

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT PHASE 2 – PLANNING DIRECTION

June 2016

—

O2 Planning + Design

In collaboration with Anne Muecke, CBCL, and TransActive Solutions

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. INTRODUCTION 2

- 2. WHAT WE DID 3
 - WHO WE ENGAGED 3
 - WHAT ACTIVITIES WE DID 3
 - HOW WE ANALYZED THE INPUT 4

- 3. WHAT WE HEARD 5
 - GENERAL COMMENTS 5
 - GUIDING PRINCIPLES 6
 - THEMES 8
 - SPATIALLY REFERENCED COMMENTS 10
 - QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS 11
 - INTERACTIVE MAP COMMENTS 12

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

1. INTRODUCTION

The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is developing the *Halifax Green Network Plan* (HGNP) as recommended in the Regional Plan, approved in October 2014, which calls for a *Greenbelting and Public Open Space Priorities Plan* for the Region. The Regional Plan provides a framework for how the HRM wants to grow and develop as a vibrant and sustainable Region and community. The HGNP will establish a planning and land management framework for open space to help advance the multiple environmental, social, cultural, and economic objectives of the HRM, as well as a means to inform future development and growth patterns.

HRM is committed to engaging the public and stakeholders throughout the planning process, and extensive engagement is being conducted as part of the development of the HGNP. The objectives of the engagement process are to:

- Broadly engage the community (regional centre, urban, and rural communities) and stakeholder groups (provincial departments, non-governmental organizations, First Nations, ethnic groups, and other interests).
- Provide numerous opportunities for stakeholder groups with various interests to give input that balances economic, environmental, and socio-cultural interests.
- Provide opportunities for public involvement that are convenient and accessible.
- Build on past engagement successes during Phase 1: Foundations and Phase 2: Planning Direction, as well as we other projects such as Regional Plan, to provide continuity and acknowledge prior contributions.

Phase 2: Strategic Direction consultation (April–May 2016) included a number of communications and engagement activities designed to share and seek feedback on the strategic directions of the plan. To facilitate the highest levels of engagement, citizens were offered opportunities to participate and provide feedback in person, at home, or online. During this time, residents from the regional centre, urban and rural communities, as well as various stakeholder groups, were presented with the draft plan, and were provided with the opportunity to provide feedback.

This input will help to inform policies and strategies identified in the Halifax Green Network Plan and to help create a comprehensive planning and implementation framework for the HGNP, including its preferred scenarios and solutions.

2. WHAT WE DID

Who We Engaged

Building on the engagement process from phase 1, the process for phase 2 sought feedback from the general public, HRM staff and committee, numerous non-governmental organizations and interest groups, as well as governmental departments from a wide range of interests, such as environment, development, natural resources, recreation, economy, culture, social, health and well-being, transportation, energy, and education.

What Activities We Did

From April to May 2016, Phase 2 of the engagement, the project team presented the strategic directions to citizens to ensure that the developing plan was aligned with the direction provided.

Building on the input gathered during the first phase, Phase 2 consultation was framed by the following themes:



Public opportunities to provide feedback on the draft work were advertised through social media, the Shape Your City Community Engagement Hub, and advertising in the Chronicle Herald, Metro News, Masthead, and community papers, as well as email invitations to stakeholders.

The engagement process included a number of different communications and outreach activities to share information and to seek input into a future vision for a regional open space network – its current issues, opportunities, and values that should inform its development. Phase 2 included the following tools and inputs:

1. **Eight (8) open houses** across the HRM area: presentation + Q&A (3 hrs)
 - Fall River, March 30, 2016
 - Atlantica Hotel, March 31, 2016
 - Lewis Lake Tantallon, April 1, 2016

- Prospect Community Centre, April 2, 2016
- Cole Harbour, April 4, 2016
- Musquodoboit Harbour, April 7, 2016
- Sheet Harbour
- Musquodoboit Valley

2. **An interactive map** (engage.02design.com/halifax/engage_map/) was available from April to May 2016 for citizens to share feedback on summed values, highest values, and potential risk areas on the following maps:

Summed Values. These maps represent all the valued features identified within each category:

- Ecosystem & Biodiversity
- Socio-Cultural
- Working Landscapes

Highest Values. Selected features and areas from the Summed Values determined to be indispensable for the HRM:

- Indispensable Patterns & Highest Ecological Values
- Socio-Cultural
- Working Landscapes

Potential Risk Values. This category identified areas of highest value—at risk of being threatened. These areas were proposed for active protection:

- Ecosystem and Biodiversity Values

3. **Questionnaire:** online and in-person

How We Analyzed the Input

The feedback gathered was consolidated into a database, and individual comments and ideas were categorized by topic wherever possible (i.e. seven guiding principles and three themes). In addition, overarching recommendations for the report emerged as an important focus for further discussion, particularly coming out of the in-person events. As a result, these were tagged as a separate category during analysis.

3. WHAT WE HEARD

Generally, the draft **work** was well received, and citizens were able to provide rich, highly-detailed responses. The engagement activities (open houses, interactive online map, comment forms, meetings and workshops) resulted in 1715 comments from across the HRM.

- Eight (8) open houses resulting in 284 verbal comments
- Interactive map received a total of 1051 “push pins” in April/May 2016
- 380 Comment forms received online and in person
- Two (2) stakeholder update meetings
- One (1) government workshop

During phase 2, comments in response to the draft **work** were shared with the project team in the following general categories:

- General comments (overarching recommendations)
- Guiding principles
- By theme
- Spatially referenced comments

The comments collected over the course of the Phase 2 engagement process will be essential to the development of a robust and thoughtful strategy moving forward. Recurring comments highlighted the need to enforce regulations, to encourage collaboration between all levels of government, and to ensure a balance between the three themes (ecosystems, working landscapes, and sociocultural) when addressing the differing functions of the area. Overall, the plan was met with support and with the recognition that this is a unique opportunity to use the collected data to inform decision making in an innovative way over the coming years.

