



Guidebook to HRM's Alternatives for Growth

How will HRM grow over the next 25 years? This guidebook illustrates three alternatives for what the future of Halifax Regional Municipality might look like.

The alternatives offer strategies for how HRM could accommodate an additional 100,000 residents within its borders. They represent a range of options for how HRM could grow over the next 25 years, achieve the goals and objectives of the Regional Plan, and still maintain the style and character that brings people to HRM and keeps them here.

These alternatives are conceptual. They are not a final product. They are intended to stimulate discussion about how you, as a resident of HRM, want the region to grow. You are encouraged to offer your comments, suggest modifications to any of the alternatives, or propose new alternatives that meet the Regional Planning goals and objectives.

This guidebook outlines the basic elements of the three alternatives for growth, but it cannot fully describe each one, nor answer all the questions you might have about how our region is growing. All interested residents are encouraged to come to the official launch of the alternatives, and the informative open houses following it, to ask questions, participate in a discussion or simply provide your feedback. The times and locations of these events are listed on page 23.

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The Alternatives

The three alternatives presented in this guide are based on the Regional Plan's goals and objectives, which were developed from the previous phase of public consultation and endorsed by Halifax Regional Council in January 2004. The goals and objectives relate to HRM's economy, environment, settlement patterns, transportation and Halifax Harbour.

The alternatives offer an exciting view of the future of our region - one of connected open spaces, clean waterways, and productive and integrated natural and resource lands. It's a vision of a region with mixed use, transit-friendly communities and vibrant rural villages. It's a place with inter-regional transportation systems and a diverse and strong regional economy.

All three alternatives show a region centred around a strong Capital District and Halifax Harbour, which functions as a magnet for the whole municipality and all of Atlantic Canada.

The three alternatives illustrate ideas for how we can achieve this vision.

Each alternative supports several consistent ideas that will be outlined in more detail later in this guidebook.

- **A growing economy** - by maintaining a strong regional centre, supporting the region's global competitiveness and creating opportunities for new employment locations.
- **Environmental protection** - through a network of open spaces, cleaner air, more clustered development and reduced energy consumption.
- **Building on the strengths of our settlement pattern** - by promoting healthy, walkable communities and emphasizing high quality, pedestrian-friendly building design.
- **Provide transportation choices** - by enhancing the role and scope of public transit.
- **An active Halifax Harbour** - by protecting key industrial and commercial sites and promoting tourism, shipping and freight transportation.



Townhouses are one of many housing options that could be available in a compact, mixed use community.

The Alternatives

Regional Planning Questions

The alternatives address each of the Regional Planning themes:

- What locations are regionally significant to support economic expansion?
- How do we protect our environmental assets?
- Where should we encourage settlement areas over the next 25 years?
- What type of transportation investment do we want to support our desired form of growth?
- How can we maximize the benefits of the existing and potential uses of Halifax Harbour?

Regional Planning Results

Ultimately the Regional Plan will deliver:

- policies to ensure ongoing integration among the Regional Planning themes.
- an economic development infrastructure strategy, including utilities, transportation systems and piped water and sewer.
- a plan for preserving open space and protecting key environmental assets.
- policies to help ensure new development is environmentally and financially sustainable.
- a set of maps showing where and how HRM should grow over the next 25 years.
- plans for developing and managing transportation and piped infrastructure systems.
- a detailed harbour land use plan and recommended governance structure.
- a framework for community planning.
- a list of prioritized steps to achieve policies and their approximate costs and timelines.

A copy of the Regional Planning goals and objectives and other Regional Planning research documents are available on the Regional Planning website at www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning or by calling 490-5857.

Open Space Protection

Each of the three alternatives for growth outlined in this guide could include either of these two levels of open space protection. They are shown on maps in this guide with Level 1 in dark green and Level 2 in light green.

Open spaces, including both land and water, have shaped the way HRM has developed along the coast and around parks, forests, lakes and rivers. Residents continue to say that preserving this open space, and all elements of the environment, is critical to the success of the region.

Preserving open space is an important part of maintaining our quality of life, protecting our wildlife and ensuring that our lakes and coastal areas remain fishable and swimmable for future generations. As well, preserving land for farming, fishing, forestry, tourism, recreation and mining will ensure that future generations can benefit from these natural resources.

However, HRM currently has very limited control over the protection of the region's open space.

Below are two levels of action HRM could take to protect our open space. The levels are cumulative, meaning Level 1 includes everything the municipality is currently doing, plus some additional actions HRM could take and Level 2 includes everything in Level 1, plus further actions.

Open Space Protection - Level 1

HRM would actively use its currently available regulatory powers to protect lands needed for forestry, fishing, mining, recreation, tourism, cultural heritage, critical open space linkages and public shoreline access. Many of these regulations are currently being used in the region, but not as extensively as they could be.



Open Space Protection

To make Level 1 work, HRM would need to:

- negotiate conservation easements, where private landowners would agree to protect specific features on their property.
- acquire certain lands to ensure the protection of environmentally sensitive areas, create a connection among existing open spaces and protect public access to nature.
- amend zoning, land use bylaws and other relevant legislation to address environmental protection.
- award development permits based in part on the consideration of environmental protection standards.
- encourage partnerships with other levels of government to establish areas of interconnected open space and to enforce existing environmental protection legislation.

Open Space Protection - Level 2

Heritage sites, natural resources, recreational opportunities and biodiversity can be protected through developing and using municipal legislation as outlined in Level 1. The direct protection of habitat, coastal waters and wetlands, however, is currently outside municipal jurisdiction.

Level 2 includes partnerships that HRM could enter into with other levels of government. Together with the measures in Level 1, this would enable HRM to protect wildlife habitats and to regulate development based on its impact on rivers, lakes and streams.

