience. In the shoulder season, the opposite is true as there is lower demand for labour as rooms are taken out of inventory.

Additionally, there is a current risk that some hotel stock will be taken out of inventory to house transient workers arriving in Halifax to work on mega projects over the coming years.

### *Considerations*

- Develop drivers of demand to support year-round tourism offerings. Promote shoulder season tourism initiatives leveraging channels in leisure, business events, sporting events, and entertainment to drive greater visitation in all months of the year.
- Work with the HRM and economic development organizations to attract hotel and alternative accommodations investment, using levers like tax incentives, zoning, removing red tape, and addressing regulatory challenges for example.
- Optimize the mix of traditional and alternative accommodations, including short-term rentals, without disrupting permanent housing inventory.
- Improve transportation links to support accommodation growth in areas across the Halifax region.
- Strengthen workforce development and address labour shortages by collaborating with educational institutions, offering incentives for staff retention, and recruitment campaigns.

## Cruise Industry

**Opportunity:** To better understand drivers of performance and potential of the Halifax cruise industry, as well as the possible impact on quality of experience for both passengers and residents, to help guide the sustainable future of cruise in the region.

### *Background*

The cruise industry is a very fast-growing sector of the global tourism economy. Across the globe in 2022, there were 20.4 million cruise passengers that contributed USD \$138 billion to the global economy, 1.2 million jobs, USD \$43 billion in wages, and USD \$69 billion in GDP. By 2023, the number of global cruise passengers rose to 31.7 million, growing 6.8 per cent since 2019. From 2024 to 2028, global cruise capacity is forecasted to grow at least 10 per cent.

### *Global cruise segments:*

- The average age of cruisers is 46, with 36 per cent of passengers under the age of 40.
- Some global trends in tourism include multi-generational travellers, solo travel from Millennials and Gen Z, and an increasing number of new-to-cruise travellers.
- Many cruise travellers like to return to cruise with 82 per cent of those who have cruised likely to cruise again, 12 per cent of cruise travellers, cruising twice a year, and 10 per cent of cruise travellers taking three to five cruises a year. Additionally, 71 per cent of international travellers are considering taking their first cruise.
- The North American cruise market is the fastest growing around the world, well outpacing its global rate of growth and with the highest number of cruisers.

### *Halifax cruise industry:*

The Halifax region is emerging as a leading North Atlantic cruise destination with its deep-water port and strategic location which offers direct access to transatlantic routes and New England itineraries.

The region's vibrant cultural and natural attractions like the historic downtown, waterfront, and iconic landscapes appeal to all segments of cruise operators - from giant ships to niche, expedition cruise lines. The past two years alone have seen cruise passenger volumes grow by 28 per cent with projections indicating a 60 per cent increase to almost 600,000 passengers by 2029.

The Port of Halifax is equipped to accommodate the world's largest cruise ships, with full-service terminals and berth space. Piers can accommodate direct ship-to-shore access through dedicated terminals. Tour buses, taxis, limousines, and ride share programs are located in front of the terminal to take visitors to Peggy's Cove, and many other destinations outside of the waterfront and downtown within short proximity to the terminal.

There has been an increase in ships and passengers over the past few years. In the 2022 season, there were 147 ships with approximately 294,474 passengers. In the 2023 season, the industry rose to 176 ship visits with a 7.6 per cent increase to 317,007 passengers. In the 2024 season, this number quickly grew to 203 projected ship visits with 18.57 per cent growth to 375,889 passengers.

- September and October are the busiest months for cruises, with 61.1 per cent of all ships and approximately 65 per cent of all cruise passengers arriving during these two months.
- The average spend of cruise ship passenger remained constant from 2022-2024 at \$138 per passenger.
- Due to the increased number of cruise ship visitors between 2022 and 2024, the total spend of cruise ship passenger increased to nearly \$52 million in 2024.