The following is a summary of issues, considerations, and actionable recommendations in response to the suggestions heard in this phase.

General Comments

Ideas about process from public feedback

During the analysis of the comments, the following questions helped frame the reporting of citizen feedback:

- Were there any patterns/differences between what we heard from different places (urban vs. rural commuters)?
- What big messages were conveyed?
- What recommendations were presented to the project team that would be of value while developing the final plan?

From the analysis of this qualitative feedback, the following are some strategies or ideas that emerged as recommendations to support improved processes:

- Need for new, more, or further collaboration, particularly with the Province regarding overlapping jurisdictions

- Concerns about planning approval process and enforceable actions, while keeping in mind not to over-regulate
- Tools for implementation
- Clarifying land ownership and management responsibilities
- Clearly determining the owner and champion of the plan once completed
- Consider budgeting for educational programs in the implementation strategy
- Include an educational component in the policy set
- Need mechanism for amendments; create a platform for a non-static plan

Comments tagged with collaboration

A number of comments suggested building new, more, or further collaborative relationships with various groups:

- Re-engage and continue collaboration with the Province, Department of Natural Resources
- Public into the engagement process
- Stakeholders (non-exclusive)
- Coordination between HRM departments
- Consider establishing a Green Network Advisory Committee

Alignments with regulatory documents, policies, projects, processes

The highest number of comments were related to ensuring alignments with other projects, or inform

- Municipal development application process
- Regional Plan
- Fall River Visioning outcomes, such as trails and open space
- Off-leash dog parks: staff report (2004), HRM/Calgary consultation (2007), pilot parks (2008)
- Department of Natural Resources regarding forest management
- Park rationalization
- Land Suitability Analysis
- How to address Cultural Landscapes? Port Wallace LSA process.
- Ross Cantwell Study
- Finer-scale investigations

Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles were met with overwhelming support. Based on the Questionnaire results, the majority of participants “Strongly Agree” with all seven Guiding Principles. (See Appendix A for the detailed summary.)

Other comments highlighted the following issues and recommendations:

Connected

- Connectivity and buffering existing protected areas is critical
- Partner with jurisdictions outside of HRM boundaries for access to data of the neighbouring areas

Grounded in science

- Concerned about long-term impact of climate change and sea level rise
- Decision makers (eg. local council) should refer to data to make informed, science-based decisions, encouraging sound and defensible actions
- Ensure data is robust enough to make accurate, informed decisions
- Ability to revisit and update data in the future
- Test data to create evidence and prioritization and inform rationale and good decision-making, prior to finalization

Sustainable

- Develop strategy to prioritize natural preservation against development
- Prioritize cultural preservation
- Disheartened by past track record – need implementation plan to ensure preservation and protection
- Involve all levels of government and community in implementation plan

Diverse and contextual

- Ensure balance between ecological value, recreational activities, cultural significance, and economic viability
- Access to water and open space (for recreation)
- Balance with preservation of water systems, wetlands, forests, etc.
- Recognize the important role aquaculture plays in certain communities

Multi-functional and resilient

- Ensure balance between ecological value, recreational activities, cultural significance, and economic viability
- Foster responsible development
- Enforcement of development guidelines/plan
- Flexibility in guidelines so as not to stifle a family's ability to make a livelihood
- Citizens often feel helpless against developers

Coordinated and stewarded

- Clarity needed in land ownership and management responsibilities
- Give citizens/communities the tools to help implement the plan
- Community stewardship programs
- Ensure alignment with other regulatory documents, policies and projects
- Provincial and municipal plans must be aligned with one another
- Need for new, more, or further collaboration, particularly with the Province regarding overlapping jurisdictions
- Develop working relationship between all levels of government and stakeholders to ensure ongoing productive decision making (data sharing, etc.)

Equitable and inclusive

- Open access to information for informed decision making
- Ensure marginalized communities are recognized
- Ensure public input is respected and heard

Themes

The questionnaire results showed that each Goal and Objective is overwhelmingly supported by the majority of respondents. (See Appendix A for the detailed summary.)

The overall comments received indicate a distinct need to create a balance between the three Themes. There is a desire to preserve ecological lands and cultural heritage, while also planning for economic stability of individual livelihoods.

Theme 1: Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Comments Overview:

- General concern that development will supersede any strides made with the Green Network Plan
- Council needs to enforce actions
- Long-term environmental effects (e.g. climate change, sea level rise) need to be taken into consideration
- Protect watershed, wetland, and forest areas from quarry, logging, and subdivision runoff
- Universal access to open space and water, especially for those without capital
- Get detailed forestry information – coordinate with Province (20 year plan)
- Prioritize riparian buffers
- Need to preserve and protect to decrease further loss (e.g. habitat, bat hibernaculum)
- Concerned about damage to natural corridors in conflict with growth areas
- Concerned with ownership of natural areas, buffers
- Concerned trails will lose their protection
- Concerned about fracking
- Concerned about migratory birds
- Archipelago has significant ecological value
- Enjoy wilderness close to the city
- Community stewardship for nature preserve
- “Take one down, plant one” approach to tree planting
- Dark sky data

Actionable Recommendations:

- Develop and enforce regulations to ensure the HGNP and other related/subsequent strategies are prioritized
- Develop long-term climate change strategy
- Define ownership and management responsibilities of coastal and ecologically significant land
- Develop a water management master plan to ensure watershed protection of wetlands and forests from development and industrial run-off
- Foster community stewardship for further layer of local ecological protection and preservation

Theme 2: Working Landscapes

Comments Overview:

- Development done right
- Stringent development regulations and enforcement to ensure developers abide by rules
- Flexible development regulations to allow for innovative development tools and so landowners can make a living
- Develop strategy for lot sub-division
- Connect with Provincial forestry plan
- Recognize fisheries and aquaculture areas are critical to livelihoods
- Create requirement for developers to use trees elsewhere
- Recognize that people *want* to live/work in rural areas
- Include input from developers on public record
- “What do we do to remain viable and make a good livelihood?”