To make it work, HRM would need to:

- form partnerships with the provincial government and other stakeholders.
- seek increased authority for protecting the environment through the development process (changes to provincial legislation).



The Centres

The alternatives were developed using “centres” as the building blocks. Each type of centre offers a different range of activities, services and public open spaces for residents in the region. The three alternatives combine the various centres together on a map, illustrating three different ways HRM could grow and develop over the next 25 years.

Keep in mind as you look over the alternatives, that they are conceptual only. While specific areas of the region are identified in the maps, this only means they are potential centres. More centres are marked on the maps than may be needed to accommodate growth over the next 25 years. They are identified to give you an idea of where growth and density could be focussed with each alternative. Further public consultation and research will help determine where the actual centres will be located.

Each type of centre represents a style of growth. This doesn't imply that all communities will look alike. Quite the opposite is true. Preserving the qualities that make each community unique is one of the goals of Regional Planning. The centres simply represent some general patterns and characteristics that could shape the gradual growth of these communities over the next 25 years.

How potential centres were identified

Each of the potential centres shown on the maps in this guide were identified based on one or more of the following:

- They are an existing, growing community.
- They have existing or potential transportation routes.
- They have existing facilities and public meeting spaces like libraries, recreation facilities or community halls.



Regional Centre

For each of the alternatives, the regional centre continues to be HRM's Capital District and the surrounding urban core. The Capital District encompasses Downtown Halifax, Downtown Dartmouth, and the Spring Garden Road, Quinpool Road and Gottingen Street areas. As part of the regional centre, the Capital District functions as the primary cultural, entertainment and employment centre for the entire region and is recognized as the economic engine for Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.



Major Centres

Major centres would combine all the facilities and businesses that residents need in their everyday lives, as well as a variety of housing types. They would also include some employment. Development within each major centre would be in areas that have municipal services, like piped water and sewer.

Potential major centres have been identified because they are near areas that receive piped water and sewer or in an area that may receive these services within the next several years.

The Centres



Rural Centres

Rural centres would resemble major centres, but would likely be smaller and have fewer homes per square kilometre. Zoning would provide for a mix of homes and businesses, like small shops or medical offices. Rural centres could receive future piped services, like water and sewer, and some form of public transit service.



Community Hubs

Community hubs could be urban, suburban or rural, and zoning would provide for a compatible mix of homes and businesses, like dry cleaning or grocery stores, to address the needs of most residents.



Neighbourhood Villages

Neighbourhood villages would be the smallest-sized centres and would serve a local focus with zoning allowing for some conveniences, like corner grocery stores and daycare centres.

Between Centres

Growth would be provided for, subject to assessment of such factors as ground water, transportation, septic soil compatibility, and other important assets.

Foundation Strategy

The foundation strategy is the backbone of the alternatives. It remains the same in each alternative and addresses the essential aspects of the Regional Plan's principles, goals and objectives. The variations among the alternatives are the type and location of centres and the accompanying level of municipal services, like public transit and piped water and sewer.

The foundation strategy has several key elements that address the Regional Plan's goals and objectives at a broad level. Through the foundation strategy, each alternative would:

- Ensure the efficient and effective use of existing and future infrastructure, like roads, sewers, water lines and sewage treatment plants.
- Support HRM's global competitiveness through enhancing our quality of life, transportation systems and other key economic drivers.
- Support the Capital District as the economic and cultural centre. While suburban and rural employment centres will continue to be important elements of the region, the foundation strategy builds on the importance of the Capital District as the economic and cultural heart of the region.
- Provide a range of choices for where people could live, both among and between centres.
- Ensure interconnected open space. This would support recreational trails and would allow wildlife to move freely among our forests, parks and wildlife reserves, rather than limiting them to areas that are surrounded by subdivisions or highways.
- Protect cultural and heritage sites and landscapes. These sites are valuable to residents and contribute heavily to the tourism industry and the image of the region.
- Design and invest for energy efficiency. This would conserve non-renewable resources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Public parks close to compact residential neighbourhoods could encourage walking, cycling and other elements of an active lifestyle and allow residents to enjoy nature close to home.

Foundation Strategy

- Outline the boundaries of municipal services like piped water and sewer. Piped services would only be provided within specific boundaries for the urban and suburban areas and within designated rural centres. These boundaries would be broad enough to include enough land for new development in locations where municipal costs and environmental impacts would meet approved standards.
- Allow a mix of uses and affordable housing choices. More complete communities would allow mixed uses, like closely linked residential, commercial and office spaces, and a range of affordable housing choices.
- Encourage clustered and compact communities. This would facilitate walking, enable efficient transit service, reduce land consumption, and provide programs, services and infrastructure in a cost effective manner.
- Invest in public transportation, walking and cycling. This would reduce emissions, reduce or avoid congestion and encourage active lifestyles.
- Promote transportation links necessary to support a strong economy. This could include truck routes, rail lines, marine ports and airports.
- Maintain a port and marine focus for Halifax Harbour. As an economic engine for the entire region, the harbour will need to accommodate port, industrial, recreational and residential uses, with minimal environmental impacts.

Municipal Costs of Services

All of the alternatives would be more cost effective than our current pattern of growth. However, to accommodate future growth, we will need to find ways to make our tax dollar go further. The cost to the municipality to provide these services will be a critical part of the evaluation of the alternatives.

To make the foundation strategy work, HRM would need to provide or enhance many services to the whole region, like public transit, piped water and sewer, libraries and community and recreation facilities.

In general, municipal services cost less when communities:

- are more compact.
- are close to other centres.
- are well connected by good transportation routes.
- have mixed residential and commercial uses.

Please remember as you go through the alternatives in the next few pages that they are conceptual only. The centres identified on the following maps are potential centres only. No areas have yet been selected for any specific changes.

