

**Healthy Growth for HRM**  
HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

July 2003

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**Why we need a regional plan**

A regional plan is a detailed, long-range, region-wide plan that will outline where, when and how future growth and development should take place in Halifax Regional Municipality. It builds the framework for healthy growth within the municipality.

Studies show HRM's population is growing all the time. From 1996 to 2001, the population grew almost five percent, at a consistent increase of about one percent per year. While that may not seem like an overwhelming, or even significant number, estimates indicate the population will continue to grow at the same steady pace over the next 25 years.

HRM's population is just under 360,000 today. At an expected constant growth of one percent per year, the population will increase by an additional 75,000 to 100,000 people over the next 25 years.

That constant growth means nearly *half a million people* will need homes in safe, clean neighbourhoods in Halifax Regional Municipality.

They'll need employment and an economy strong enough to maintain that employment.

They'll need an efficient transportation system to take them to and from work and other day-to-day activities. And they'll need a clean environment with open, green spaces so they can enjoy our abundant natural assets.

Growth can offer immeasurable possibilities and opportunities for HRM, but it needs to be anticipated, planned for and managed. That's the role of the Regional Plan.

The Regional Plan will create a strategy both to shape growth and preserve what our citizens tell us they want: a strong economy, a protected environment, and efficient transportation.

The Regional Plan will propose ways to maintain the safe, vibrant, healthy way of life that draws people to HRM and keeps them here.

**How will it work?**

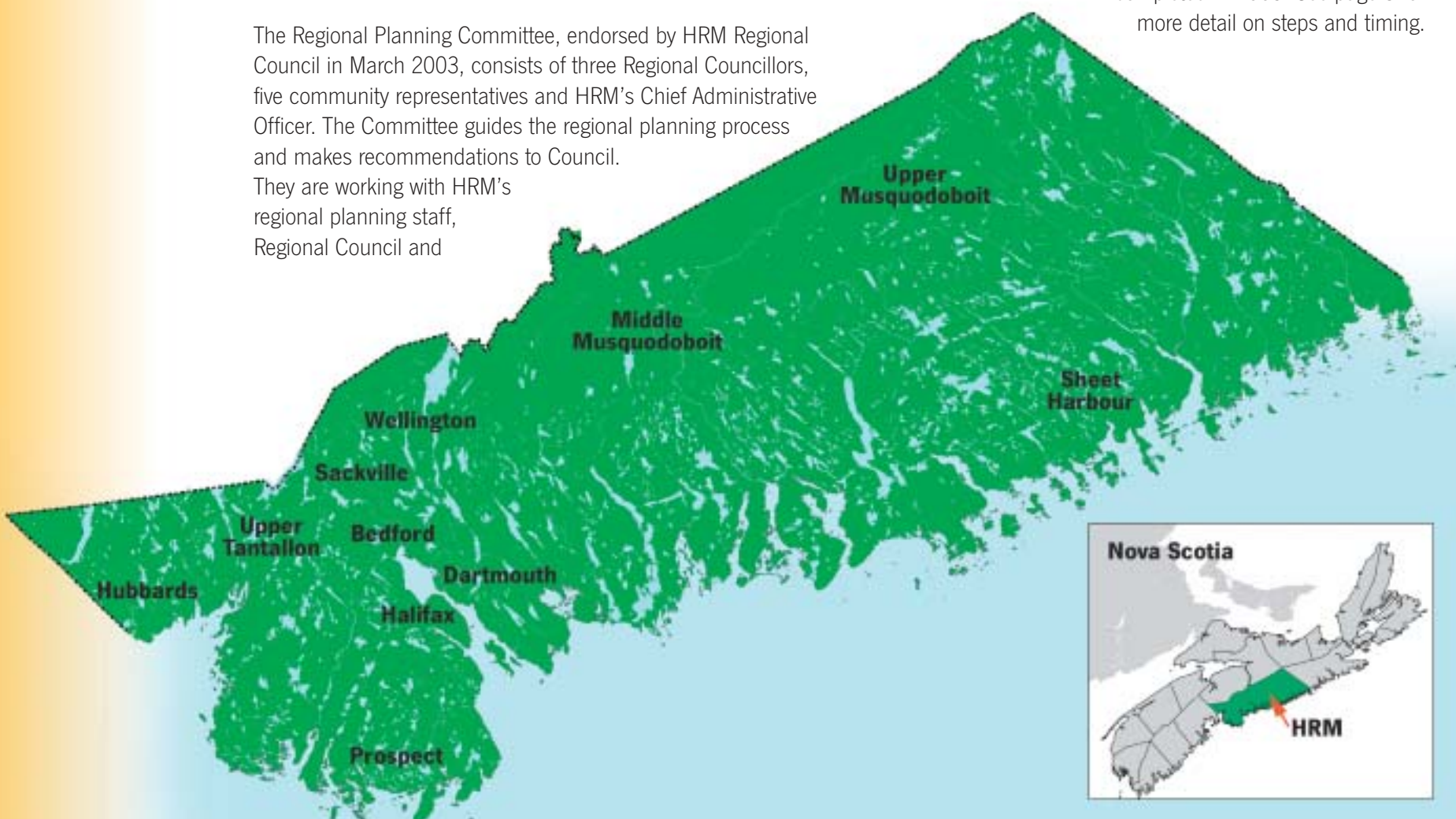
The Regional Plan will include a series of maps and municipal policies that outline where growth will be encouraged and what areas should be preserved for other uses, like parks, natural resources and other open spaces. It will make transportation recommendations, designed to accommodate both current and new HRM residents and economic development. It will identify geographic areas required for economic development and include a plan for Halifax Harbour.