Actionable Recommendations:

- Regulate development through innovative strategies that balance ecological and cultural significance and continue to allow landowners to make a living. Enforce regulations to ensure developers abide by the rules.
- Conduct open water study to better understand the significance of areas used for aquaculture and fisheries

Theme 3: Sociocultural

Comments Overview:

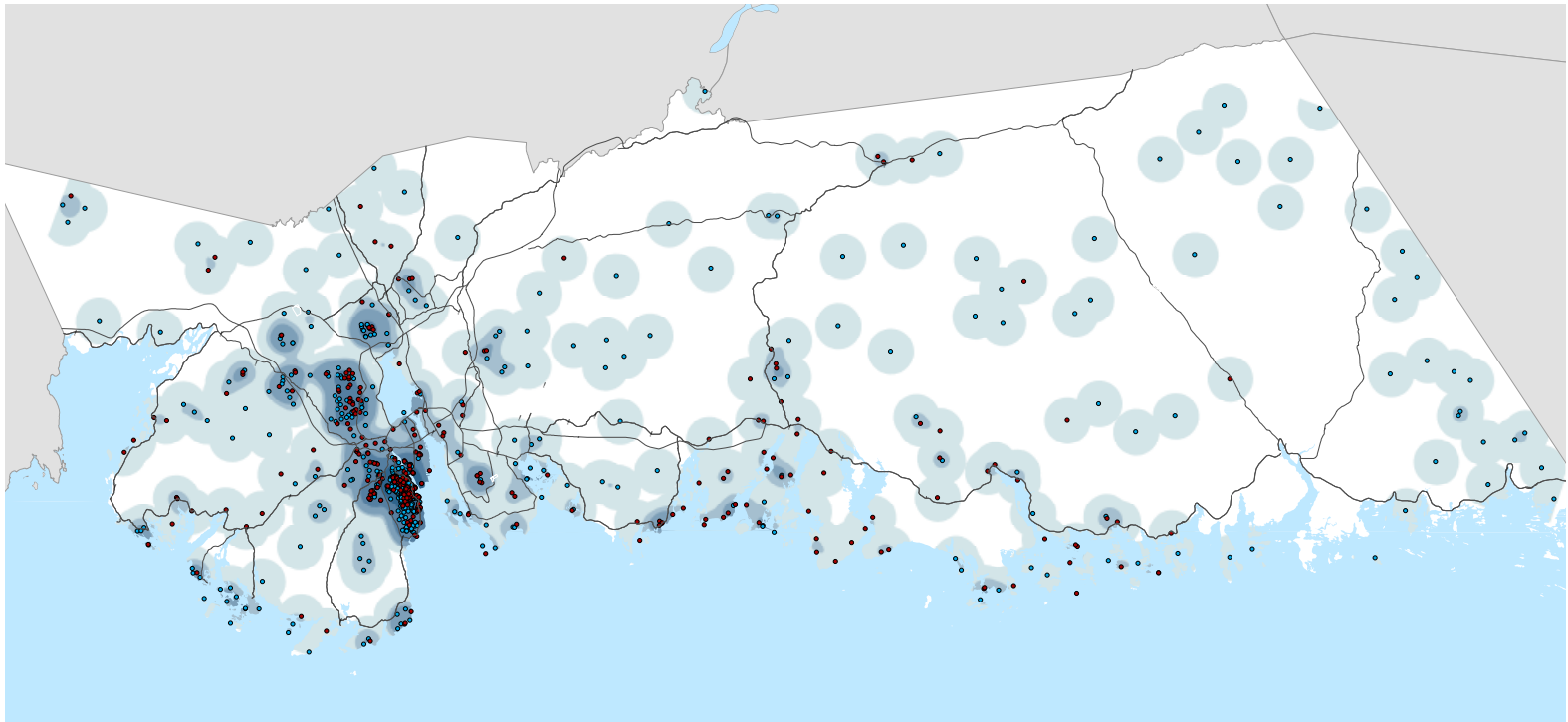
- No exclusive access to water
- Mediate recreational pressures during summer months
- Wilderness hiking experience on only section of undeveloped coastline
- New parks and picnic areas
- Some of the best hiking trails in the province
- Evaluate the Social Return on Investment – look not just at economic value of developing, but at social and environmental impact of not developing
- Communities need to engage to protect cultural landscapes
- Islands are important cultural landscapes and are fundamental to growing tourism
- Develop a coastal communities plan
- Active fishing harbour adds to scenic value

Actionable Recommendations:

- Use the Social Return on Investment as a measurement to balance the economic value of development and industry against the social and environmental impact.
- Develop a coastal communities plan.
- Evaluate seasonal recreational pressures.
- Develop strategy to continue to actively engage citizens to protect cultural landscapes and foster community stewardship.

