

HALIFAX GREEN NETWORK PLAN USER'S GUIDE

CREATED BY OUR HRM ALLIANCE

BASED ON HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY'S GREEN
NETWORK PLAN



BACKGROUND

Why a Greenbelt?

Between 1992 and 2014, Halifax nearly doubled in area but only grew in population by a fifth. To ensure continued access to nature, livable communities, and lower our tax burden we must control the sprawl of development.

The solution is a greenbelt: laying out the exact places where development should happen based on health, food, economy, and ecology. With strong, clear implementation, the Green Network Plan will allow us to direct development away from our most vulnerable natural areas.

Our Role

Our HRM Alliance played an instrumental role in the Halifax Green Network Plan. Initially, the Alliance was the key force building public interest in a plan for a Halifax greenbelt. During the process of the Halifax Green Network Plan's creation the Alliance contributed essential community knowledge and continued to build public awareness for the value of greenbelting and supporting complete communities. Now that the plan has been approved, Our HRM Alliance will continue to be a watchdog, ensuring the plan is implemented in time to preserve our rich green network.

Our HRM Alliance is a coalition on over 60 organizations from sectors as diverse as health, environment, trails, business, community growth, and transportation advocating for a sustainable future through greenbelting and complete communities.

Key Dates



May 25, 2011

Our HRM Alliance is launched with 17 member groups commencing years of essential advocacy work



October 18, 2014

The Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy is passed, calling for protection of open space based on citizen interest



August 14, 2018

Green Network Plan is unanimously approved by Halifax Council



September 24, 2019

The first amendment to the Regional Plan based off the recommendations of the Green Network Plan is approved by Halifax Council

WHAT IS THE GREEN NETWORK PLAN?

The Green Network Plan (GNP) is a vision and strategy for how the city can utilize and grow our existing green network.

The Green Network Plan is not policy. It is not necessary for the plan to be followed. In order to incorporate the information in the plan into policy we need implementation.

Implementation means that the information highlighted in the plan will be incorporated into policy, requiring it to be followed.


This guide is an overview of what Our HRM Alliance believes to be the most important findings and action items of the Plan, as well as an interpretation in more accessible language and summarized format.

The Green Network Plan looks at 5 theme areas:

- 1 Ecology**
Biodiversity, connectivity, water management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, air quality, risk minimization, urban forest
- 2 Working Landscape**
Tourism, waste management, farming and resource production
- 3 Community Shaping**
Community building and identity, aesthetics, public comfort and safety
- 4 Outdoor Recreation**
Recreation, health and wellbeing, active transportation, learning and play
- 5 Cultural Landscapes**
Cultural, historical, and Indigenous significance

Each theme has a goal, key considerations, map, objectives and actions. Actions are the most useful to reference as they are tangible steps to incorporate the mapped and researched values. [The interpretation and comments are written below in the action items in blue.](#)

DOCUMENTS TO KNOW

Click the  icon beside each plan to be taken to the described document.



REGIONAL PLAN

A long-term, region-wide vision for HRM. While not everything in the Strategy must be done, no actions that contradict it can be taken.
AKA: Regional Municipal Planning Strategy



MUNICIPAL PLANNING STRATEGIES

A practical vision and plan for each of HRM's Community Plan Areas.
AKA: Secondary Planning Strategies, MPS



HRM CHARTER

HRM only has jurisdiction where the Province allows. The Charter describes HRM's jurisdiction and must be changed when HRM needs control over new areas.



LAND USE BY-LAWS

LUBs enforce the Planning Strategies through specific rules of land use. Rules are region specific, including 21 plan areas.
AKA: LUBs



HALIFAX GREEN NETWORK PLAN

The Plan that this document is summarizing!
AKA: GNP, HGNP

1. ECOLOGY

Biodiversity, connectivity, water management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, air quality, risk minimization, urban forest

Key Action Items

Action 1: Refine and incorporate the Ecology Map into the Regional Plan and use it to guide regional planning decisions related to the location and shape of: urban service boundary, rural centres, nature parks, conservation design developments. (2-7y)
Likely during the Regional Plan review, Map 5 will be added into plans and policy. Presumably the map will be reviewed before the changes are made.

