



**Draft Regional Plan
Cole Harbour Workshop - May 19, 2005
Cole Harbour Place
~ Notes ~**

Discussion Table: Settlement, Services & Housing

What's your burning question about the Regional Plan policies?

1. What is HRM's policy regarding multi-unit/semi housing in different parts of HRM - specifically Hubley #3 Highway - and what is HRM's policy for on-site services - i.e., cluster systems etc.?
2. How will they affect existing plan policies? (e.g., Preston area MDP)
3. How much background information will be required for the District (Rural) Centers to get configured at the Reg. Plan?
4. What is an Open Space design subdivision? Explain.

R-1 zoning breakdown density!
Protective Covenants Existing
Who will maintain the "cluster septic systems"?

What did you come here to accomplish?

- To get more information as we look at options for an 8 lot plan.
- To gain some first-hand knowledge of the plan.
- More clarification on Regional Plan documents.
- To be informed.

What will make you happy you came here?

- To get the info.
- To go away knowing and/or understanding more than when I came.
- More answers on Reg. Plan answered.
- Help make the plan acceptable to all

What can you do [to] ensure that this workshop is a success?

- Give my input.
- Listen & participate freely.
- Good information and clarification on key points.

VERBAL PARTICIPATION

Burning Questions

1. What is HRM's policy regarding multi-unit/semi housing in different locations - e.g., Hubley #3 Highway?
 2. What is HRM's policy for on-site services - i.e., cluster systems?
 3. How will the Regional Plan affect existing plans' policies? - e.g., Preston area MDP/MPS?
 4. Will those [existing] plans have to be totally revised? Seems like re-inventing the wheel.
- Preston MPS has effective economic development policies.
 - Are we overlooking ethnic diversity in the name of an overall plan?
 - These African Nova Scotian communities have been restricted through colonial land allocations which gave them the poorest lands.
 - Bureaucratic uniformity is not appropriate. Make sure the Regional Plan is sensitive to the ethnic/cultural, historical distinctiveness of these African Nova Scotian communities.

5. R-1 zoning breakdown - density?
 - doubles neighbourhood density.
 - don't "plunk" apartment buildings into the middle of existing neighbourhoods.
 - a "blended" approach is better.
6. Protective covenants - how will they be affected?
 - they prohibit accessory apartments.
7. Is HRM involved with protective covenants?
8. Will the Regional Plan over-ride protective covenants?
9. Who will maintain the cluster systems?
 - a condominium corporation or residents' association is a flawed concept for this purpose - people get exhausted.
 - prefer to have HRM take it over.
 - have compost toilets and other innovations been considered? Don't build the whole plan around technologies which may be superseded. Greywater systems can use lakes. Recirculating septic shared systems have been successfully installed. Electricity can be generated off-grid. Such people are not tied to utilities, yet they pay the tax, come to the centres for services, then go back into the woods where they live independently.

The NS Department of Environment and Labour are a roadblock to innovative servicing.

10. How much background information will be required for all the Centres, in order to prepare configuration criteria?
 - having development as-of-right in the Centres is a good idea.
 - Details will be worked out at the secondary planning level.
 - circle-shpaed centres don't make sense in rural areas, where a linear pattern is more appropriate. But a linear pattern still needs edges.

11. Will HRM embrace the existing Lawrencetown plan, which already addresses all the issues?
- private roads are important for kinship subdivision.
 - after six generations of land ownership, we don't want to lose the opportunity just as it dawns!
 - we resisted the old regional plan.
 - Community Plans seem to work.
 - the draft Regional Plan is very detailed - it is far more than just a "framework".
 - the draft Regional Plan is too restrictive outside the Centres.
 - the 4-lot maximum doesn't address small developers.
 - Hold a meeting at the Lawrencetown Community Centre, which serves six communities.

Other Discussion

1. Is there no minimum road frontage? Kinship lots are awkwardly shaped with little or no frontage.
 - Immediate requirements for development agreements will slow the application time line.
 - Allow 10 lots instead of 4 between the Centres of the Eastern Shore for marketability. The number of lots that should be allowed may differ from one portion of HRM to another.
 - Private roads are important.
2. Who will provide trails, etc., in the shared open space for cluster subdivisions?
 - Development agreements for the clusters will add to timelines and cost.
 - “Prohibit” is too strong. If it’s negotiable, I can live with it.
 - A country (private) road needn’t have a 66-foot right-of-way!
 - The private road issue comes down to affordability.