### *Challenges with cruise in Halifax*

The rapid success of the cruise industry is not without its potential challenges. At current levels of ships and passengers, during periods of high volume of ships which occurs a few times a year, there is significant crowding. Only a few ships can tie up on pier and the others must tender in, with boats providing disembarking passengers access to shore. This can create a significant amount of congestion at the Port, spilling into the waterfront area. As well, with coaches, taxis, and other transportation providers picking up passengers, traffic congestion can significantly deteriorate the passenger experience. Additionally, coaches can sit in traffic for up to an hour, in some cases, just to leave the port. Traffic challenges are further exacerbated by construction projects along the route.

The estimated 60 per cent increase of passenger volume by 2029 could further deteriorate the passenger experience, which may support a review of cruise in the region and alternatives to welcome these high value, high growth visitors.

### *Considerations*

- Expand berthing and tendering facilities, such as Dartmouth, Shannon Park, or other locations.
- Improve transportation networks like shuttle services, designated zones for roads during peak cruise periods and additional coach licenses.
- Enhance accessibility infrastructure to support passengers with additional needs.
- Optimize digital and visitor amenities to support navigation of the downtown and waterfront areas.
- Promote underutilized attractions and regions for passengers to explore.
- Strengthen sustainability initiatives like expanding shore power, waste management, and energy-efficient practices.

As Halifax prepares for a new phase of cruise tourism growth, ensuring that expansion is both sustainable and community-minded has become a strategic priority. To that end, Initiative Twenty-Three: Delivering a Balanced Approach to Cruise Growth directly supports and operationalizes many key insights and recommendations outlined in the *Cruise Market Analysis Companion Study (2025)*. As Halifax's cruise traffic is expected to grow by over 60% by 2029, this initiative responds to the need for a thoughtful, data-driven approach to managing that growth sustainably.

The study highlights various challenges associated with cruise expansion—from peak-day congestion in the downtown core to transportation bottlenecks and resident fatigue. Initiative Twenty-Three addresses these issues head-on by proposing a Cruise Management Framework and a Cruise Growth Task Force. These tools will help coordinate stakeholders across tourism,

transportation, infrastructure, and community sectors to manage visitor flow, schedule shore excursions more efficiently, and plan for necessary port and city infrastructure upgrades.

The analysis notes specific gaps, like limited berthing capacity, crowded terminals, and insufficient shore excursion transport, that directly align with the initiative's focus on building operational capacity and scaling workforce readiness. Similarly, the study emphasizes the importance of visitor experience and resident satisfaction, which are central to the initiative's mission to ensure that tourism remains a positive force for all.

Perhaps most importantly, the initiative embodies the collaborative spirit recommended in the study. Bringing together the Halifax Port Authority, Discover Halifax, Tourism Nova Scotia, industry, and community partners sets the stage for a unified response to a complex issue. It positions HRM to accommodate future cruise demand and lead as a model for balanced, inclusive, and sustainable cruise tourism.

## Car Rental

**Opportunity:** A better understanding of the drivers of the mismatch between supply and demand for rental cars and alternative, self-drive options in all seasons will support the sustainable growth of this critical asset and drive tourism in the region into the future.

### *Background*

The car rental business is evolving rapidly, driven by shifts in consumer preferences, technology, P2P car-sharing platforms, and growing demand for sustainable travel options. As visitors increasingly seek flexible and eco-friendly mobility solutions, traditional car rental companies are pressured to adapt their fleets and infrastructure to remain competitive.

But the industry itself is under pressure to balance car rental supply with seasonal demand, with too many vehicles in inventory during the shoulder season and too few in the high-demand summer season.

### *Rental cars in Halifax*

The Halifax region, Nova Scotia, and all of Atlantic Canada face ongoing challenges in balancing car rental supply with seasonal demand, especially during the peak season, to facilitate visitor travel to nearby attractions within a few hours' drive of their Halifax accommodations, or to other parts of Nova Scotia.