Alternative A - Regional and Major Centres

The Regional and Major Centres Alternative shows a small number of large major centres around a regional centre. Fast and frequent public transit routes would link each major centre directly to the regional centre, where business and employment would be focussed.

This pattern of growth builds on the foundation strategy, which includes elements like supporting a strong regional economic centre, establishing compact, mixed-use communities, protecting open space, offering affordable housing choices, ensuring energy efficiency and protecting valuable cultural and heritage landscapes.

Each major centre would be zoned to include facilities and businesses to serve the day-to-day needs of its residents. Each would also include some employment.

The heart of each major centre would include a compact mix of homes and businesses located close to a major transit terminal.

The homes would become less densely arranged and there would be a smaller range of businesses as you move farther away from the middle of each major centre.

Development within each major centre would be on piped municipal services like water and sewer. Rural centres would also be designated for piped services and some form of transit service. This would be in a layout similar to the major centres, but would reflect the more rural context.

Public transit would continue to focus primarily on getting residents from the major centres to our main regional employment centre. Significant park-and-ride space would be available to serve both the residents of each major centre and residents in other suburbs and more rural areas.

This alternative would preserve more rural resource land and open space than either of the other two. With fewer rural centres, Alternative A best preserves the existing rural lifestyle. However, with fewer centres, there would be less choice of housing locations.



Redeveloping underused or vacant land could encourage residential growth in the urban core, where many municipal services already exist.

Alternative A - Regional and Major Centres

Specifically, the Regional and Major Centres Alternative would:

- focus most new development in one regional centre and several major centres.
- ensure each centre contains green space, a mixed use of commercial, residential and office space, and a variety of housing types.
- organize each major centre around a strong central area with decreasing density as you move further from this core.
- locate rural growth primarily within rural centres with municipal piped services.
- develop fast, frequent and direct public transit service from the major centres to the regional centre.
- continue the role of the Capital District and surrounding urban area as the primary employment and cultural centre of the region

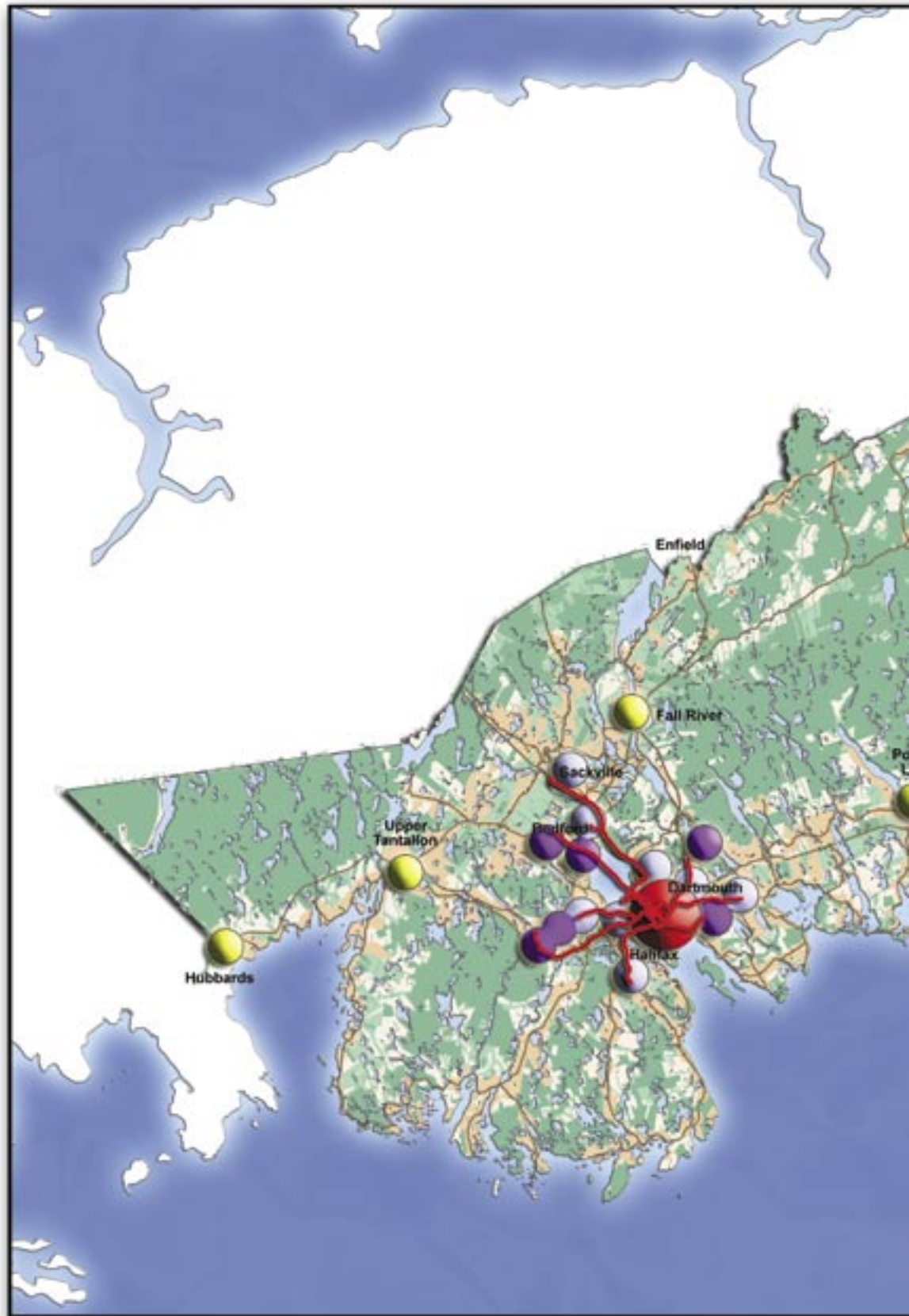


Direct transit service, such as a fast ferry, from a major centre to the regional centre is an important element of Alternative A