Action 3: Amend MPS to clarify and ensure that environmental sensitive areas are identified and considered during the review of all discretionary planning applications. (2-7y)

All MPS will be changed to reference sensitive areas. These will need to be 'considered' in development.

Action 6: Amend Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-laws to consolidate, clarify and refine the Municipality's variable approach to watercourse buffers

Action 11+12: Work with Halifax Water and Nova Scotia Environment to establish stormwater management guidelines to improve the quality of stormwater runoff. (2-4y) and to promote green infrastructure, such as naturalized stormwater retention ponds and bioswales, as the preferred approach to managing stormwater. (4-7y)
HRM has prioritized creating new water management guidelines which if implemented, could benefit water quality.

Map 5: Green Network Ecology Map



Action 16: Make the Green Network Database available to all Municipal departments, as well as freely available to the public through HRM's Open Data Catalogue. (1-2y)

This will provide the public with the data used to create the GNP which can be used to do updated and additional analyses and ensure transparency and accountability.

Action 18: Formally request that the Province amend the HRM Charter to enable the Municipality to acquire sensitive environmental lands as an environmental reserve through the land development and subdivision process, in addition to existing parkland dedication provisions. (1-2y)
This suggests HRM is looking at land acquisition as a primary method of protecting the green network (ie. the process of purchasing land used with the Halifax Wilderness Park). While land acquisition is important, there are many tools to protect land through zoning that will make a green network affordable.

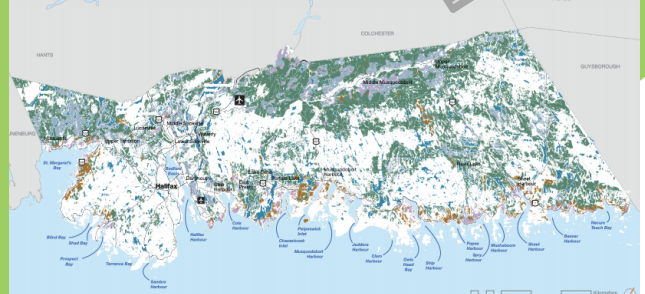
2. WORKING LANDSCAPES

Key Action Items

Action 22: Amend MPS and LUBs to encourage agricultural developments and supportive uses to locate and expand in agricultural area. [Cont on p.45] (2-7y).

Agricultural uses are being prioritized in identified rural areas.

Map 7: Working Landscapes



Take a look at the Working Landscapes map to see how the location of your work is classified.

3. COMMUNITY SHAPING

Key Action Items

Action 29: Amend the Regional Plan to ensure that the Green Network map is considered when reviewing changes to the Urban Service boundary, Urban Settlement Designation, Urban Reserve Designation and when preparing Secondary Planning Strategies. (2-7y)

Action 32: Amend the Regional Plan and MPS to prioritize the preservation and creation of natural connections to the Chebucto Peninsula (Map 9) from the Mainland when reviewing development proposals and updating planning policies and zoning in the area. (2-7y)

These changes will be added into plans and policy, likely during the Regional Plan review. Maps will likely need to be reviewed before the listed changes are made.

Action 34: Work with the NS Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, as opportunities arise, to identify opportunities to construct wildlife crossings under Highway 103 and the planned Highway 113. (Guidance)

Action 35: Amend the Regional Plan to better define the size, shape, and location of all rural centres in relation to natural corridors and valued open spaces. (2-7y)

Areas where planned rural centres conflict with corridors and spaces identified in this plan will be reviewed, likely prioritizing one.

Action 37: Amend the Regional Plan conservation design development agreement policies to: [list on p.52] (2-7y)

Rural residential development will be required to consider specified GNP findings.