The fleet shortages result in very high prices or no cars, which can significantly impact the likelihood of booking a Halifax trip, especially when alternatives to rental cars are also in short supply.

Halifax's car rental fleet is estimated to comprise nearly 3,000 vehicles, equating to approximately 0.005 cars per capita. While this figure is comparable to several other destinations, it falls short of the ratios observed in leading cities.

It is also essential to recognize that major Canadian urban centres typically offer **more advanced public transit infrastructure**, which can diminish the reliance on car rentals as a primary mode of transportation.

### *Comparative fleet size*

- Halifax's car rental fleet is estimated to have between 2,301 and 2,991 vehicles.
- Per capita, Halifax has a more substantial fleet than Toronto and is just below Ottawa.
- However, Calgary and Vancouver have more vehicles per capita and are considered leaders in the vehicle rental fleet space. (Note: these cities have more advanced public transit infrastructure, which can diminish the reliance on car rentals)
- Toronto has close to half the per capita capacity of Halifax.

While Halifax has a decent fleet supply, particularly compared with other destinations, there is room to grow to better accommodate the visitation influx due to seasonality. Expanding the fleet can be especially useful in Halifax to bring visitors outside of the downtown core and into other areas of the destination, which may be more challenging to access without a personal vehicle.

VEHICLE RENTAL FLEETS ACROSS KEY CANADIAN CITIES		
City	Vehicle Rental Fleet Size	Vehicles Per Capita*
Halifax	2,301 – 2,991	0.005
Toronto	7,900 – 8,888	0.003
Vancouver	12,335 – 13,877	0.020
Ottawa	5,944 – 6,687	0.006
Calgary	12,430 – 13,984	0.010

\* Based on the upper end of the estimated car rental fleet size

In 2024, there were 64 car rental establishments in Nova Scotia, accounting for 2.2 per cent of the 2,936 within the national industry (Nova Scotia placed 6<sup>th</sup> province with the most car rental establishments in Canada).

- Halifax accounted for 71.9 per cent (46) of Nova Scotia's car rental establishments in 2024.
- Nova Scotia had a revenue of \$136.9 million in 2024, which saw a decline of 1.0 per cent from 2019-2024 but a projected annual growth of 0.1 per cent from 2024-2029.
- Employment in the Nova Scotia car rental market sat at 262 employees in 2024, with an annual growth reduction of 6.8 per cent from 2019 to 2024.
- Over the next five years to 2029, provincial revenue is anticipated to grow 0.1 per cent to \$137.5 million while the national industry revenue is projected to grow 1.8 per cent. However, the number of establishments is forecasted to decline to 62 locations by 2029, with employment decreasing to 252 workers.

In addition to an imbalance between demand and supply of car rental and equivalent options, the Halifax rental car and alternative transportation networks is characterized by the following:

- A challenge in understanding how rental car companies make fleet ordering decisions, which are complex and highly confidential, as these companies seek to balance their risk, yield per car, total yearly revenue, and opportunity relative to their competitors.
- The lack of charging stations (EV infrastructure) to accommodate increasingly in-demand electric vehicles.
- Alternative car rental services, such as Turo and Communauto Atlantic, offer additional options but have yet to achieve mainstream adoption and remain in a growth phase.
- Some insurance and permitting processes impede profitability for rental car providers.

### Considerations

- Collaborate with governments at all levels to simplify fleet management, insurance, and permitting processes to reduce barriers for car rental companies and alternative providers and reduce the obstacles to profitability.

- Encourage additional competition in traditional rental car providers.
- Encourage additional technology, car rental sharing opportunities, and an improved regulatory and insurance framework to facilitate their uptake.
- Improve seasonality in the Halifax tourism economy to reduce fluctuations in car rental supply.
- Invest in EV infrastructure to expand EV networks and incentivize car rental companies to adopt electric and hybrid vehicles to support the Halifax region's and visitors' sustainability goals.