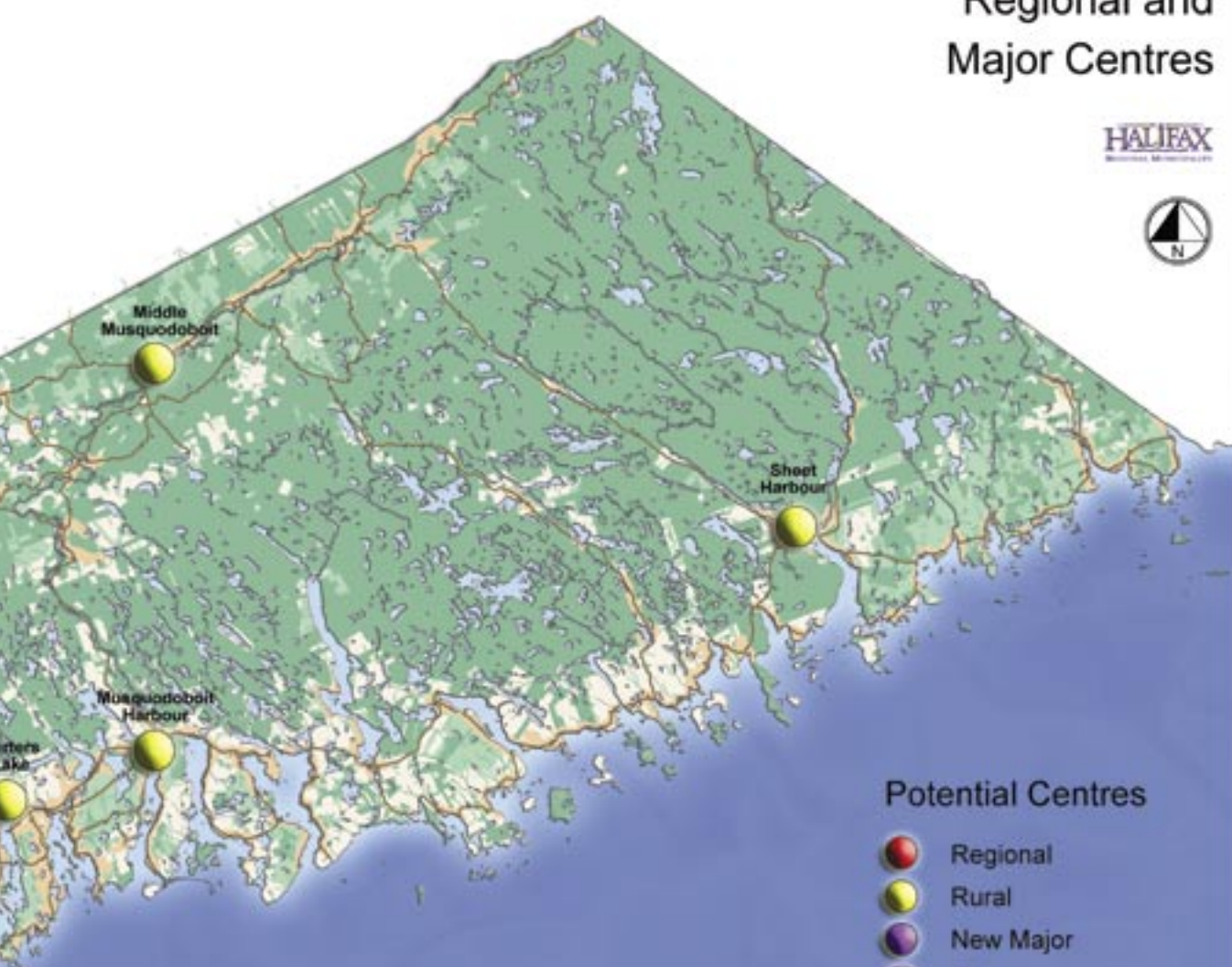
To make it work HRM would need to:

- amend land use regulations to permit a mix of uses in the central area of each major centre, with decreasing density further from this core.
- encourage redevelopment on underused and vacant urban land.
- partner with federal and provincial agencies to ensure lands within the centres are developed to their full potential.
- invest in fast, frequent and direct transit service from each major centre to the regional centre.
- provide park and ride options in each major centre.

Alternative A - Regional and Major Centres



Alternative A Regional and Major Centres



Potential Centres

- Regional
- Rural
- New Major
- Major
- Primary Transit Link
- Open Space Level 1
- Open Space Level 2
- Existing Settlement

This map is a graphical representation intended for discussion purposes only. HRM accepts no liability for errors or omissions.

Alternative B - Transit-Linked Community Hubs

The Transit-Linked Community Hubs Alternative shows a large number of smaller centres, or community hubs, along major transit routes that lead to the regional centre.

