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The Halifax Region Mainstreets Plan Position Statement — January 9, 2017

The success of communities in the Halifax Regional Municipality depends on having updated, modern local plans to ensure development contributes to the aspirations of residents and business. Long-term strategic goals can only be achieved if communities have updated/current rules for how they grow.

Some sixty per cent of HRM's development occurs outside our regional centre, and yet, plans for most of the municipality are decades old. In the twenty years since amalgamation, only two local plans have been enacted for rural areas. This region can only prosper, and amalgamation will only truly be complete, once all communities have a voice in shaping their own future.

Proposal

Our HRM Alliance and the groups supporting this statement call on HRM to develop two plans: one for every suburban community in the region, and another for every major rural community. Instead of starting from scratch for each, this common planning exercise would allow the municipality to get the basics done, and then to focus on what is distinctive and important in each. The goal is not a one-size-fits-all planning approach, but to reduce redundancy specifically to free up the resources necessary to ensure each community gets a tailor-made plan that matches their needs and aspirations.

We believe these plans should include design guidelines and financial strategies to prioritize the development of great local main streets for every major growth centre. Such main streets would contribute to the success of rural and suburban communities in multiple ways:

- Support local business and economic development.
- Contribute to tourism by offering unique destinations to shop and spend time.
- Improve the effectiveness of transit by putting more homes and business on existing lines.
- Support active transportation and recreation and increase access to healthy food.
- Lower costs for low-income residents by improving access to transit, stores and services.
- Reduce transportation-related CO2 emissions.
- Improve the region's financial sustainability by growing the commercial taxbase.
- Reduce the tax burden, by encouraging development on existing infrastructure.
- Promote aging in place and intergenerational social capital.
- Further develop local identity and pride.

These plans would also allow the boundaries of Growth Centres to be redrawn to suit development goals and to avoid undermining high-value natural lands identified in the Green Network Plan.

The Halifax Regional Municipality can become a network of successful, unique communities, connected by every mode of transportation possible. To get there, we need clear plans that will ensure the millions of dollars invested in development yearly consistently contribute to clear common goals for a prosperous, sustainable future.

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Groups supporting this Position Statement:

- Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia
- CARP Nova Scotia
- Halifax Cycling Coalition
- It's More Than Buses
- Main Street Dartmouth Community Improvement District
- Sackville Business Commission
- Spryfield Community Association
- Spryfield Business Commission
- United Way
- Walk n' Roll Halifax