## Accessibility

**Opportunity:** To better understand the readiness of Halifax's tourism to meet accessibility standards, identify gaps in addressing the accessibility needs of visitors, and recommend strategies to create a more inclusive and accessible tourism environment to achieve a potential competitive advantage for visitors with accessibility needs.

### *Background*

In 2022, Statistics Canada reported that 27 per cent of Canadians aged 15 and older, or approximately 8 million individuals, had at least one disability. Yet those with varying abilities enjoy travel like others, but they face challenges due to limited information on accessible accommodations, amenities, experiences, and tourism assets, which complicates their trip planning and experience.

Tourism accessibility explores the opportunities to strengthen HRMs position as an inclusive travel destination to meet the needs of millions of prospective visitors from across Canada, and around the world, with accessibility challenges by first developing an audit of its current compliance with accessibility standards, and then developing an action plan, through the provincial accessible framework to address the deficiencies. When a critical mass of those tourism assets and experiences is deemed accessible, Halifax may then have an opportunity to position and market the destination as accessible to millions of prospective visitors, many of whom may have limited options in the places they can visit.

### *Accessibility in Nova Scotia and Halifax*

- The Nova Scotia Access by Design 2030 initiative highlights the importance for and priority of accessible design across Nova Scotia.
- Nova Scotia is developing requirements for tourism businesses to meet accessibility needs, under six standard types listed in Exhibit 1 below.
- The only feasible options for tourism businesses to receive funding for built environment projects is Nova Scotia's ACCESS-Ability Grant Program, the federal government's Enabling Accessibility Fund, and the Rick Hansen Foundation.
- There is an understanding that it is unrealistic for all tourist activities and experiences to be fully accessible, but the creation of accessible itineraries could help.
- The six step process in developing accessibility requirements are: standards development; awareness and capacity building; collaboration and support; compliance and enforcement; monitoring an evaluation; and government of Nova Scotia leading by example.

### *Considerations*

- Develop a unified tourism accessibility vision: A collaborative framework with stakeholders to align on a shared vision for accessible tourism and tourism assets.
- Develop a tourism accessibility audit: Evaluate key sites and tourism assets to evaluate against accessibility criteria.
- Centralized digital information: Develop a web content accessibility guideline-compliant hub showcasing accessibility features, virtual tours, and feedback tools for visitors.

- Enhanced tourism infrastructure and transportation: Improve accessibility at major tourist destinations and expand accessible transport options.
- Comprehensive tourism front-line staff training: Implement training programs for tourism front-line staff that focus on physical, sensory, and neurodiverse accessibility needs.
- Feedback mechanisms: Establish channels, like surveys and in-person feedback forms, to gather insights and improve accessibility offerings.

## Final Thoughts

The Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 marks a defining moment in how the region envisions, cultivates, and leads tourism development. Rooted in a **community-first** philosophy and powered by the **Collective Impact model**, the ITMP 2030 reflects an ambitious yet pragmatic roadmap that balances economic growth with social, cultural, and environmental responsibility. Designed as a living document, it will remain responsive to new insights, emerging opportunities, and community priorities over the next five years, ensuring its continued relevance and impact through adaptive leadership and collaboration.

### A UNIFIED VISION WITH REGIONAL DISTINCTION

The Plan reinforces Halifax’s foundational vision of becoming *everyone’s favourite Canadian city*—a destination that captivates visitors while enriching the lives of residents. It recognizes the **diversity of Halifax’s regions**, from the vibrant Urban Core and the Gateway communities to the scenic Peggy’s Cove Coastal Region and the untapped potential of Eastern HRM. Each area is empowered with targeted strategies that build on local strengths while addressing infrastructural gaps and access limitations. The Five A’s framework—Attractions, Accessibility, Accommodation, Amenities, and Activities—guides these assessments and interventions.