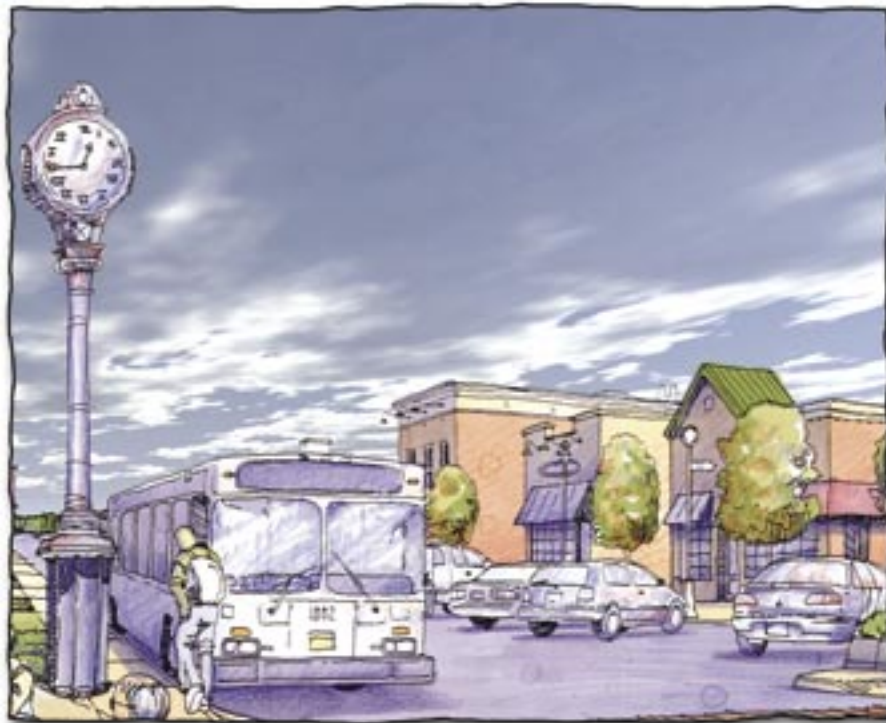
Like Alternative A, this pattern of growth builds on the foundation strategy, which includes elements like supporting a strong regional economic centre, establishing compact, mixed-use communities, protecting open space, offering affordable housing choices, ensuring energy efficiency and protecting valuable cultural and heritage landscapes.

Each community hub would be zoned to include most community services and businesses that commuters use day-to-day, clustered around a transit station. Each community hub would also include some employment.

In the suburbs and urban core, development in community hubs would be on municipal services, like piped water and sewer. Some rural centres would also be designated for municipal piped services and some type of public transit, as with Alternative A. Other rural centres, however, might use individual wells and some form of small-scale shared sewage treatment system.

Fast and frequent public transit service would link each community hub to the regional centre by passing through other community hubs. This would encourage people to use public transit, not only to reach the regional centre, but also to reach other communities.

A larger number of smaller centres provides greater walkability and choices of locations, however, more investment would be needed to provide fast and frequent transit service.



Transit stations are an important centerpiece in community hubs.

Alternative B - Transit-Linked Community Hubs



The centre of a community hub could provide transit commuters with a variety of conveniences like corner grocery stores and newsstands on their way to and from work.

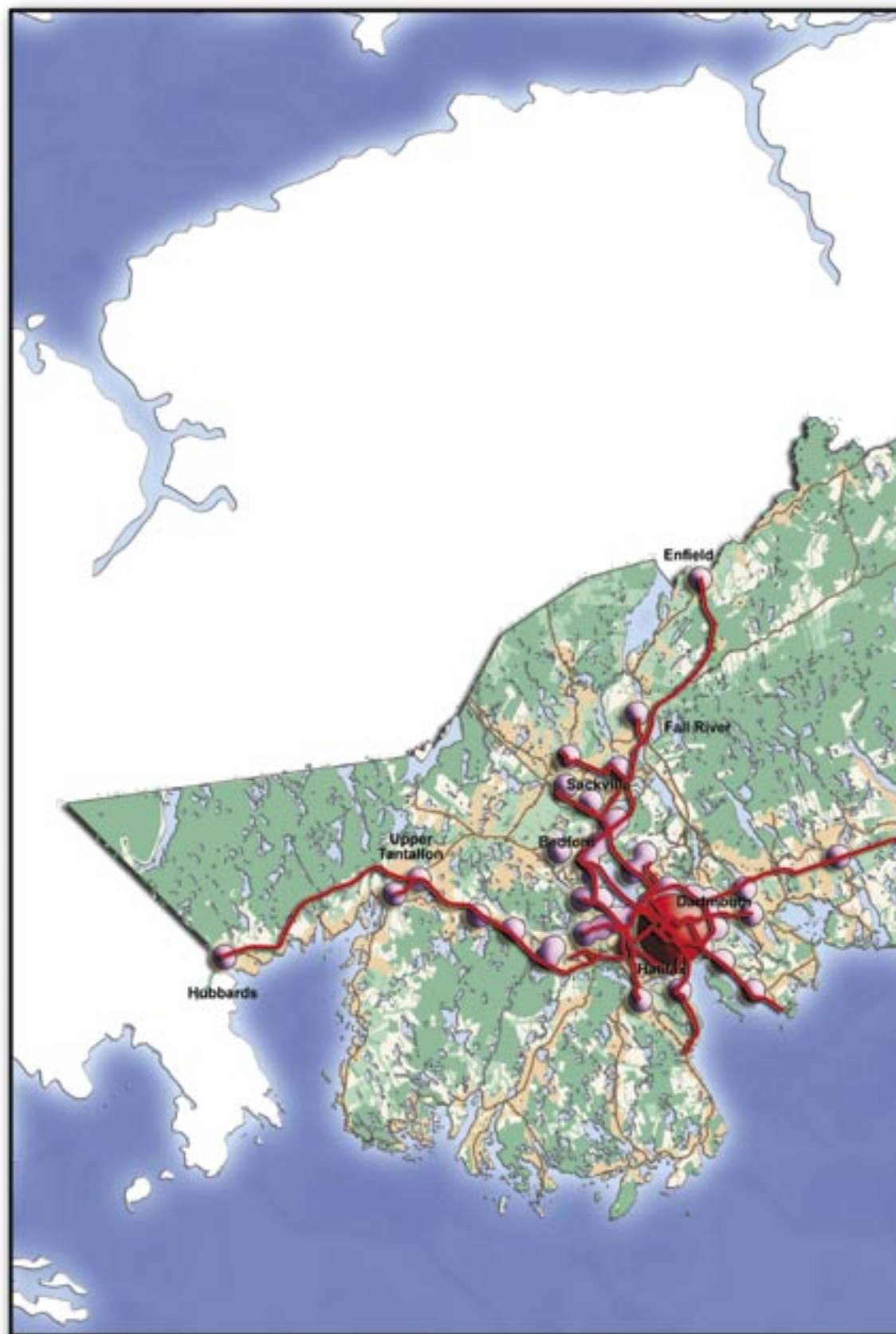
Specifically, the Transit-Linked Community Hubs Alternative would:

- focus growth in a series of compact, mixed-use community hubs located along public transit routes.
- ensure each centre contains green space, a mixed use of commercial, residential and office space, and a variety of housing types.
- provide zoning for convenient services for commuters, like corner grocery stores, drycleaners, newsstands and child care facilities close to a transit station in the centre of each community hub.
- locate rural growth within rural centres, both with and without municipal piped services.
- develop fast and frequent public transit service through community hubs, leading to the regional centre.

To make it work HRM would need to:

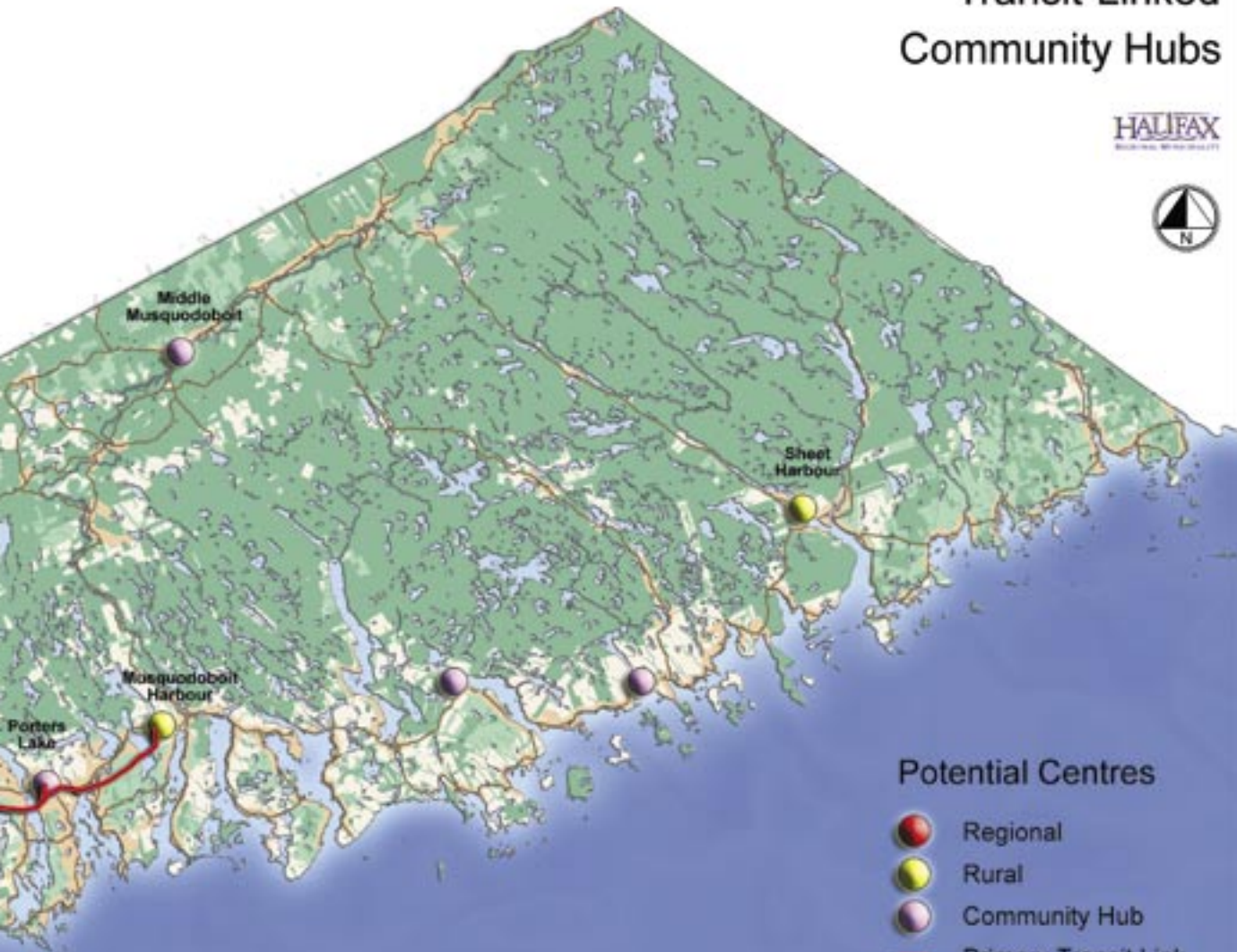
- amend land-use regulations to permit higher-density, compact centres with homes and services within walking distance of a transit station in community hubs.
- encourage "main street" type retail in each community hub.
- invest in fast and frequent transit service, linking community hubs with each other and the regional centre.
- ensure access to transit stations by foot or by a local feeder bus, with less emphasis on park-and-ride.

Alternative B - Transit-Linked Community Hubs





Alternative B Transit-Linked Community Hubs

HALIFAX
Metropolitan Municipality



Potential Centres

-  Regional
-  Rural
-  Community Hub
-  Primary Transit Link
-  Open Space Level 1
-  Open Space Level 2
-  Existing Settlement

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Alternative C - Multiple-Hub Centres

The Multiple-Hub Centres Alternative shows a variety of centres, with different levels of service, dispersed throughout the region.