Spatially Referenced Comments

The interactive map component of the Phase 2 engagement received over one thousand comments, highlighting areas of significance and spatially correlated concerns. The map below demonstrates the density of comments placed on the online map by participants. The areas of Birch Cove and the Backlands show the highest volume of comments received.

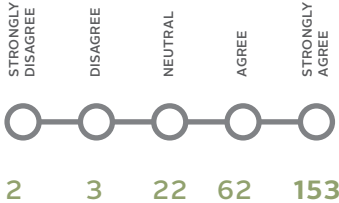


Analysis of this data underscored the importance of several locationally specific issues, strongly in line with the aforementioned Themes and Guiding Principles. Sociocultural amenities like hiking and biking trails, swimming spots, and canoe/kayak access points were emphasized. The more general themes of Ecosystems and Biodiversity were reflected in the high number of comments related to conservation and protection, as well as ecology. Summative maps and sample comments in Appendix B illustrate further the major ideas collected by the interactive map.

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire Results

The following pages illustrate the results of the in-person and online questionnaire. With 380 individual responses, the total number of responses under each category (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree) are documented beside each question, as illustrated below.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following are Guiding Principles that provide overarching direction to the Halifax Green Network Plan.

CONNECTED

A network of inter-dependent open spaces across land and water, that are linked physically and visually to maintain ecological functions, regional identity, recreation opportunities as well as quality of life.

GROUNDING IN SCIENCE

The Green Network Plan will be founded on the best available science in conservation biology, landscape ecology and social sciences. It will adapt as new information and approaches becomes available.

SUSTAINABLE

The Green Network Plan will guide the shaping and sustainable development of the region by conserving environmental quality, enhancing cultural and recreational opportunities and creating complete communities in which to live, work and play. Current and future generations will benefit from the protection of important ecological, cultural and working landscapes, that allow for sustainable agriculture and natural resource development while maintaining the unique characteristics of the region that support a thriving tourism industry.

DIVERSE + CONTEXTUAL

A network of open space that provides a diversity of open spaces to meet current and future regional demand. Contextual open spaces provide place-appropriate access to land and water and programming that respects the unique cultural and ecological context and meets specific community needs.

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL + RESILIENT

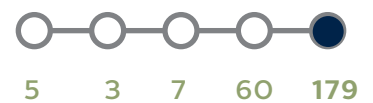
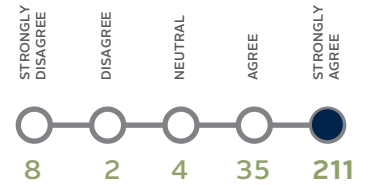
A network of open space that provides multiple functions and benefits including ecosystem services, recreational opportunities and economic opportunities. This is achieved through a flexible and adaptable open space network that serves many uses, including public amenity, habitat, green infrastructure, stormwater management, source water protection, active transportation, and lands that provide for food, goods, and livelihoods. The network strengthens the Region's resiliency and adaptability to environmental and economic fluctuations and other changing conditions over time.

COORDINATED + STEWARDED

Coordinated management and investment on both public and private lands will be achieved through public initiatives as well as collaboration and voluntary partnerships with community groups, private investors and land holders. Alignment will be maintained with existing Government plans to ensure the Green Network policies and actions are additive to those initiatives rather than redundant. The community is consulted and engaged to ensure essential local and regional needs are met. Open space resources are wisely stewarded to ensure that high quality multiple values are retained over the long term.

EQUITABLE + INCLUSIVE

Equitable and inclusive access is achieved through appropriately distributed public open spaces to provide opportunities for all residents to enjoy these areas within easy access to their homes, communities and workplaces. Public interests are balanced with the rights of land owners.



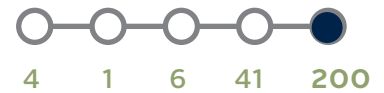
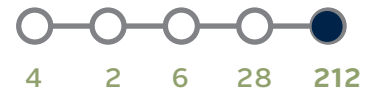
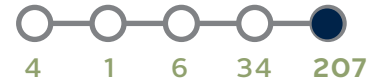
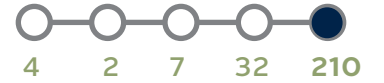
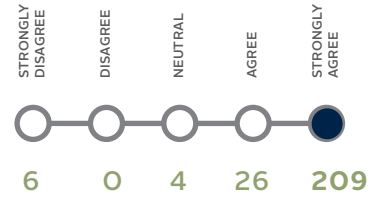
ECOSYSTEMS

Natural systems that support plant, animal and human life.

Goal: Maintain water quality and quantity for the health of our communities and the natural environment we depend on.

Objectives:

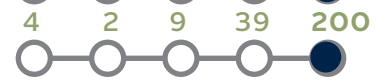
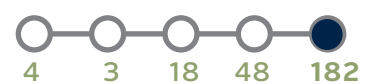
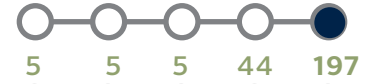
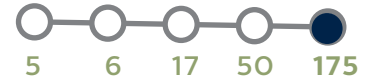
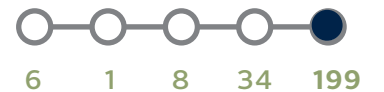
- To protect all existing and proposed surface and groundwater resources needed for drinking water supply from activities that degrade water quality or reduce its quantity;
- To ensure land use activities and community design reflect and respect environmental sustainability and public health requirements for water quality in sensitive areas, including runoff to receiving waters;
- To protect and enhance the protection of headwater streams, floodplains, riparian areas, headwater seepage areas and wetlands that control and moderate the movement and quality of water in the environment;
- To ensure landscape patterns and features – such as buffer zones – that influence water quality are not compromised by incompatible land uses or activities.