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| Discussion Table: Settlement & Housing |
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Burning Questions

1. Once the Regional Plan is approved, how will planning controls be introduced?
2. What is the Regional Plan proposing and how will it affect the area where we live and the land we own (community of Oldham and Halifax and Dartmouth)?
3. How is the Regional Plan going to control the so called “infilling” of R-1 areas (to allow for accessory dwelling units)?
4. What areas is HRM concentrating on for future development?
5. In implementing this Regional Plan, how will HRM address the economic loss of employment (jobs) in the residential construction industry?

Discussion of the Burning Questions

Question 1

- Concern over length of time that will be required to review community plans, and how is priority determined.
- Need assurance that there will be adequate public involvement in the community planning process.

What the Draft Regional Plan says:

- Draft Plan proposes that following its adoption, community visioning exercises and reviews of community and secondary plans will commence, to include extensive public consultation.

Question 2

- Concern that property in rural areas will not be allowed to develop
- Is the growth pattern (Alternative 'B') an original idea or is it in place in other municipalities?
- What is open space subdivision design? How does it work?
- How will the shared septic systems be managed and maintained?
- Was any consideration given to the use of sewage holding tanks rather than septic systems?
- Will there be snow removal, garbage pick-up, school bus service, etc. to the open space design subdivisions?
- How do open space design subdivisions deal with irregularly shaped/sized lots, steep slopes and soil issues?
- Suggestion that development should only be permitted in areas where there is adequate well water and good soils for septic tanks.
- Can the Regional Plan adequately address the issues of open space subdivision at this time? Neither HRM nor the Province has determined the mechanics as to how this concept will be implemented.

What the Draft Regional Plan says:

- Draft Plan proposes a number of development options for development within suburban and rural areas, for example, encouraging housing development within centres, allowing for open space subdivision design, up to 4 lots through traditional subdivision design and 1 lot per year thereafter. Options for ownership and maintenance of shared septic systems are being discussed with the province. The draft plan proposes that all development occur on public rather than private roads, so municipal services (snow plowing, garbage collection, etc.) will be provided. The open space subdivision design is proposed to be considered by means of development agreement, and this process will determine the suitability of the design in terms of soils, waste water management, groundwater, topography, traffic, and so on.

Question 3

- Need to determine and implement proper controls for allowing secondary units (including basement apartments) in R-1 zones. If HRM cannot control the impacts then it should not be permitted. The integrity of the R-1 zone should be maintained.
- Are secondary units in R-1 zones going to be implemented as part of the Regional Plan?
- Enforcement of by-laws is lacking on many issues. This should be a prime emphasis of the plan. How are all these policies going to be enforced?
- While the Regional Plan speaks to promoting more diversity within communities, for example mixed use neighbourhoods, there should be more inclusiveness in the policies. Policies should be strengthened to allow for age-in-place opportunities and seniors housing, housing for persons with disabilities and day care opportunities. Need a variety of housing options within communities, a better definition of affordable housing and an affordable housing program.
- Look more closely at redevelopment site opportunities that already exist, in relation to affordable and inclusive housing options.

What the Draft Regional Plan says:

- Draft Plan proposes that as part of the community visioning process and process to review community plans, which will follow the adoption of the Regional Plan, issues and opportunities associated with the provision for affordable housing, housing for seniors, students, the disabled, day care, etc. will be considered and discussed with all communities through public consultation.

Question 4

- Concern that most future (serviced) growth is being directed to only a few areas owned by 'big'

developers, and concern that the lack of competition and choice will drive housing prices higher.

- Concern that there is a concentration of development in areas which will not be affordable for many consumers.
- Other suggestions that the Plan is encouraging growth in more areas than the three big serviced areas.
- Concern that there are not enough business opportunities for the 'smaller' residential developers.