The Regional Planning Committee, endorsed by HRM Regional Council in March 2003, consists of three Regional Councillors, five community representatives and HRM's Chief Administrative Officer. The Committee guides the regional planning process and makes recommendations to Council. They are working with HRM's regional planning staff, Regional Council and

the community to develop the new Regional Plan - its direction, priorities, goals and objectives.

The Committee has recently developed a vision and eight principles to guide the Regional Plan. They are described in more detail on page 2.

The Regional Plan is expected to be completed in 2005. See page 8 for more detail on steps and timing.





## Regional Plan Vision & Principles

Phase I of developing the Regional Plan, from November 2001 to December 2002, was primarily a research phase, consisting of a variety of staff research projects and several forms of public consultation.

Many tools were used to help HRM gain a better understanding of what people value about the region and what they think about the way we have grown. They included:

- A Citizen's Survey
- Town Hall Meetings
- Community Case Studies
- A Workbook
- Position Papers

The information, ideas, opinions and concerns learned during this research phase fell into five major themes areas: HRM's economy, the environment, our settlement pattern, transportation, and the Halifax Harbour. These are the themes that will shape the Regional Plan.

The Regional Planning Committee also used the information gained during this first phase to develop the vision and principles that will guide the development of HRM's Regional Plan.

### Vision

HRM will adopt a broad Regional Plan which, throughout the next 25 years, will guide its physical development in a way that promotes healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities.

### Guiding Principle

The Regional Plan will seek to address the needs and views of all HRM, recognizing the diversity of its citizens, community and geography.

### Principles

- Provide a framework that leads to predictable, fair, cost-effective decision-making.
- Support development patterns that promote a vigorous regional economy.
- Preserve and promote sustainability of cultural, historical and natural assets.
- Support appropriate roles for the Halifax/Dartmouth central business district and local business districts as a focus for economic, cultural and residential activities.
- Manage development in a way that will make the most effective use of land, energy, infrastructure, public services and facilities and considers healthy lifestyles.
- Ensure opportunities for the protection of open space, wilderness, natural beauty and sensitive environmental areas.
- Develop integrated transportation systems in conjunction with the above principles.



## The Capital District

The Capital District is the core of HRM. It encompasses Downtown Halifax, Downtown Dartmouth and the Gottingen Street, Spring Garden Road and Quinpool Road areas.

