



**Draft Regional Plan
East Preston Workshop - June 1, 2005
East Preston Recreation Centre
~ Notes ~**

Discussion Table: Governance & Implementation / Economy

Burning Questions

1. Is East Preston a target for growth and if not why not?
 - Not all communities in HRM were identified as Centres in the Regional Plan. Centres were identified based on whether they are an existing and growing community, there are existing or potential transportation routes available and/or they have existing facilities like libraries, community centres or recreation facilities. East Preston was not identified as a Centre.
 - *There was discussion that East Preston should have been considered as a Centre. This can be reviewed.*
2. Why hasn't rail transport (commuter and freight) been considered more seriously?
 - Commuter rail makes more economic sense in areas with larger populations than HRM. It is more cost effective to transport commuters by express bus than by rail in this Region.
 - An inland terminal is an option being discussed to relieve the truck traffic through downtown Halifax. This involves removing all containers from the port by rail and transferring containers to trucks in a location outside the urban core.
3. Why is the East Preston community not acknowledged in the mapping exercise?
 - The Regional Planning maps show only the designated centres, not all of the 191 communities throughout HRM.
4. Where is East Preston in the Regional Plan?
 - East Preston is located in the Rural Commutershed Designation. This means that residential growth can take place, generally using on-site septic systems and wells, where there is capacity to service

residential development with septic systems and adequate ground water supply. A concept known as Open Subdivision Design, which proposes using common septic systems for a group of houses, is encouraged to reduce the costs of ongoing maintenance of streets and to provide more open space for environmental protection.

5. How will East Preston benefit from the Regional Plan, specifically, what are the immediate changes we will see?

- The Regional Plan is still in draft form and has not yet been approved by Regional Council.
- The most immediate change that would take place if the Regional Plan is adopted would be that residential development using on-site services would be permitted for up to 4 lots for existing parcels of land, one lot per year on new lots and Open Space Design subdivision development would be allowed by development agreement for larger developments. Detailed planning for communities in HRM would begin after the Regional Plan is adopted.

6. What is the Urban Reserve in North Preston and what is the plan for that area?

- The area shown on the map is the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children lands on Main St. The Urban Reserves are large areas of undeveloped lands around the urban/suburban area of HRM where expansion of municipal water and sewer serviced land might occur. Ten sites were studied to determine where new growth might best take place. The study recommended that a portion of the new residential suburban growth occur in two areas which were the least expensive to service with transportation, sewer and water infrastructure. Those areas are Bedford West and Morris/Russell Lake. The Urban Reserve areas - shown on the Generalized Future Land Use Map in the Draft Regional Plan Guide - are areas where long term future (more than 25 years) development might go. Monitoring of development will be ongoing and the Urban Reserve areas considered if growth is faster than anticipated.
- *During the discussion, it was indicated that a convention centre is being planned for the NSHCC property. This information will be considered in the Regional Planning process.*

7. Why are we restricting rural housing growth rather than encouraging it?

- About one quarter of all new housing in HRM over the next 25 years is expected to occur in rural areas so there will still be opportunities for rural housing development in HRM. One of the concerns with rural development, however, is the capacity of the land to handle on-site septic systems. In some cases in HRM, central sewer systems have had to be installed at great expense to solve contamination problems. As well, when housing development is spread over a large area, resource land (such as forestry and farming land) is reduced, which undermines rural employment opportunities. To avoid potential problems, the Regional Plan encourages rural development using open space design subdivisions. This approach ensures land is suitable for on-site services and also reduces the amount of resource land removed from production.