What the Draft Regional Plan says:

- Draft Regional Plan proposes future development in the three 'greenfield' sites, within the Regional Centre and Capital District, within all district and local 'centres' in the urban and rural areas, within other rural areas by means of the open space subdivision design concept, and through the redevelopment of certain opportunity ('brownfield') sites.

Question 5

- Will the existing interim growth controls be lifted with the adoption of the Regional Plan in the fall of 2005, or will this have to wait until the Province authorizes hydrological testing?
- Concern that the current (interim) growth controls are forcing development to already-approved lands owned by a few major developers. This affects housing choice, availability and affordability.
- New home construction is slowing down, housing prices are going up, jobs are being lost, it is hurting the small developers/home builders, and this could be due to the lack of land available for development because of the interim growth controls.
- Regional Plan needs to ensure that adequate lands are made available for development, apart from the lands owned by the major developers ('greenfield' sites).
- Other suggestions that there are many factors that contribute to the economics of the housing market, and that it may not be attributable solely to land availability and the interim growth controls.

What the Draft Regional Plan says:

- Draft Regional Plan proposes that the interim growth controls will be lifted upon the adoption of

the plan and upon HRM receiving legislation from the province to require hydrological studies. Concerns about the impacts of Regional Plan policy on the residential construction industry (opportunities and issues) will continue to be discussed with industry representatives and Council.

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| Discussion Table: Municipal Services & Utilities |
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Burning Questions

1. Why does HRM allow large lot subdivisions (on well and septic systems) so close to urban centres?
2. Why are hydro geological assessments not required as a conditions for subdivision approval (for lots serviced with well water)?
3. Why is there no requirement to decommission existing well and septic systems when central services are made available?

Discussion of the Burning Questions

1. Why does HRM allow large lot subdivisions (on well and septic systems) so close to urban centres?
 - question raised as to what is “as-of-right development”
 - Why does HRM not refuse to grant subdivision approvals for large lot subdivisions adjacent to full services areas and force subdividers to provide central sewer and water services. Practice appears wasteful.
 - Discussion as to the motivations for subdivision approvals prior to amalgamation. Halifax County did not pay for roads and schools and therefore new subdivisions provided additional property tax revenues with little additional cost.
 - Why not think of transportation needs before development occurs.
 - Who will use new transit terminal under construction on Portland Street. Residents do not know much about service to be provided. HRM should be providing information to residents.

2. Why are hydrogeological assessments not required as a conditions for subdivision approval (for lots serviced with well water)?
- need for assessment of ground water quantity and quality before subdivision approvals granted.
 - some discussion on the historical role of the provincial Dept. of the Environment in groundwater assessment and CMHC guidelines.
 - review of proposed policies pertaining to groundwater in draft regional plan.
 - policy SW-11: clause (a) requires study by qualified person to assess need for central water extensions. This may lead to HRM being inundated with requests backed by studies. It was noted that HRM currently has 32 outstanding requests.
 - SW-15: WWMD by-law to establish operational requirements for maintenance of in-ground septic systems. Operational requirements covered under provincial regulations. May be outside municipal jurisdiction?
 - Section 8.2.3 Private Wells: In first paragraph, statement that well drillers required to conduct pump testing on a newly created lot. This is not an accurate statement as there is no such requirement made on well drillers. Later provided to Peter Duncan, reference to Well Construction Regulations section 43a and b for single family dwelling: most drilled wells tested by bail or air lift: the 6 hr. pumping in section b is normally for dug wells. Any other pump testing requirements are the responsibility of the well owner.
 - There is a need to better define water quality criteria under any hydrogeological assessment program. Individual home transactions also need to test for general chemistry, metal scan (which include arsenic an uranium) and bacteria, as opposed to common practice of just arsenic, uranium and bacteria.
 - SW-17: establishes five lot criteria for triggering hydrogeological assessment. Criteria should be based on minimum area of land to be subdivided (ie. minimum lot size of five lots).
 - noted that there is sometimes a conflict of interest between persons performing both installation and inspection services on the same lot.
 - SW-27: jurisdictional question raised regarding provincial role in requested inspection program.
3. Why is there no requirement to decommission existing well and septic systems when central services are made available?