Around the world, urban cores have been recognized as key economic generators for entire regions. A strong downtown is essential for smart growth. We're proud that HRM can lay claim to this benefit for all of our citizens.

The Capital District employs 70,000 people, generates \$80 million dollars in municipal taxes and more than \$600 million dollars in tourism revenue. The Capital District is experiencing residential growth and low business vacancies on both sides of Halifax Harbour. We need to support the region's economic engine, as it creates benefits for all HRM.

However, no capital exists just because of economics. It has to be a place for all people. It needs a broad variety of special attractions and activities. In our Capital District, harbour life, art galleries, theatre, entertainment and government institutions provide a concentration of unique experiences.

The Capital District belongs to each and every citizen of HRM. It's the common ground of a very large municipality.

**The Capital District's Vision:** Together, our harbour community will ensure the sustainability of a diverse, civilized, magnetic Capital District for the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Province of Nova Scotia.

Also as part of its vision, the Capital District will support and/or build on specific Capital District assets as social and economic generators for the area. These assets include:

- the regional and provincial centre for
  - government
  - commerce
  - education
  - health
  - military
  - festivals and events
  - arts and culture
  - recreation and entertainment
- the transportation hub, with international, national, regional and local links
- a safe, clean and proud community
- a strong sense of history and heritage, with heritage buildings, historic sites and parks
- open and green spaces
- arts and culture
- Harbour-focused relationships, access and interaction

## Regional Planning Themes

The Regional Plan is all about finding options that achieve balance within and among the five theme areas. Here are some key points to think about before the next public consultation process begins in the fall. Future issues of the Regional Planning Newsletter will provide more detailed descriptions of the opportunities and challenges within the five theme areas. If you have comments, questions or ideas about the theme areas, or the overall Regional Plan, please contact the Regional Planning office at 490-5857 or [regplan@halifax.ca](mailto:regplan@halifax.ca).

### Economy

**HRM's abundant natural resources, strategic location and skilled workers make it a great place to do business.** The Capital District is the region's economic centre with 40% of all HRM jobs located in and immediately around the downtown areas.

#### The Opportunity

HRM must remain competitive in the global market place. Supporting a strong economic core and maintaining our connections to the world through our port, airport, roads, railway and communications, are critical to our ongoing economic success. Services and opportunities must be provided to both centrally located businesses and to areas outside the urban core.

#### The Challenge

Providing the infrastructure and environment to ensure HRM's ability to compete globally will be a key challenge for the Regional Plan.

### Environment

**Preserving the environment is very important to HRM residents.** The top five environmental issues reported during public consultation in 2001 and 2002 were: Halifax Harbour clean-up, drinking water quality, lake water quality for recreation, loss of wildlife, and conservation of green space. Urban residents are also concerned about air quality.

#### The Opportunity

Protecting HRM's parks, trails and green spaces, as well as clean air and water, will help maintain the quality of life for HRM residents. The environment can also have a direct impact on the economy. Studies show that many businesses choose to locate their offices in cities with a high quality of life including green spaces, trails and cultural opportunities.

#### The Challenge

A key environmental challenge for the Regional Plan will be finding the right balance between identifying land for development and protecting green space, water, air and other natural resources.

### Settlement

**HRM is a growing community, accounting for about 40 percent of Nova Scotia's population.** Like all cities in North America, suburban growth has been the dominant pattern in HRM in recent history. The substantial increase in land occupied by human settlement in the region has created ever increasing demands on the natural environment and generated the need for new municipal services.

#### The Opportunity

Well planned development can respect nature, preserve views, support healthy lifestyles, reduce air pollution and save money. We're in a position to encourage future development patterns that will allow ample choice in housing, while bringing related activities closer together. We can also promote better integration of community and economic development with transportation and transit services.

#### The Challenge

Finding the right balance between settlement in the urban, suburban and rural areas of HRM will be the key settlement challenge for the Regional Plan. The location, density and design of residential and commercial development will significantly affect the costs of accommodating growth, taxes and the quality of life we enjoy in the region.