### STRATEGIC THEMES AND ACTION-DRIVEN GOALS

At the heart of ITMP 2030 are six enduring strategic themes:

1. **Make it easy to get here and visit**
2. **Develop responsible tourism**
3. **Build and enhance demand generators**
4. **Establish leadership in tourism**
5. **Attract high-yield growth markets**
6. **Be vibrant and alive, 365**

These themes are underpinned by initiatives that span infrastructure development (e.g., large-scale venues, waterfront revitalization), cultural investments (e.g., Africville Marina, Acadian storytelling), and operational improvements (e.g., AI booking systems, liquor regulation reform). Each initiative is structured around actionable steps, measurable outcomes, and clear partnerships, reflecting Discover Halifax’s commitment to **implementation transparency and long-term accountability**.

### SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

The ITMP 2030 is about attracting more visitors and **ensuring that tourism enhances the fabric of local life**. By incorporating targeted studies (on cruise capacity, accommodations, and accessibility), the Plan provides that future growth is grounded in **data, sustainability, and inclusiveness**. Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, Acadian, and other historically underrepresented communities are given meaningful space and support to shape their tourism narratives and benefit from increased exposure and investment.

## **A BLUEPRINT FOR RESILIENCE AND PROSPERITY**

Halifax is ready to lead with a bold, resilient tourism strategy in a post-pandemic world facing global uncertainty. ITMP 2030 aligns with the broader economic priorities of Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy—**People, Planet, Prosperity**—positioning tourism not as a siloed industry, but as a **catalyst for cultural vibrancy, economic development, and community well-being.**

The journey will require continued collaboration, adaptive leadership, and ongoing community engagement. But with this Plan, Halifax has laid the groundwork to grow its tourism economy in a way that **reflects its values, honours its communities, and unlocks its full potential—region by region, season by season, year by year.**

## Definitions

Glossary of key terms for the Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030. *Please note that these references are defined from the perspective of the tourism industry, and not necessarily how they would be interpreted in general use.*

### A

#### **Accessibility**

The practice of ensuring that tourism experiences, infrastructure, transportation, and services are inclusive and accessible to individuals with disabilities or mobility challenges.

#### **Accommodation**

Lodging available for visitors, including hotels, motels, short-term vacation rentals (STVRs), inns, bed-and-breakfasts, and alternative options like eco-lodges or boutique hotels.

#### **Attractions**

Key points of interest that draw visitors to a destination include natural landmarks, museums, cultural sites, historic buildings, and event venues.

#### **Airport Area**

The Halifax Stanfield International Airport and its surrounding communities serve as an important gateway for visitors to Halifax and the Atlantic Canada region.

### B

#### **Build and enhance demand generators**

One of the strategic themes of ITMP 2030, referring to efforts to improve and expand tourism attractions and experiences that draw visitors.

### C

#### **Car sharing or peer-to-peer (P2P) car sharing**

Alternative rental models like Turo and Communauto allow individuals to rent cars directly from vehicle owners or subscriber-based companies.

#### **Collective Impact**

A structured collaborative approach where stakeholders from different sectors commit to a common agenda to solve a social problem, emphasizing coordinated efforts and shared measurement.

#### **Community-first approach**

A tourism development philosophy that prioritizes the needs, values, and well-being of residents while planning and growing tourism initiatives.

**Cruise industry**

The tourism sector is focused on cruise ship visitors, which plays a significant role in Halifax's visitor economy through port activities, excursions, and related spending.

D

**Destination Management Organization (DMO)**

An organization responsible not only for promoting tourism but also for managing the destination's infrastructure, sustainability practices, and community engagement. Discover Halifax functions as Halifax's DMO.

**Destination Marketing Organization (also DMO)**

An entity primarily focused on marketing a destination to attract leisure and business travelers.

**Discover Halifax**

The official destination marketing and management organization for the Halifax Regional Municipality.

**Demand generators**

Products, events, attractions, or experiences that stimulate visitor interest and drive tourism-related economic activity.

E

**Eastern Shore**

The coastal region east of the urban core within Halifax Region known for its beaches, historic villages, and emerging adventure tourism potential, including communities such as Chezzetcook, Musquodoboit Harbour, and Sheet Harbour.

