



Our HRM Alliance is a coalition of 65 organizations from across Halifax Regional Municipality advocating for a sustainable future through complete communities and greenbelting.

A Call for Action in Response to the Halifax Green Network Plan Progress Report

February 16, 2021

Dear Members of the Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee,

Our HRM Alliance is a coalition of 65 organizations from across Halifax Regional Municipality advocating for a sustainable future through complete communities and greenbelting.

Our HRM Alliance has long been involved with the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGNP), from initially calling for the use of greenbelting as a solution during the 2011 RP+5, to actively contributing to the HGNP drafting. Since the adoption of the HGNP, the Alliance has been committed to monitoring the implementation of the plan as we are invested in the plan's success.

The protection of the Halifax Green Network is an essential piece of addressing climate change, the biodiversity crisis, and creating a vibrant, livable city. It is because of the immense value that protecting the Halifax Green Network will bring our municipality, that we must raise concerns about the project's implementation.

On Thursday, the standing committee will have the opportunity to act upon the HGNP Progress Report. This report details, that out of the 79 action items of the HGNP, 52 of which have a timeline, **only 3 have been implemented**. Of the 52 action items with associated timelines, **11 have surpassed their implementation timeline**. In addition, of the three implemented actions, two relate to requesting changes from the Province, that the Province has yet to act on.

A significant amount of the HGNP must be implemented during the ongoing Regional Plan review. We ask for CPED's steadfast support to fully implement the HGNP during this period. However, **as we wait for the updated Plan, the HGNP is not guiding development nor being adequately considered in development agreements or staff reports**. Currently, growth centres overlap with high-value greenspace, and proposed developments overlap with ecological corridors. We ask CPED to support the HGNP's implementation and ensure that there remains an intact green network to protect. Fortunately, there are actions available to expedite the process of protecting the Halifax Green Network including:

- Request key changes to the HRM Charter
Two requests for changes the HRM Charter make-up two thirds of the completed HGNP action items. The requests could significantly enhance HRM's ability to provide access to nature, yet the Province has not acted on these requests. Due to the timeline, CPED can request that the Mayor resubmit the initial requests as well as initiate a request to amend section 237 of the Charter to extend the period of time available to acquire parkland after rezoning to be consistent with transportation-based acquisition timelines. (HGNP Action 18 and 61)
- Support the establishment of service level targets for access to nature and engage in mapping to determine gaps



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Seven of the eleven HGNP action items which have not been completed within the allotted timeline concern establishing targets and measuring access to nature. This work is extremely important given current public health contexts and the committee should request timely action. (HGNP Action 50-56)

- Integrate the HGNP mapping into the *environmental implication* notes of staff reports and the training being developed for municipal employees

The HalifACT team is currently revising guidance for staff to fill out the *environmental implications* sections of staff reports prompted by an ecological lens decision-making request from the Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee. Incorporating the HGNP maps as a consideration for the environmental implications section of staff reports would allow council to stay apprised when topics present opportunities or risks to the Halifax Green Network.

- Plan for wildlife crossings, including through the Red Book in the 2021 update
The 2-year HGNP report details that wildlife crossings will be considered in the 2022 revision of the Red Book. In the 1-year report, these crossings were to be considered in 2020 and the timeline allotted by the HGNP has already been surpassed. Requirements around wildlife crossings should not be deferred for an additional year, and instead should be integrated into the 2021 update. (HGNP Action 41)
- Invest in parkland acquisition during the municipal budgeting process
Over the past 20-years, the funds invested in parkland acquisition have declined significantly. In order to act on the Halifax Green Network Plan, and protect greenspace that provides immense ecological, recreational and health, and place-making benefits, council must invest in the parkland acquisition budget.
- Investigate further resourcing and support for the HGNP
The similarly scaled HalifACT is being aggressively implemented, while the HGNP as an important plan for community health and wellbeing *and* climate action is comparatively under-resourced. We suggest CPED work with staff to understand the barriers to timely implementation and provide any necessary resourcing and support.

These actions, alongside your continued support of the Halifax Green Network in the Regional Plan review will leave a legacy. That of a community committed to protecting what matters most for its citizens, and for a commitment to future generations in preserving biodiversity and acting on climate change.

Sincerely,

Our HRM Alliance

Signed by our Steering Committee on behalf of the Our HRM Alliance Membership

[Ecology Action Centre](#)

[The Village on Main](#)

[Downtown Halifax Business Commission](#)

[Williams Lake Conservation Company](#)

[Sandy Lake Conservation Association](#)

[Sackville Rivers Association](#)

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