### Transportation

**HRM residents are willing to choose alternatives to driving.**

In a Statistics Canada ranking of all Canadian metro areas, HRM was tied for the highest percentage of people walking to work. We also ranked third highest in vehicles traveling to work with passengers and fifth with our low percentage of people driving alone to work.

#### The Opportunity

HRM has a system of roads, rail lines, and public transportation that provides a solid base to build on. Having a population that is open to transportation options means we can consider many alternatives for transportation, including high speed ferries, buses or trains and expanded walking trails and bicycle lanes, as well as new road construction.

#### The Challenge

If HRM continues to grow as we have, without a comprehensive transportation plan, we will have increased traffic problems and congestion. A key transportation challenge for the Regional Plan will be finding the right balance between new road construction and increased public transit options.

### Halifax Harbour

**Halifax Harbour has many competing uses for a finite amount of land and water,** including container shipping and cargo, off-shore oil and gas, cruise ships and other tourism, recreation, residential, and the need to maintain the Harbour as an environmental ecosystem. There is currently no overall plan for our Harbour. Landowners, government, and other stakeholders are working primarily independently, with no common blueprint, vision or management structure.

#### The Opportunity

Halifax Harbour is one of the region's most important assets - economically, culturally and socially. Maintaining and enhancing the Harbour for the benefit of residents, visitors, commercial and industrial interests is critical. Developing a harbour plan, both a land use plan and a management strategy, will enable us to make the best use of this important resource.

#### The Challenge

Determining the right balance among the multitude of competing interests for Harbour lands and water and identifying an appropriate management structure among the stakeholders will be the main challenges of the Harbour section of the Regional Plan. See page 6 for more detail on Halifax Harbour.

### Overall

**The key to regional planning is the relationship among these themes.** While each theme area has individual opportunities and challenges, the real opportunity regional planning presents is the chance to look at all the areas together and set the stage for an exciting, successful region.

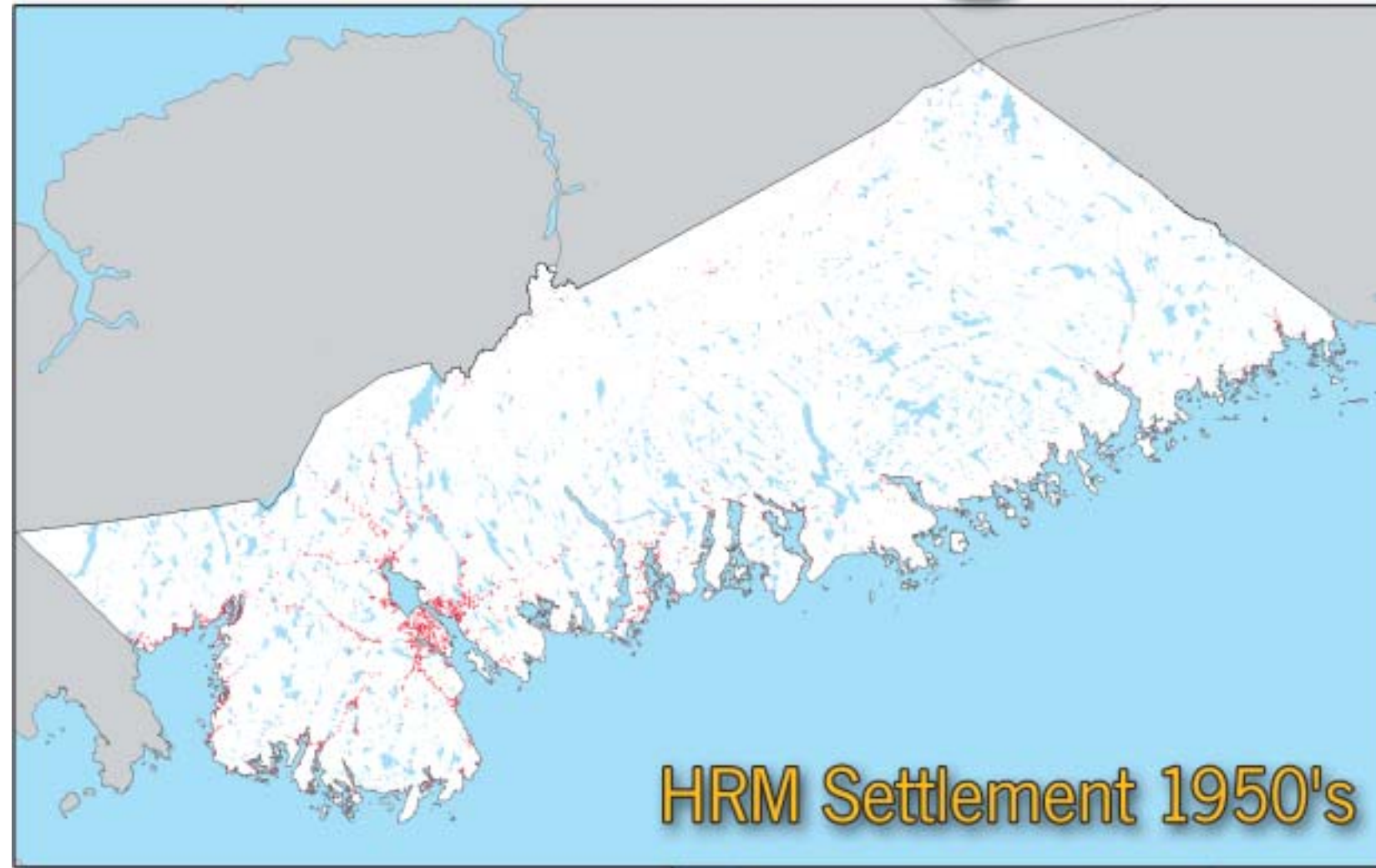
For example, we can guide future residential development to areas that can be more easily serviced with public transit. We can encourage work and living locations that are close to one another, in both regional and local centres. These are just two of the many exciting opportunities to shape HRM, provided by planning on a regional scale around all five themes.