**Enabling environment**

The combination of infrastructure, policies, services, and institutions that allow tourism to thrive sustainably.

**EV infrastructure**

Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations and facilities are necessary to support the growth of sustainable transportation options in tourism.

F

**Five A's of Tourism**

Key elements essential for a thriving tourism destination: Attractions, Accessibility, Accommodation, Amenities, and Activities.

## G

### **The Gateway**

A term used to describe the Bedford, Sackville, and Airport Area regions as critical entry points for visitors to Halifax.

## H

### **Halifax**

Refers to the *entire* Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), not just downtown Halifax. Includes areas like Dartmouth, Eastern Shore, and Hubbards.

### **Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)**

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) encompasses approximately 5,500 square kilometers and comprises over 200 urban, suburban, and rural communities. Established in 1996 through the amalgamation of the City of Halifax, City of Dartmouth, Town of Bedford, and Halifax County Municipality, HRM unites these historically distinct areas under a single municipal government.

### **High-yield markets**

Target audiences that typically have higher disposable incomes, stay longer, and spend more, maximizing the economic benefits of tourism.

## I

### **Inclusive economic growth model**

A development framework that ensures the economic benefits of tourism are distributed equitably among all segments of society.

### **Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP)**

A strategic roadmap aligning tourism growth with Halifax's broader community, environmental, and economic development objectives.

## L

### **Living example of Collective Impact**

The ITMP process and implementation serve as an ongoing, real-world demonstration of how collaborative work can achieve large-scale destination development.

## M

### **Motorcoach industry**

The industry responsible for large coach buses that transport tourists around a destination. In Halifax, regulations impacting this sector can affect accessibility to regional attractions.



## P

### **Peggy's Cove Coastal Region**

A well-known tourism area anchored by Peggy's Point Lighthouse, and includes nearby communities like St. Margaret's Bay and Hubbards.

### **Placemaking**

The collaborative process of designing public spaces that promote health, happiness, and well-being for both residents and visitors.

### **Public washrooms**

Essential infrastructure that supports a visitor-friendly environment, particularly important for extending stays and promoting comfort.

## R

### **Regional engagement**

Consultations and community meetings across Halifax's diverse geographic areas to understand local tourism needs and opportunities.

### **Rum Runners Trail**

A popular multi-use trail connecting Halifax to Lunenburg, often used for cycling and hiking tourism.

## S

### **Seasonality**

The variation in tourism activity across different times of the year, with peak seasons typically seeing higher visitor numbers compared to shoulder season.

### **Shoulder season**

The period outside peak tourist months (November to May in Halifax), often targeted for growth to create a more stable, year-round visitor economy.

### **Shore power**

Infrastructure that allows cruise ships to plug into land-based electricity at port instead of running diesel engines, reducing environmental impacts.

### **Short-term rentals (STVRs)**

Alternative accommodations such as Airbnb and VRBO properties that provide flexible lodging options but may impact local housing availability.

### **Stakeholder**

Any individual, business, organization, or government entity with an interest in the success of Halifax's tourism sector.

## T

### **Tourism accessibility audit**

An evaluation process used to assess the extent to which tourism-related infrastructure and services meet accessibility standards.

### **Transportation networks**

Systems that support visitor movement within and to/from a destination, including public transit, ride-sharing, rental vehicles, ferries, and walking/biking trails.

## V

### **Visitor economy**

All direct, indirect, and induced economic activities resulting from visitor interactions with a destination, including spending on accommodations, dining, transportation, and experiences.

### **Vision**

The aspirational goal set out in the ITMP: To be everyone's favourite Canadian city.

## W

### **Wayfinding**

All systems—signage, maps, digital guides—that help visitors navigate a destination efficiently and confidently.

### **Wild Islands Coast**

A protected region of hundreds of islands along Halifax's Eastern Shore, promoting sustainable eco-tourism and outdoor adventures.