Goal: Support the long term conservation of a well functioning, connected, richly diverse ecological network.

Objectives:

- To conserve the Region's important landscape patterns through a network of Indispensable Landscape Patterns:
 - **Large patches of natural vegetation** that support habitat and species diversity, and natural hydrological processes;
 - **Connectivity between large patches** in the form of wide corridors or clusters of smaller patches of natural vegetation;
 - **Vegetated corridors** along major streams and rivers, and buffers in sensitive coastal environments to provide effective support for species movement, erosion control, water quality, and habitat;
 - **Stepping stones** of small natural vegetation patches through altered landscapes to support rare habitat and animal movement;
- To repair fragmented landscapes and fill critical gaps in connectivity;
- To protect important, unique and rare landscape elements, features and habitats;
- To support the protection of species at risk;
- To support the ecological health and functioning of coastal estuaries and environments;
- To recognize and reduce the adverse impact of land development and human access on natural systems and ecosystem function.



WORKING LANDSCAPES

Places that support economic activity

Goal: Support the development of sustainable natural resource-based economic activity.

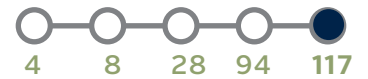
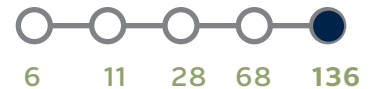
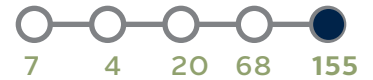
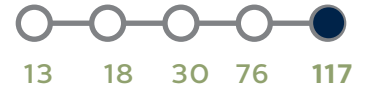
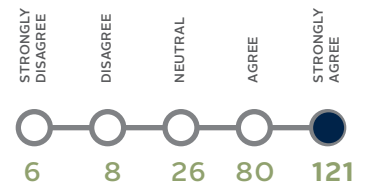
Objectives:

- To protect the productive agriculture soils that sustain regional food security and farm livelihoods;
- To ensure that important non-renewable mineral resources are accessible, and that extraction and management practices respect ecological, cultural, recreational and public health values;
- To promote sustainable forest management practices that provide economic benefits while also meeting ecological and recreational objectives.

Goal: Ensure that scenic assets, natural and cultural heritage, harbours and industrial lands are conserved for future economic development.

Objectives:

- To support the function of working harbours and ensure that it is not compromised by other uses or activities;
- To support the protection of scenic and cultural landscapes and traditional land-uses that underpin a thriving tourism industry;
- To ensure that lands needed for large footprint commercial and industrial activity are conserved and developed in a manner that respects ecological objectives.



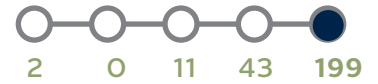
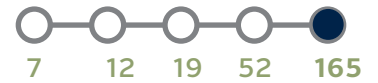
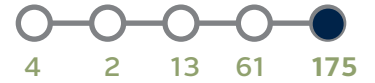
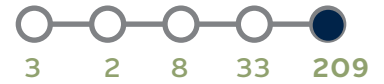
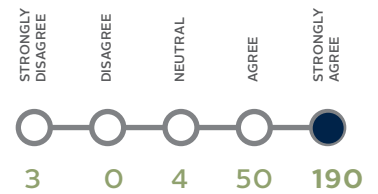
RECREATION AND TRAILS

Places we go for fun, engagement with nature, and active living.

Goal: Develop a regional public open space system that provides a range of community benefits and recreational opportunities in the regional centre, and urban and rural communities.

Objectives:

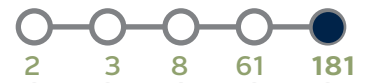
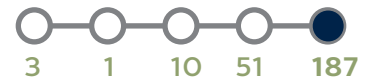
- To promote active living and enhance quality of life through the provision of a high quality system of regional parks and trails in both urban and rural areas;
- To incorporate a diverse range of park type and open space experiences in communities including plazas, squares, and promenades; school and institutional grounds; active sports / recreation areas; cultural sites; urban nature parks and green corridors;
- To provide accessible remote wilderness recreational opportunities;
- To ensure equitable access to regional, district and neighbourhood parks and trail systems throughout the region;
- To provide a well connected and extensive regional corridor, trail and water route system that includes streets, recreation trails, greenways, off-road motorized Active Transportation trails, nature trails and water routes;
- To provide an enhanced urban forest that supports public comfort, amenity and habitat in urban areas;
- To ensure that new development maintains the ecological function of the urban forest by retaining or replacing trees so that benefits such as heat moderation and stormwater management opportunities continue to be provided.



Goal: Increase public access to nature and water close to home.

Objectives:

- To provide access to and experience of nature close to major settlement areas;
- To provide increased public access to lakes, coastal areas, beaches, other natural areas and enhanced trail and water route systems regionally and within communities;
- To protect and enhance natural areas within settlement areas including urban forests, natural greenways, vegetated patches, wetlands, rivers, and lakes for their multiple benefits in shaping and enhancing communities, and protecting ecological and cultural values.



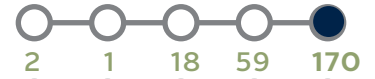
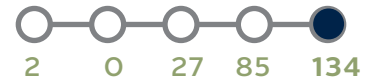
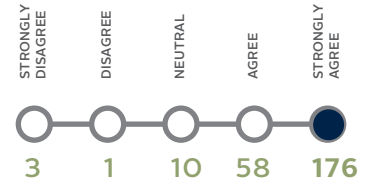
COMMUNITIES

Places We Live, Work, and Play.