Action 39 + 40: Work with the Province to mitigate the impacts on essential and important corridors and valued ecological open spaces when designing new regional transportation projects and reconnect fragmented landscapes when repairing or expanding roads (Guidance)

Section 3 does not have a new map but rather refers to Map 5: Green Network Ecology Map

4. OUTDOOR RECREATION

Key Action Items

Action 43: Through Halifax's Community Engagement Strategy, formalize a public engagement program for the planning and stewardship of parks. (Guidance)

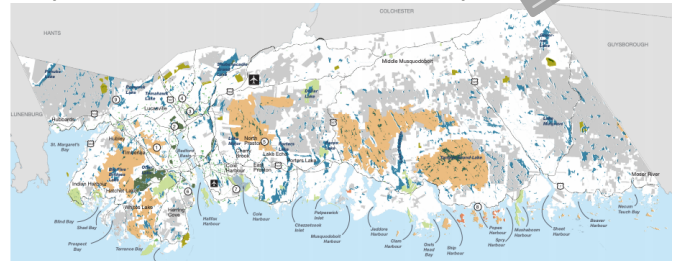
Action 46: Include culture and education programs and projects, such as the inclusion of public art within parks and nature interpretation programs when planning for parks. (Guidance)

HRM will create a plan for the stewardship and programming of parks.

Action 50: Develop service level targets for the Regional Plan settlement types to provide public access to the spectrum of recreation experiences within the Halifax park system. (1-2y) [Other targets on p. 58]

Targets will be created for public access to all types of parks. This could be used to show a need for a park in a specific neighbourhood.

Map 10: Outdoor Recreation Map



Action 60: Continue to study and consider the adoption of infrastructure charges to support the development and improvement of parks and recreation facilities that are needed to support new development. (1-2y)

Infrastructure charges would be taken from new development (likely suburban and rural) to fund nearby parks.

Action 66: During the next Regional Plan review amend the Regional Plan to recognize the recent land acquisitions within the Purcell's Cove Backlands as Regional Park and consider open space planning for the remainder of this area. (2-7y)

Open space development is being considered for the remainder of the Backlands.

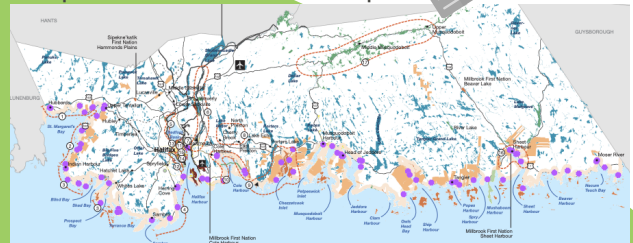
5. CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Key Action Items

Action 74: Amend the Regional Plan to include cultural landscapes as elements that must be considered when preparing conservation design development agreements.

You may want to inspect Map 12 to see if there are any cultural sites identified near your group's work. If there is overlap, you can tie in these sites to prioritize your projects.

Map 12: Cultural Landscapes



Action 78: Proactively engage and expand the inventory of cultural landscapes of interest to African Nova Scotian, Mikmaq, Acadian and immigrant communities.

Action 79: Engage groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in planning initiatives when developing cultural landscape plans and policies.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT THE GNP



“WE NEED THE GNP IMPLEMENTED!”

The Halifax Green Network Plan is a progressive and informative guide to creating a green network in HRM. If it is implemented this will truly develop Halifax as a rich place to live. We cannot wait to make these important changes. We need to follow the action items to implement the Plan now.



“WILL YOU BE FOLLOWING ACTION ITEM _ OF THE GNP?”

Remind decision makers that their choices are tied to a plan. Even before the plan's full implementation, making choices that contradict their own plan which was approved unanimously would require some explanation.



“IF THE GNP IS IMPLEMENTED, PLACES LIKE OURS ALL AROUND HRM WILL BE PROTECTED AND SUPPORTED”

Your members must know that implementation of the GNP is an important part of your work and that it will have an even bigger impact across HRM. Don't forget to mention the GNP to them!



“THE GREEN NETWORK IS CRUCIAL TO HEALTHY COMMUNITIES”

The green network isn't just about ecology. Remind your members and decisionmakers that access to nature is an integral part of fostering healthy and connected communities. By directing growth to existing communities, we improve the amenities that citizens have in their own neighbourhoods, like transit, small businesses, parks, and community centres.