The end result will be a Regional Plan that builds the framework for healthy growth in HRM. It will determine how to preserve what our citizens value, building on past successes and untapped opportunities to realize our vision.

To determine that balance, we need your input. See page 8 for details on public consultation opportunities.



# How HRM has grown ...



**1950s** - The metro area was very compact. Most people lived in the former cities of Halifax and Dartmouth, what we now call the urban core.

**1960s** - Subdivisions, like Clayton Park and Woodlawn developed. Development increased in rural areas and commuter subdivisions began to emerge in Hatchet Lake, Timberlea, Hammonds Plains, Upper Sackville and Lake Echo.

**1970s** - Sackville and Forest Hills emerged as growth centres, as a result of the 1975 Regional Development Plan. These new communities were linked to the urban core by an expanding highway system and the new MacKay Bridge, completed in 1970.

**1980s** - Rural subdivisions began to extend further along main roads leading to the metro area. Considerable development occurred along Highways #2, #7, #103, #333 and the Hammonds Plains Road.

**1990s** - New suburban communities, like Glenbourne, Clayton Park West and Portland Estates, began to develop as provincial housing programs wound down. Subdivision development accelerated from Cole Harbour all the way to West Chezzetcook and intensified in the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea area.

**2000s** - Residential development in the urban core is beginning to grow, increasing the urban core population for the first time in 30 years. Suburban communities such as Glenbourne and Portland Estates, have continued to develop, while rural development is focussing on areas from St. Margaret's Bay to Musquodoboit Harbour.

As the settlement patterns continue to evolve outside the traditional urban and suburban areas, larger residential lots are needed in more rural areas to accommodate private services, like wells and septic tanks. If this trend continues as it is, we'll consume an ever-increasing amount of HRM's countryside for housing development and services will cost more to deliver over this dispersed area.

By developing a Regional Plan to manage this growth, we can encourage our future settlement patterns to take this into account and focus on ways to accommodate our growing population, without sacrificing the character that makes HRM a unique and attractive place to live.