- HRM should require homeowners to properly abandon well and septic systems when central services installed.
- discussion on the economics of retro-fitting homes with central services.

Other Discussion

A. General Comments

- Will R-1 zones be changed to allow for more affordable housing? Concern expressed about the impact on existing neighbourhoods if auxiliary dwelling units permitted.
- There is a perception that some developers and construction companies get preferential treatment from HRM.
- HRM should do a better job of provide residents with information regarding what services are provided for the taxes paid
- Why are underground services not required?

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| Discussion Table: Transportation |
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Burning Questions

- 1 Will Active Transportation and trails be incorporated into HRM domain?
- 2 Would like to see Active Transportation corridors as part of the transportation mandate?
- 3 Will there be a transportation plan to carry traffic to the ALM Bridge? Discuss the sale of Brightwood Golf Course.
- 4 There is too much emphasis on the downtown areas. Can't get to activity centres by public transit.
- 5 What happened to the 4 lane road from Caldwell to the By-pass?
- 6 Why haven't promises been kept? Over the last 18 years, many things were promised, such as traffic signals at Hampton Green and Caldwell and a sidewalk along Colby Drive by Mall entrance?

7 Why can't coffee be taken on buses?

Discussion of the Burning Questions

Questions 1 and 2 - Active Transportation and Trails

- Trails don't connect to each other.
- Volunteers who raise money and build trails want to have them connect to use for commuting and to reach the BRT terminals. Dedicated volunteers to keep trails up and usable.
- Maintaining the trails will be an issue in the future.
- Incorporate community group trails and make a system that works for all - leading to a healthier community.
- Trails for transportation will reduce traffic congestion.
- HRM should help fund trails, maintain them and integrate with Metro Transit and the bikeways.
- Community groups as trustees for trails and HRM employees could maintain them.
- Council decisions (for trail by-laws, etc.); not community groups working against each other - ie allowing or not allowing ATV's.
- Colby/Forest Hills trails exist, but are not maintained. For example, the trail from Hannebury Drive to the pool is not walkable.
- Community groups building linear trails (rails to trails) and these feed into other trails.
- TCT (trans canada trails) - HRM could take over maintenance as part of future discussions and make part of green space.
- Morris and Russell Lakes - want to see trails in these areas and other connect to the TCT.
- The ATV's and snowmobiles want to use the rail lines - the community groups decide what uses are permitted.
- In the US - AT corridors received 10% of the total amount of funding for surface transportation.

- Trails should be considered part of the infrastructure - may not have enough funding to support this but we could have a lower % of the total (for surface transportation).
- a) Asked: on average how many people will travel further than 1 mile using AT?
- Need to create infrastructure to make it user friendly.
- Need more trails through the urban areas and bicycle routes.

Question 3: ALM Bridge

- There is a bottleneck at Woodland and Victoria Roads.
- There are broken pieces along Victoria, Woodland and Pleasant Streets that could be fixed to improve traffic movements.
- There appears to be no plan to fix the problem.
- Could have Woodland go through the old Northbrook School lands to Wyse Road and move traffic better that way to the bridge.
- a) Why isn't there an interchange to bring traffic from Woodland to the Mackay Bridge?
- HRM - need to talk with province and vice versa - this is common sense.
- Approach to ALM Bridge is an issue - if you can get to it.
- Need something in the plan to address this.

Question 4: Broken Links and Activity Centres

- What about the people who work in Burnside? We need transportation for all.
- Small buses could be used to go through the side streets in Burnside.
- Three buses from Cole Harbour to Bayers Lake - no direct access or route.
- Metro transit does not respond to discussions.
- a) BRT - peak hours only? And other transit routes?