8. Will Metro Transit Service improve for East Preston?

- The Regional Plan proposes express bus routes for Highway 107 with park-and-ride stops at the interchanges along the route. Rural transit service to the interchanges would come later in the roll out of the Regional Plan, and could involve shared taxi service, commuter vans or rural transit service.
9. Why is the original Preston Township in the Open Space designation?
- The Open Space designation includes mostly Crown land and forestry company holdings across HRM.
 - *There was discussion about disputed ownership of Crown land in the Preston Township. Once this is resolved, the Regional Plan can be reviewed to reflect ownership of these lands.*
10. Did the Regional Plan use HRM's diversity policy and if so how did it impact the Regional Plan.?
- HRM's Diversity Policy recognizes and promotes the diverse needs of various communities within the Region. To help achieve this goal, the Regional Planning process included consulting with many groups, communities and organizations across HRM. The proposed draft Plan also includes policies to encourage a wide range of housing and employment opportunities in HRM to meet the needs of a diverse population.
11. What is HRM's plan to make East Preston a viable community?
12. Will the Regional Plan restrict commercial development in the watershed area?
13. Is there a role for the model of local community councils in the Regional Plan?
14. How can the community participate in its own planning?
- The draft Regional Plan will establish a broad framework for growth and development over the entire HRM and also directs decisions on regional issues. Development activity in communities will still be guided by existing Community Planning Strategies which will remain in place. Beginning after the Regional Plan is adopted, these community plans will be reviewed with the full participation of the local residents to set the future direction of the community, including details like where different types of development should go. The Regional Plan also recommends that an Economic Development Strategy for HRM be created to help answer questions like how could a community grow and prosper. The Strategy will be developed once the Regional Plan is adopted.
15. When will the meeting be rescheduled?
- A meeting in the Preston will be organized once details of a future community visioning and planning process have been worked out.
16. Has the new federal immigration policy been considered in the Regional Plan?
- Immigration policy is not specifically addressed in the Regional Plan. However the plan recognizes

that immigration from outside the region is necessary to ensure a strong economy. The main thrust of the Regional Plan is to encourage that immigration by preserving those characteristics that make HRM an attractive place to live and work in. Recently an Atlantic Mayors conference discussed local immigration policies and HRM is also considering creating its own immigration strategy.

Discussion Table: Housing & Settlement
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Burning Questions

1. Why is East Preston not on the map (and how will this affect future services)?
2. Why should development be stopped in the rural areas (concern that current proposal will make some lands virtually worthless)?
3. How will housing and homelessness issues be addressed?
4. How and how soon will my rights as a rural land owner be affected?
5. What changes will be implemented in the community of East Preston?

Discussion

1. Why is East Preston not on the map?
 - There is a lot of growth happening in Dartmouth but not in the Preston area - “we need incentives to grow”
 - East Preston should be provided with services because:
 - There is a lot of land suitable for development (the largest land holding by a Black community in the Province)
 - Land development is not restricted by watershed designation
 - East Preston is located on Hwy 7 and is not isolated
 - Water quality is a problem (ie iron, arsenic and suspected health problems)
 - It makes sense to make East Preston a hub and provide water services to the area (some participants wanted to obtain more services but did not wish to be defined as a centre if that meant more regulation)
2. How will lands of rural land owners be affected?
 - The centres’ designation will provide for mixed housing development and different levels of services
 - It was felt that the following measures were too restrictive:
 - Outside the centres in rural areas only open space subdivision design will be permitted, or 4 conventional kinship lots

- New private roads will not be permitted (how will that affect cottage and other development?)
- One lot per year on new public roads will be permitted outside the centres

- Growth is restricted due to analysis of service costs and environmental constraints but some participants did not agree with this analysis

- Both HRM and its residents need predictability with regard to development and costs
- Past expenditures for sewer and water expenditures cost HRM \$80M, these funds were taken from infrastructure funds

- concern was expressed that those extensions were brought about by former sceptic field regulations and small lots but industry has learned from past mistakes and regulations have been upgraded, and remediation was shared by residents

- Open space subdivision is a good idea but it cannot be the only option for development outside centres

- Those who were born and raised in the county area want space - “what is wrong with that?”

- Clustered development should be integrated into a larger, mixed subdivision design

- If suitable conditions don't exist, conventional subdivision design should be allowed

Housing and homelessness

- Low incomes and unresolved land title issues prevent some residents from obtaining mortgages

- There is hidden homelessness in rural communities (ie individuals who cannot access appropriate and affordable housing staying with family and friends, leading to over-crowding)

- Housing maintenance is a problem due to low incomes

- There is a need for a mix of housing types ie singles, duplexes, semis, apartments

- Affordable housing should be integrated in the community

- We need incentives for affordable housing

- There is a concern that by restricting growth and increasing regulation housing costs will increase

- 3. What changes will be implemented in the community of East Preston?