Goal: Conserve areas that shape community form and contribute to quality of life and complete communities.

Objectives:

- To increase the usage of conservation design and conservation-oriented development practices to meet environmental and community objectives in the land development process;
- To ensure that open space elements within and adjacent to communities that shape the desired settlement form and contribute to the quality of life are maintained or enhanced. These elements work most effectively in planned combinations, patterns and as systems that interconnect and are mutually supportive. They include the following Essential Urban Landscape Elements:
 - **Edges** – naturally vegetated areas that contain and separate settlements;
 - **Wedges** – large naturally vegetated lands or waters penetrating settled areas and extending out to connect with the broader regional landscape;
 - **Patches** – landscape patches of green space or water. They include:
 - Parks and squares
 - The grounds of schools and institutions
 - Cultural sites, nodes and landmarks
 - Natural areas, lakes and other public or private green space
 - **Districts** – Areas with distinct land-use, built form and landscape patterns that give them a recognizable character and cultural identity;
 - **Corridors** including:
 - **Greenways** – linear green spaces following natural land or water features or a series of open space parcels;
 - **Natural Urban** – naturally vegetated riparian or urban forest corridors;
 - **Complete Streets** – streets designed and maintained to support safe and comfortable travel for all users regardless of age, ability or mode of transportation; social interaction; and stormwater management;
 - **High Streets and Main Streets** – primary business streets often with landscaped streetscapes;
 - **Esplanades / Promenades** – long, open, walking areas, usually next to a river, harbour, ocean or large body of water;
 - **Trails and Pathways** – trails providing recreational and active transportation opportunities for pedestrians, cyclists or ATV users;
 - **Nodes** – destinations within the network such as cross-roads or intersections.



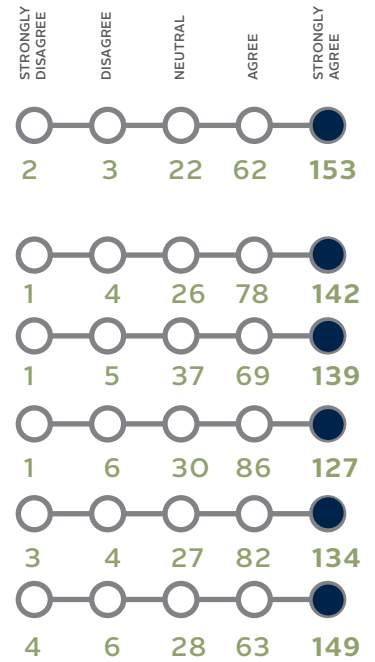
CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Places that connect us to history and define the Regional identity.

Goal: Conserve valued cultural landscapes and heritage elements

Objectives:

- To celebrate and promote the array of cultural landscapes and identities that have contributed to the overall character of the region;
- To identify and understand cultural values and landscapes through data collection, community engagement, and criteria-based decision-making;
- To establish prioritized cultural landscapes of interest for further study and potential management;
- To adopt cultural conservation strategies that are integrated into land-use planning, public lands planning and development, and Municipal decision-making;
- To ensure Mi'kmaq values and interests are identified, recognized, and incorporated into the Plan.



APPENDIX B

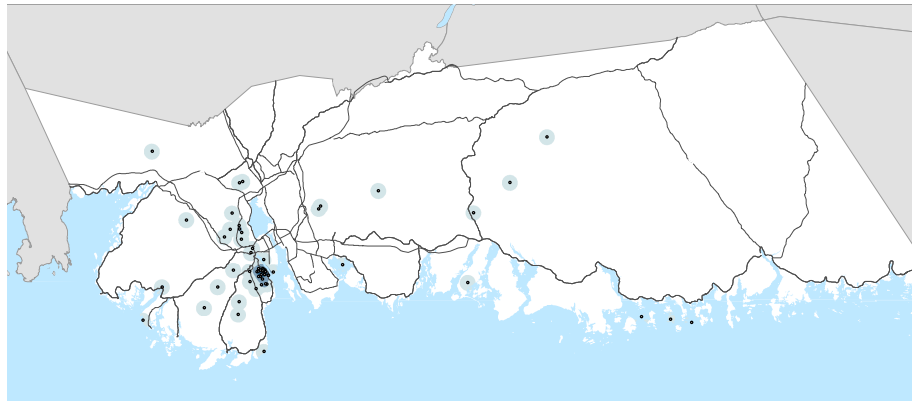
Interactive Map Comments

The following maps and sample comments summarize the major ideas captured by the online map component of Phase 2. They are strongly correlated with the Themes and Guiding Principles identified in other avenues of engagement. The following categories are synthesized from an analysis of the most frequently cited ideas and suggestions.

Biodiversity, Habitat, and Ecology

Sample Comments:

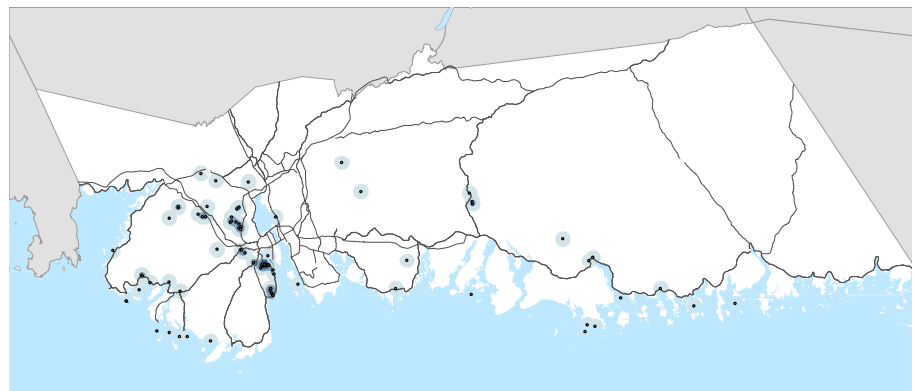
- “So much biodiversity and value in this area. Would love to see less logging!”
- “The Backlands is an ecological and recreational jewel, best suited for low-impact activity like hiking, nature study, etc. It has a wealth of biodiversity and landscape diversity.”
- “Some people use the Bog as a dumping ground - it’s a habitat for ducks and other wildlife.”