- b) Where will people park to use the BRT? Should have feeder routes (local service) to BRT (collection point).
- Park and ride lots should have attendants - unattended ones are unsafe.
 - Should let people know that there are drop off areas (Kiss and Ride) at transit terminals.
 - Broken Links in transportation network not addressed in plan - these are places where there is disconnect in the service or road.
 - Can't get from Burnside to Halifax West and can't go from Miller Lake to the 102. Difficult for the transportation of goods and services - part of transportation requirements.
 - Nothing major at QEII (transportation infrastructure)
 - Can't get to hospitals all day easily and safely - physical conditions don't exist.
 - Burnside - some people don't want to use their cars, but have to because public transit does not meet needs. People want to be able to use public transit.
 - Strategic collection points are needed for transportation (transit) services and other private services.
 - Rural residents use Dartmouth General instead of QEII because they are afraid of driving in Halifax.
 - Plan is missing goals and performance measures.
 - Need surveys to see where people are coming from and how they got there - conduct outside QEII.
 - Pick up activity centres as locations for transportation connections and transit service.

Questions 5 and 6: Broken promises and 4 Lane road

- 25 year plans - don't like them because they can be changed to accommodate needs.
- Colby Village - no access to safely get out of and into the area; particularly at Caldwell and Hampton Green.
- Shearwater connector will help alleviate traffic congestion on Caldwell.

- Lights warranted at Hampton Green and Caldwell Road.
- Why was Portland Estates Drive not extended 25 years ago.
- Doesn't think that this will be seen through - 25 years is too long.
- Ribbon development in former county is causing traffic problems.
- Road classification system to help deal with traffic.
- What we choose to do now - can't see if working. Why have plan for 25 years if we can't see into the future.

Other Discussion

A. General Comments

- Give out CD's of plan - cheaper and easier to mail.
- Have interactive forums.
- Lack of information - not getting out in a timely manner.
- Need to tell people about website and what is on it.

B. Specific Comments

- Shearwater:
 - Keep Shearwater as an airport and small industrial park
 - Could be a great airport in the future.
 - Don't need Shearwater as an airport.
 - Long run - turn area into housing.
 - Halifax International Airport - not enough volume.
 - If there was enough interest - private sector would be wanting to run it
- Rail Transit:
 - Dartmouth spur is usable.
 - Stagger to be able to use it for light rail
 - Why don't we have rail transit - is doesn't make sense that we don't.

Other comments:

- Would like to see more information in a sufficient time and manner.

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| Discussion Table: Environment |
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Initial Burning Questions

1. How the Regional Plan will impact HRM's Growth?
2. What potential changes will or can be made to local Municipal Planning Strategies as a result of the Regional Plan?
3. What the boundaries of the domains of concern are between municipal, provincial and federal governments respecting the environment and how will the policies be enforced?
4. One participant expressed an interest in air quality and in particular Green House Gas Emissions and how the Open Air Burning By-law and other existing municipal by-laws can be changed to implement the Regional Plan.
5. One participant expressed concern over the lack of precision in mapping of environmentally sensitive areas (wetlands) and the impact that this may have on approved lots.
6. One participant expressed concern about the potential impact of the proposed Riparian Buffer requirements on the development of existing and future lots.

Agreed upon Burning Questions for Discussion

1. How will the Regional Plan Policies be enforced?
2. Concerns about Riparian Buffers?
3. How will the policies concerning riparian buffers and air quality be implemented?

Facilitators Feedback on what potential changes will be made to local Municipal Planning Strategies as a result of the Regional Plan?

- The facilitator explained that the existing Municipal Planning Strategies would remain in effect until revised to be consistent with the Regional Plan as per policy IM-3.

- Advised that the Regional Plan specifies that where there is a conflict between the Regional Plan and an existing Municipal Planning Strategy, the more stringent requirements will prevail.
- Explained that in the case of Eastern Passage Cow Bay the buffering requirements of 200 feet from the ocean would prevail since they are more stringent than the minimum 66 foot (20 metre) buffering requirements proposed under the Regional Plan.

Main Points of Group Discussion on Agreed Upon Questions

Enforcement

- One participant expressed concerns about the frustration when contacting different levels of government to enforce regulations.
- Stated that no one government wants to take responsibility for the enforcement of the regulations where you have multiple jurisdictions involved
- Using a local example (e.g. infilling in the Cole Harbour Salt Marsh within the Cole Harbour Lawrencetown Coastal Heritage Provincial Park); after several calls was unable to get the government agencies to enforce their responsibility areas for the protection of this watercourse.
- One participant commented that one has to become very knowledgeable about who is responsible for what before you call.