- Should the Draft Regional Plan be adopted, apart from the proposed growth controls no immediate changes will take place until detailed community planning is completed.

Discussion Table: Transportation, Municipal Services & Utilities

1. Why is there no development addressed in this plan for the Preston area?
2. Typical holding of 30-40 acres, can the clusters of open space subdivision work or is this too small?
3. If there is no space in the Preston area to develop, how can you develop with the open space subdivision design?
4. Why isn't East Preston designated as a centre?
5. What policies are required to implement the open space subdivision design? (e.g. minimum frontage, lot size)
6. What is the smallest acreage required to make the open space subdivision design cost-effective?
7. Can the open space subdivision be implemented in phases and how do you get this started?
8. There is a lot of unused land between North Preston and East Preston, what will happen to this land in the next 25 years?
9. Can the North Preston water service be extended to East Preston?
 - Water quality in North Preston is questionable because of seepage from septic systems into the Lake Major Watershed
 - The sewer district should be expanded into Cherrybrook because the existing septic systems may drain into Lake Major.
 - In a watershed, there should either be full services, or no development at all
10. Why is there no benefit to East/North Preston in this plan?
11. What are the plans for windmills in this plan?
 - Windmills should be constructed away from houses or potential housing. Houses can't be sold fairly on the market if windmills are close by due to the noise they create.
12. Why is zoning in HRM a constraint for businesses in this area ?. (e.g. Mechanic shop in Cherrybrook is not allowed under the current zoning)
13. Why is there no Metro Transit service in East Preston?

14. What is the difference between the proposed express bus and the current service?
15. Why is the Park & Ride for the proposed express bus at St. John Hall? This would require residents of East Preston to have a car to access the bus service
16. Is it possible for residents of East Preston to have a shuttle bus to connect the community to the express bus service?
17. Could it be an option to loop the current Metro Transit route through North Preston to East Preston and then into the core area?
 - Speed limits are too high in the North Preston/East Preston areas. (e.g. 70km/h next to the daycare)
 - Sidewalks/shoulders of the road in East Preston are not safe for walking.
 - This area needs paving of existing unpaved roads and maintenance of all the roads in the area.
18. Why is the 25 year goal for this area the same as it is today?
19. Why are windmills being built in the East Preston area when they could be constructed further east away from residential areas?
 - East Preston want services, not windmills.
 - We live in this community because we like the quiet and open space and we feel windmills would ruin this.
 - Illegal garbage dumping is a major issue in this area.
20. In the rural area, who actually does the illegal garbage dumping cleaning? The RCMP may give out the tickets, but who cleans up the mess?
 - HRM should have a monitoring system for illegal garbage dumping in all areas.
21. Why is growth being limited in East Preston? We don't want to feel neglected any longer, we want this area to grow in population and services.
22. What services are there in this area to sustain the current population, and what incentives are there to promote future growth?
23. When the proposed express bus is implemented, will the existing Metro Transit service stop operating?
24. Are there any plans for feeder buses in this Regional Plan?

25. Why is there no plan for clean-up of Hurricane Juan damaged trees - dead falls? This is a major fire hazard in this area and there are no roads north of North Preston to control a fire if one broke out.

Discussion Table: Culture and Heritage / Natural Environment
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Burning Questions

1. What will the regional plan do to reduce green house gas emissions related to cars, trucks, etc., as a spreading pattern of development and the loss of local employment contribute to increased travel distances to work?
2. Will the active transportation plan include rural connections, funding recommendations and alternative trail use beyond the needs of commuters?
3. How will HRM Council balance development and environmental issues and interests regarding green spaces?
4. Does the regional plan tell us how, when and if, water and sewer services will be supplied in the East Preston to Lake Echo area?
5. What does the regional plan do for local parks and trails for the East Preston area and surrounding communities?
6. What methodology did staff use for the selection of proposed regional parks and why was the park at Porters Lake proposed; an area where there is mapped evidence of a threatened species?
7. Has the regional plan considered heritage protection for the traditional black communities?