Like the other alternatives, this pattern of growth builds on the foundation strategy, which includes elements like supporting a strong regional economic centre, establishing compact, mixed-use communities, protecting open space, offering affordable housing choices, ensuring energy efficiency and protecting valuable cultural and heritage landscapes.

Alternative C includes a mix of all five centre types. With each type getting successively smaller they are: the regional centre, major centres, rural centres, smaller community hubs and neighbourhood villages.

Neighbourhood villages would be primarily residential, but more compact than conventional suburban subdivisions. Zoning would provide for conveniences like small shops and daycare centres located in the centre of the village.

Like Alternative B, some rural centres would be designated for municipal services like piped water and sewer and some form of public transit. Other locations would be designated as a community hub, with some type of small scale shared sewage system. Neighbourhood villages could also take advantage of shared septic systems.

Basic public transit service would be provided close to the centre for urban and suburban neighbourhood villages, while more rural areas could offer services like dial-a-ride, shared taxis or ride sharing clubs.

While this alternative provides the most opportunity for rural growth, it also means higher density than rural communities have seen in the past. With more growth focused in rural centres, more choices would be available for locations to live. There would be higher costs associated with providing services to a wider range and a larger number of centres and/or services would be spread more thinly.



The focal point of each centre could include green space and a mix of homes and businesses.

Alternative C - Multiple-Hub Centres



Rural centres could have either municipal services like piped water and sewer or some type of small-scale shared sewage system. They could also have some form of transit.

Specifically, the Multiple-Hub Centres Alternative would:

- provide for growth within a broad range of centre types.
- ensure each centre contains green space, a mixed use of commercial, residential and office space, and a variety of housing types.
- organize each neighbourhood village around a focal point, like a local transit hub or public park.
- focus rural growth within rural centres and smaller neighbourhood villages, both with and without piped services.
- provide transit further into the rural areas of the region, with less emphasis on fast and frequent transit within the suburban and urban areas.

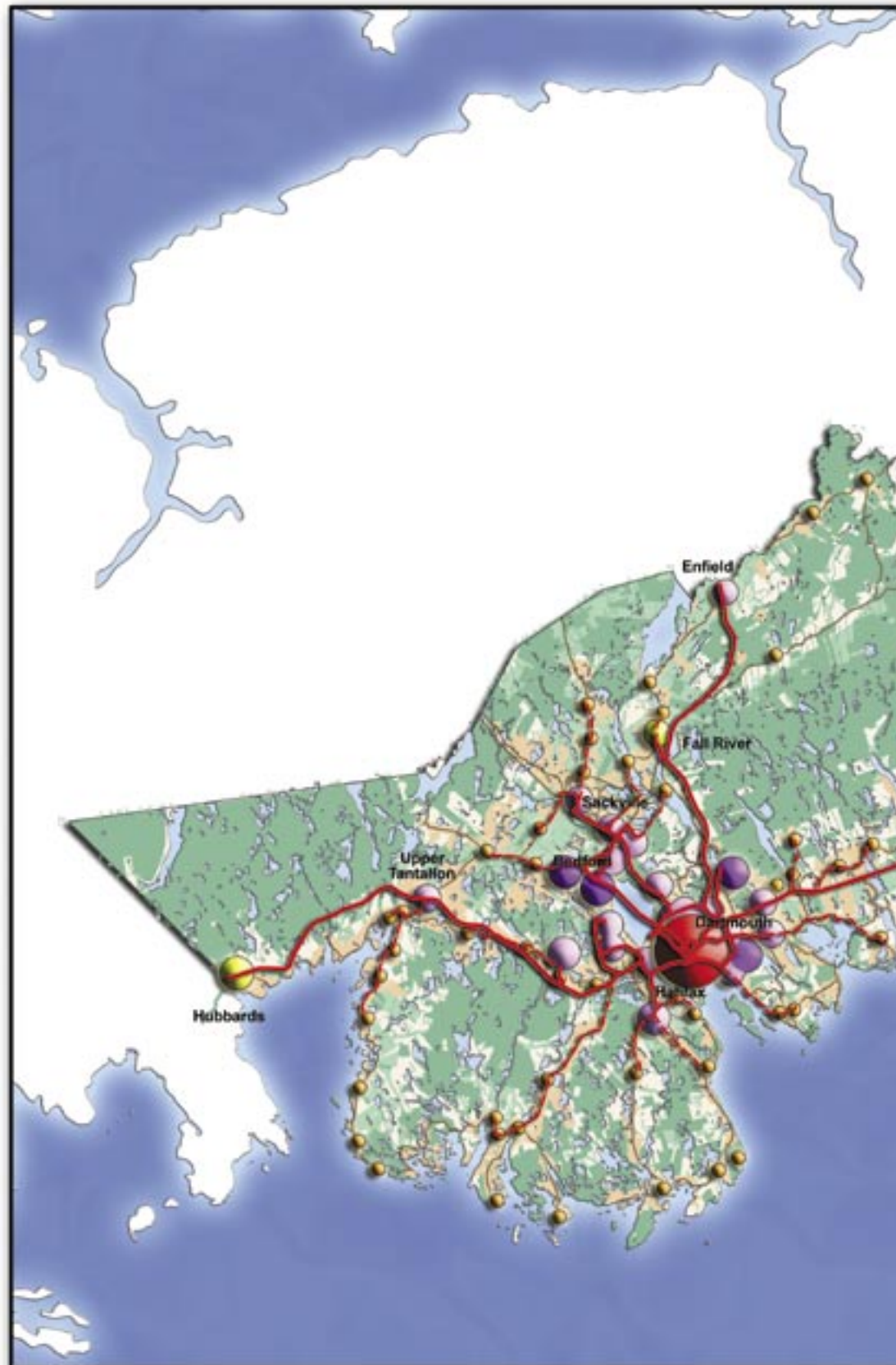
To make it work HRM would need to:

- amend regulations to permit a broader range of community types and encourage neighbourhood village development across the rural areas.
- through zoning, encourage services like child care centres and convenience stores within neighbourhood villages.
- invest in a transit service that provides a broad "hub and spoke system", including feeder buses and transfer points among centres.
- encourage innovative transit options like dial-a-ride and shared taxis to serve neighbourhood villages.