Riparian Buffers

- One participant questioned why we need buffers noting that in places like Australia people develop not only at the shore but on the water.
- One participant noted that buffers benefit everyone.
- Need some ability in policy to allow exemption from requirements if developer undertakes an impact assessment which verifies the development will have no impact on the watercourse or the impacts of the development can be mitigated.
- Policy should apply equally to everyone for the good of everyone and future generations.
- If we do not develop within the limits of nature then governments have to spend taxpayers money to fix problems for the developments that violate the forces of nature.
- Government, for example, was asked by property owners to build barriers to protect properties from coastal erosion that were built along Shore Road.

- Likewise, people should not be allowed to build along private roads.
- There's been so much precedent set to bail people out that there's now too much regulation affecting property owners.
- For example, HRM establishes a Service Area Boundary that specifies what properties maybe serviced with municipal water and sewer but there is no flexibility to allow people to hook into the system if their property is two lots beyond the Service Area Boundary.

Rights of landowners are being eroded

- One participant said that they too were a large landowner but felt that all landowners need to take responsibility for the care of the environment to improve quality of life for everyone.
- One participant expressed concern that the buffers are too rigid and will not allow any form of development within them.
- The facilitator clarified that policy E-19 of the proposed Regional Plan allows consideration for the development of boat ramps, view corridors, boat houses and some other uses within the buffers where it can be demonstrated that the alterations can be made without adversely affecting the primary purpose of the buffer.

Building close to the lake adversely affects water quality (e.g. Bisset Lake)

- Adverse effects on Bisset Lake are not only the result of the near shore lands development; what is happening in the whole watershed is a major contributing factor to the decline of Bisset Lake.
- The facilitator confirmed that water quality is affected by a whole host of activities within the watershed and the buffers in and of themselves only provide a partial measure for pollution abatement.
- The buffers provide for streambank stability and temperature control around the perimeter of the lake which is essential for fish reproduction and health of the lake.
- Protection of lakes and estuaries, however, also require management of the activities within the overall watershed which is why HRM is proposing to undertake watershed studies as a basis for future planning.

- This participant questioned whether it is not better to allow greater impact in urban areas where we want to allocate growth and provide better controls in the hinterland on forestry and farming practices.

Should have flexibility in urban areas to maximize development if impacts can be mitigated

- One standard buffer may not be enough.
- Depending on environmental conditions (e.g. soils and slope) a buffer of 50 feet may be more than adequate in some places (e.g. Bedford) but 400 feet may not be enough in places where you have soils that are highly erodible.
- Great strides have been made in policy to grandfather existing lots that would not be able to develop if the proposed buffers are adopted (existing lots are exempted from the requirements).
- The proposed buffers, however, effect raw land and the people who have future expectations for development.
- The policies protect existing development interest but not the development interests of future residents.
- One participant pointed out that change is needed since existing home owners have seen the damage that past development practices created.
- One participant noted that regulations and fees are adversely affecting development.

All agreed that enforcement is a big issue

- One participant suggested that more education should be provided in schools as a means to achieve the policies.
- Some felt that the policy has to be practical to enforce and restated there is a need for flexibility to allow judgement and room to manoeuvre.
- One participant expressed concern that flexible provisions will only be accessible to those who can afford the studies and that if you allow flexibility for some the cumulative impact affects everyone.
- One participant reiterated that the policy has to be flexible to allow judgement calls.

- One participant suggested that the policy should be flexible as long as it does not impinge on your neighbour.
- One participant expressed concern that greater flexibility opens the door to abuse.
- This participant also expressed concern that the flexibility would only be accessible to those who could afford the cost of the studies.
- One participant stated that he thought there is a campaign of fear about water quality impacts and the regulations are over the top.
- One participant stated that he saw the Regional Planning process as an incredible opportunity to lay down an incredible plan for an incredible city. He noted that we have an opportunity now while the city is still in its infancy to lay down the ground work for the future.
- Some participants felt that current concerns over water quality impacts for development are valid and that an overall plan is needed to protect environmentally sensitive areas and parks for the future.