Discussion

- Centralizing employment and the loss of businesses in rural communities has resulted in greater dependency on the private vehicle. Population has spread out away from the employment areas. This is causing increased emissions (pollution). The regional plan supports building on the Capital District and Regional Centre as a primary employment area, but proposes to reduce the use of the private automobile by increasing accessibility to transit. There would still be opportunities for residents to chose to live outside the regional centre, but improved transit - faster and more frequent - could offer an alternative way to get to work. Increased transit use and reduced use of private vehicles will result in lower emissions. In terms of local employment, many of the proposed centres build on services and business clusters that exist now. The centre concept is seen as one tool to strengthen local economies by providing more services and other incentives to build greater vitality into existing centres.
- Rural areas will be a part of the active transportation plan and it will focus on recreational

opportunities and transport between rural communities, as well as, the transport of people to and from work. Existing trails and open spaces will be considered in the active transportation plan; the plan will not simply focus on the use of roads and highways as corridors for active transportation. The active transportation plan will be more than retrofitting roads - it must look at all “corridors”. It must provide good linkages between buses, trails, bike lanes, walking routes, etc. Infrastructure like bus lockers at transit stops should be included, and transit schedules must reflect a person needs to get around on weekends too. A schedule designed only around people commuting to work leaves transit users with no transportation on weekends and evenings.

- The regional plan must strike a balance between providing infrastructure and protecting the natural environment and greenspaces. For example, Brightwood Golf Course. If it is determined, through a community plan, that a transportation route is essential, perhaps it should be a bus only route - no cars!

The proposal to increase the percentage of parkland dedication through subdivision from 5% to 10% is an improvement, but not enough is being done to achieve the right balance. Council must achieve a plan that balances the different things people want; balancing development rights and economic gain, with the greater good and the long term protection of the natural environment and wild green spaces; not allowing HRM to become one large suburb! What weight of importance will Council put to different interest groups - vis-a-vis, “political territory”?

- East Preston is not identified in the regional plan as a growth centre; no provisions for future water or sewer have been made in this plan. There are limitations with respect to treating sewage at the Eastern Passage treatment plant and this severely limits the areas which can be brought in for sewer services. Without access to these services, how can the community grow? New subdivisions must have water and improved sewage treatment. Alternative technologies must be fully examined for this community. The regional plan must not limit (our community’s) historic ability to grow and develop at our own pace.
- There are no local parks included in this regional plan. Instead the regional plan sets out guidelines and standards for communities to achieve local parks at the community planning level. The parkland contribution (for subdivisions) will increase from 5% to 10%; the bar is being set higher. The tool to identify priorities for individual communities will be the open space functional plan, which will provide the details as to what a community has now and what it needs based on standards. The functional plan must deal with all types of parks, including playing fields. Issues of developing parkland owned by the HRM must be addressed too. In some cases, parkland was contributed through subdivisions 15-20 years ago, yet it has never been developed into something useable for the community.
- Environmental asset mapping prepared for the regional plan, identifies Porters Lake as having significant habitat value. The shoreline must be protected to ensure water quality is maintained. Areas of existing crown to be included in a regional park include steep slopes and unstable soils. Regional park development would see a wilderness park without shoreline development. The regional plan would serve to reinforce the habitat value of this area and protect it through special designation and zoning. The province and HRM would work with private land owners to realize this objective. Protection as a regional park, as defined under the proposed plan, would provide

greater protection for threatened species as habitat areas would remain intact and not be severed or fragmented by roads or other forms of development.

- The black communities must be directly involved in identifying land use policy to recognize the traditional black communities. (Note: As there was insufficient time at the workshop to discuss issue in detail, it was agreed more discussion would take place at a future date)

Other Comments:

1. What did you come here tonight to accomplish?
 - gather information, hear concerns from other community members, and ascertain how much influence these concerns will have.
 - more clearly understand how I will stay involved in the process
 - try to understand what the plan is about and how it will help this community
2. What will make you happy you came tonight?
 - to hear that in 20 years, HRM will look more like European countryside with small centres scattered; countryside between centres with public transit and less emphasis on automobile transport.
 - to know that we land owners will be able to develop our lands and lots either individually or in subdivisions
 - knowing what weight of importance will be put to different interest groups - vis-a-vis, “political territory”?
3. What can you do to ensure this workshop is a success?
 - follow process, attend workshops, vote
 - impose the importance and value of this public participation process among family and friends