Canoe / Kayak / Boat Access

Sample Comments:

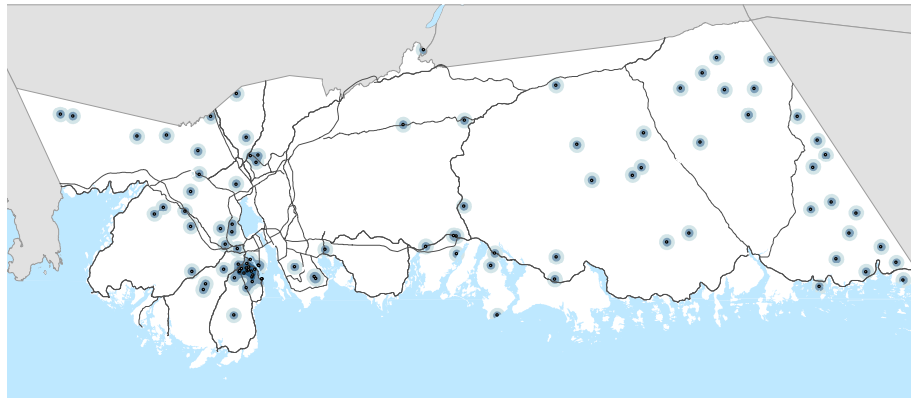
- “An extremely important boat launch. Needs signage!”
- “Just wild kayaking out here. So amazing so close to the city.”
- “This area has the potential for a great canoe day trip but finding access points is next to impossible.”
- “Can we have a somewhat safe way to get a canoe into the lakes?”



Connectivity and Corridors

Sample Comments:

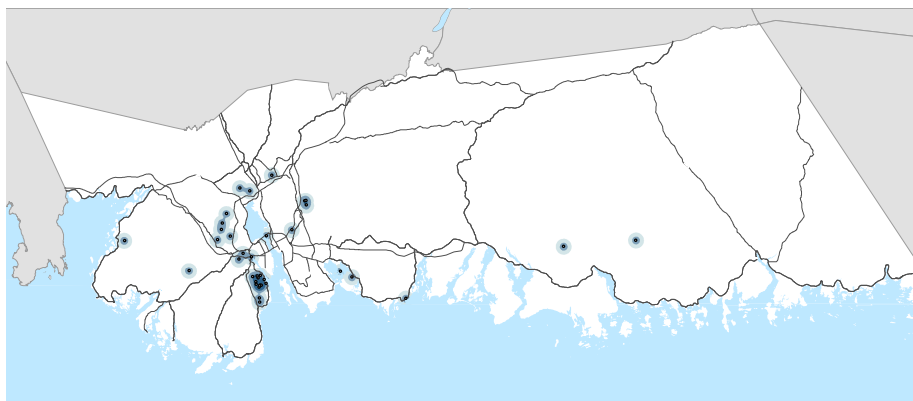
- “The connectivity pattern in this area of the map is compelling. We can still keep healthy wildlife here, but just barely, and only if we implement strong planning rules now.”
- “We need connectivity for [a] wildlife corridor between Long Lake, the wild areas around Kinston Lake and the Pennant Point.”
- “This area could provide important connectivity for wildlife and biodiversity; however, Herring Cove Road is very busy with no means for wildlife crossing.”



Cycling and Mountain Biking

Sample Comments:

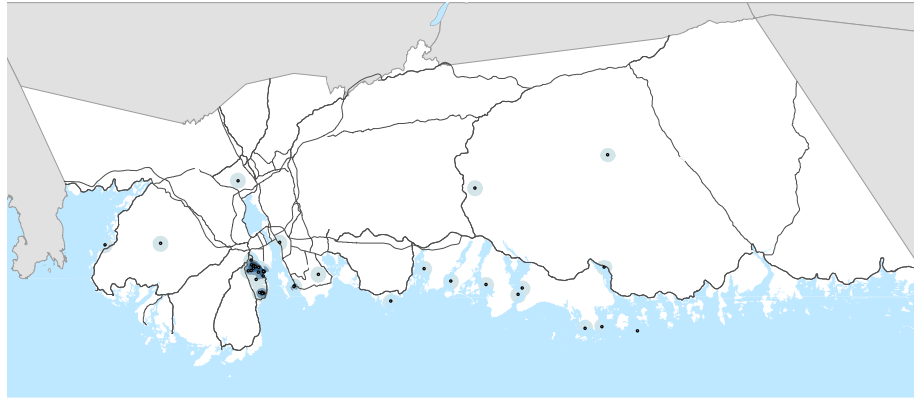
- “HRM should officially recognize this as a great mountain biking destination.”
- “Allow mountain bike access in the Western Commons. Bicycles do no more environmental damage than hiking and should not be grouped with motorized off-road vehicles.”
- “Develop more wilderness type trails here for mountain biking, not just sidewalks in the woods.”