Neighbourhood villages would be primarily residential, but would be more compact than conventional subdivisions.

Alternative C - Multiple-Hub Centres



Alternative C Multiple-Hub Centres

HALIFAX
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Potential Centres

-  Regional
-  Rural
-  New Major
-  Community Hub
-  Neighbourhood Village
-  Primary Transit Link
-  Secondary Transit Link
-  Open Space Level 1
-  Open Space Level 2
-  Existing Settlement

This map is a graphical representation intended for discussion purposes only. HRM accepts no liability for errors or omissions.

Evaluation of the Alternatives

Public feedback will determine whether the alternatives proposed in this guide are on track for growth in HRM. It will also allow for changes or additions. Staff will then evaluate the alternatives based on criteria that outline how well each alternative answers the Regional Planning goals and objectives. Visit our website or call 490-5857 for a copy of the goals and objectives.

How will the alternatives be evaluated?

The evaluation process will allow staff and the Regional Planning Committee to look at and describe the strengths and weaknesses of each alternative. It will compare how each alternative performs in comparison to the others and in comparison to what would happen if no major changes were made to the way HRM is currently growing.

The same set of criteria will be used to evaluate each alternative. The criteria will, as much as possible, be number-based, so the results can be quantitative, and therefore, more objective.

The evaluation process itself will not include a recommendation or the selection of one alternative over another. It is meant to serve as an information tool to help understand the strengths and weaknesses of each alternative. This will help the public, and ultimately Regional Council, make an informed decision about how HRM will grow over the next 25 years.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria will include, but not be limited to:

- costs associated with each alternative.
- the amount of open space protected.
- the reduction in vehicle emissions and congestion on busy roads.
- the capacity of soil and water to accommodate development.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process will include:

- identifying and selecting appropriate evaluation criteria for each Regional Planning goal and objective.
- evaluating the alternatives using the selected criteria.
- preparing an evaluation summary.
- conducting and analysing potential “what if” scenarios. (i.e. What if the projected population increase is less than anticipated?)
- present the results of the evaluation to Regional Council and the public.

Get Involved. Help Plan Our Future

We're looking for your feedback on how and where we should grow as a region.

Share your opinions with us and be a part of planning the future.

The Regional Planning Committee is hosting the launch of these alternatives, including a discussion about each alternative, its implications and the evaluation method. This will be followed by a series of open houses and information sessions in a variety of locations around HRM.

Kick-off & Launch of Alternatives for Growth

Saturday, May 15, 2004
9:00 am to 12:30 pm
Seton Academic Centre
Mount Saint Vincent University
166 Bedford Highway
Halifax, NS

Open Houses and Information Sessions

Wednesday, May 19

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Cole Harbour Place
51 Forest Hills Parkway
Cole Harbour, NS

Thursday, May 20

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Michael Wallace Elementary
School
24 Andover Street
Dartmouth, NS

Wednesday, May 26

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
St. Margaret's Centre
Highway #103, Exit 5
(behind Sobeys Mall)
Upper Tantallon, NS

Monday, May 31

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Brookside Junior High School
2239 Prospect Road
Hatchett Lake, NS

Wednesday, June 2

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Four Harbours Legion
15463 Highway #7
East Ship Harbour, NS

Thursday, June 3

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Lake Echo Community Centre
3168 Highway #7
Lake Echo, NS

Monday, June 7

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Sackville High School
1 Kingfisher Way
Lower Sackville, NS

Wednesday, June 9

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Basinview Drive Community School
273 Basinview Drive
Bedford, NS

Thursday, June 10

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Eastern Shore District High School
35 West Petpeswick Road
Musquodoboit Harbour, NS

Wednesday, June 16

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Musquodoboit Valley Bicentennial
Theatre
12390 Highway #224
Middle Musquodoboit, NS

Capital District Open House Thursday, June 17

4:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Halifax City Hall
1841 Argyle Street
Halifax, NS *This meeting will
focus on the Capital District

Monday, June 21

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
St. Agnes Church
Msgr. Leo Day Auditorium
6903 Mumford Road
Halifax, NS

Please contact the Regional Planning project office or visit our website www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning for more information.

Next Steps

Following the public consultation on the alternatives presented in this guide, the Regional Planning Committee and staff will evaluate the alternatives and present the results to Regional Council and the public in the fall. This will lead to Council's decision on a preferred alternative.

Once the preferred alternative is selected, it will define our future pattern of growth. It will be the base of the Regional Plan.

The Regional Planning Committee and staff will then prepare the appropriate policies, legislative amendments, budgets, timelines and implementation strategies that will become the Regional Plan.

The final Regional Plan is expected to be presented to Council in June 2005.

The illustrations presented in this guide are representations of ideas only. They are not a proposal for development. They are intended merely as tools to stimulate citizen discussion and ideas about the future possibilities for our region.

Regional Planning Process and Time Frame

Step 1	Public Awareness Campaign (June to September 2003)	Step 5	Evaluation of Alternatives (June to October 2004)
Step 2	Public Consultation to Develop Goals, Objectives & Opportunities (September to December 2003)	Step 6	Recommend Alternative to Council (October to December 2004)
Step 3	Develop Alternatives (December 2003 to March 2004)	Step 7	Develop Regional Plan (December 2004 to March 2005)
Step 4	Public Consultation on the Alternatives (March to June 2004)	Step 8	Adoption of Regional Plan (approximately 4 to 6 months)



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