Fishing

Sample Comments:

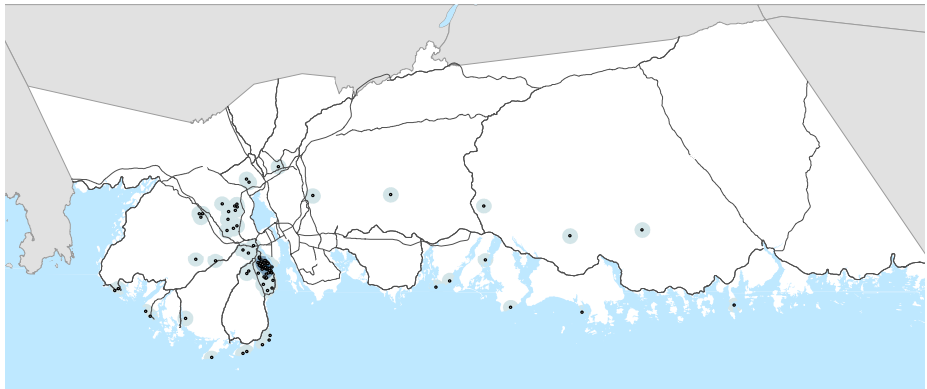
- “Great trout fishing on Eastern Pine pond.”
- “Great mackerel fishing here off the old government wharf, plus incredible views of Point Pleasant, ship traffic, McNabs, seals, seabirds, the odd whale.”
- “Years ago this was a popular fly fishing river but the run has suffered from local development over the years.”



Hiking

Sample Comments:

- “There is not only ""one favorite spot"". We love all the backlands and discover something new every time we hike here with the children. We all become adventurers! The kids especially love hiking during blueberry season.”
- “Now that the importance of the area is obvious, fair access to walkers / hikers is a priority.”



History and Culture

Sample Comments:

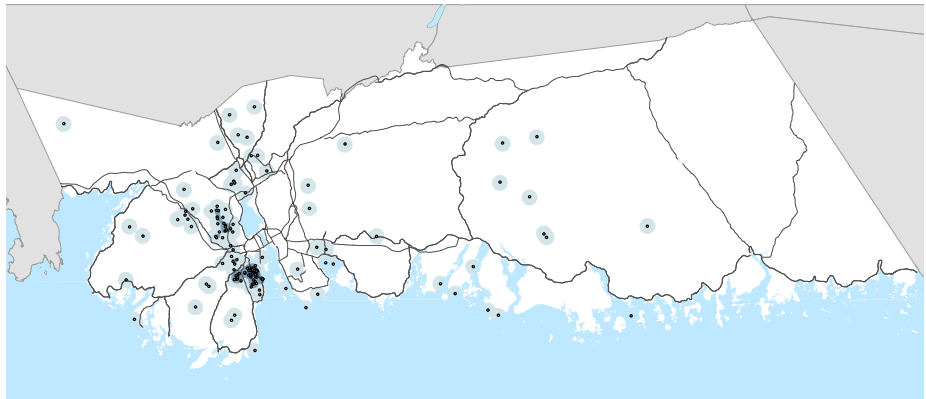
- “The Bedford Barrrens are a best kept secret. With no signage and little or no orientation, this site may be lost to development if not acknowledged by a wider community. Culture on our doorsteps that is being overlooked.”
- “It’s interesting to see the remnants of the historic train/trolley tracks and quarries, overtaken by nature but the history still echoes in the landscapes.”



Conservation and At-Risk Areas

Sample Comments:

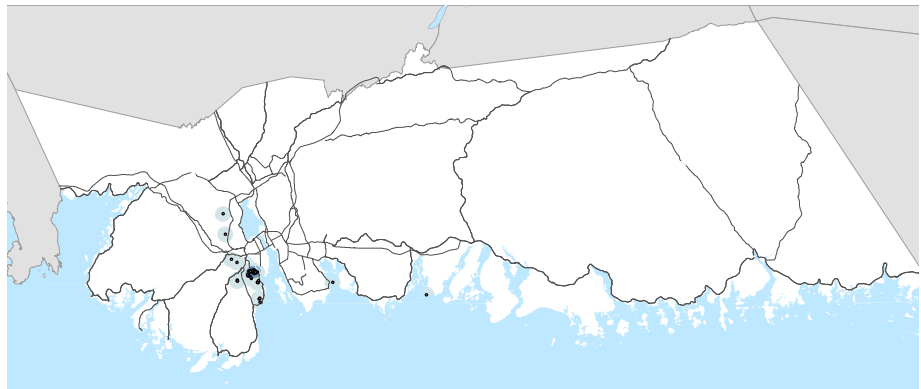
- “This is amazing! Love to see more land protection EVERYWHERE in our province!”
- “This region is one of the critically important “wedges” for urban Halifax. The crown land in this region should be designated as protected wilderness.”
- “The Blue Mountain area and hiking trail needs to be protected from development. It is a beautiful space with trails, wilderness, biodiversity.”



Swimming

Sample Comments:

- “Swimming here reminds me of my childhood – magical.”
- “We taught our kids how to swim by setting this island as a goal they could then explore.”
- “We have been swimming here at this dam for decades. A true Halifax jewel.”
- “Nice lakefront areas for picnics and swims. So tucked away you feel as though you’re thousands of miles from civilization.”



Trails and Pathways

Sample Comments:

- “I have been amazed how far one can walk into the Backlands--but with trails and markers this would be an even richer experience, and would encourage more people to come from downtown to explore, learn and benefit from this rare natural wonderland.”
- “Less big box stores more wilderness trails!”
- “Trails need to be maintained. One of the best views of Halifax here.”