## What has shaped HRM's growth?

Many factors have determined how HRM has grown over the past 50 years. Here are just a few examples:

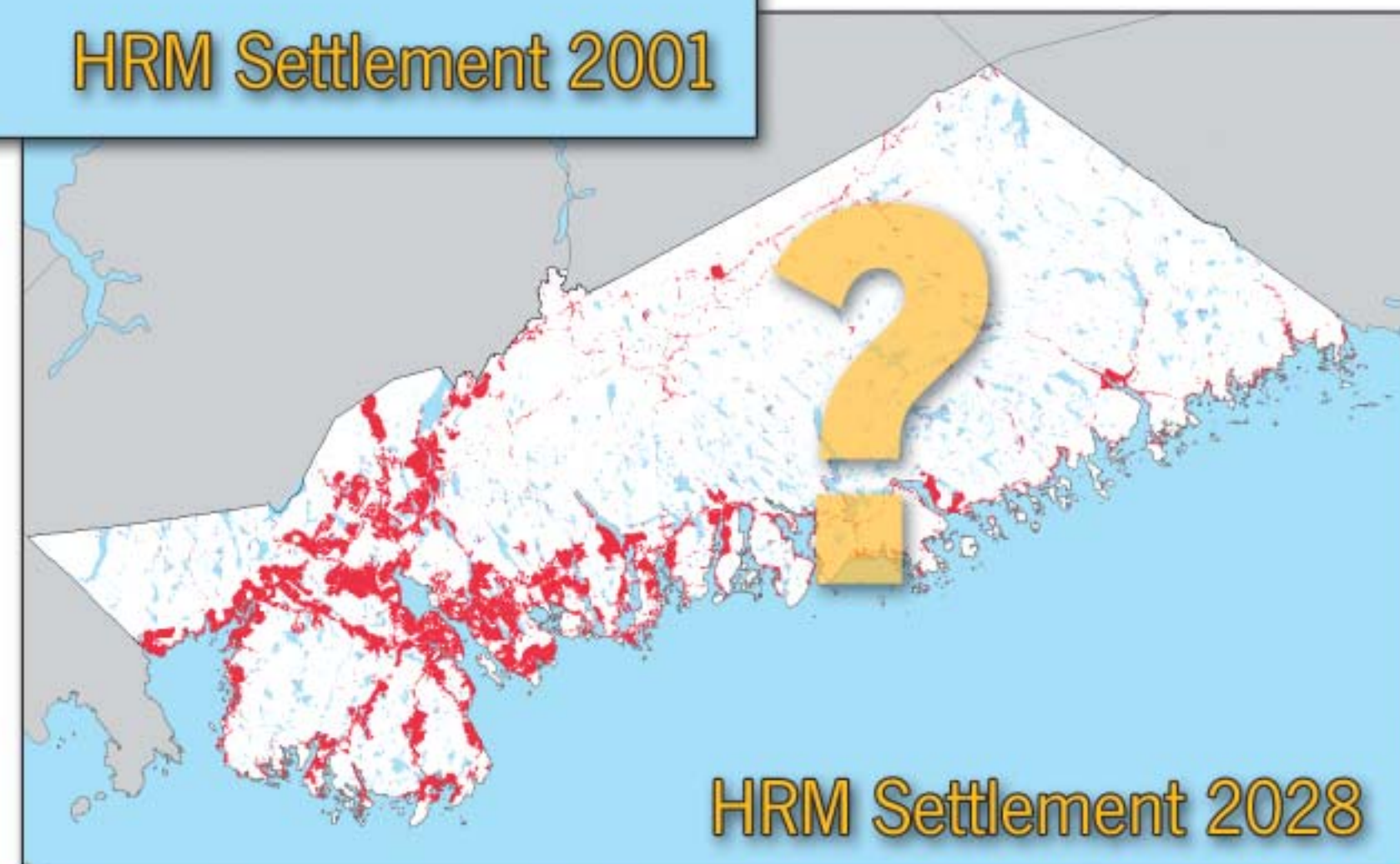
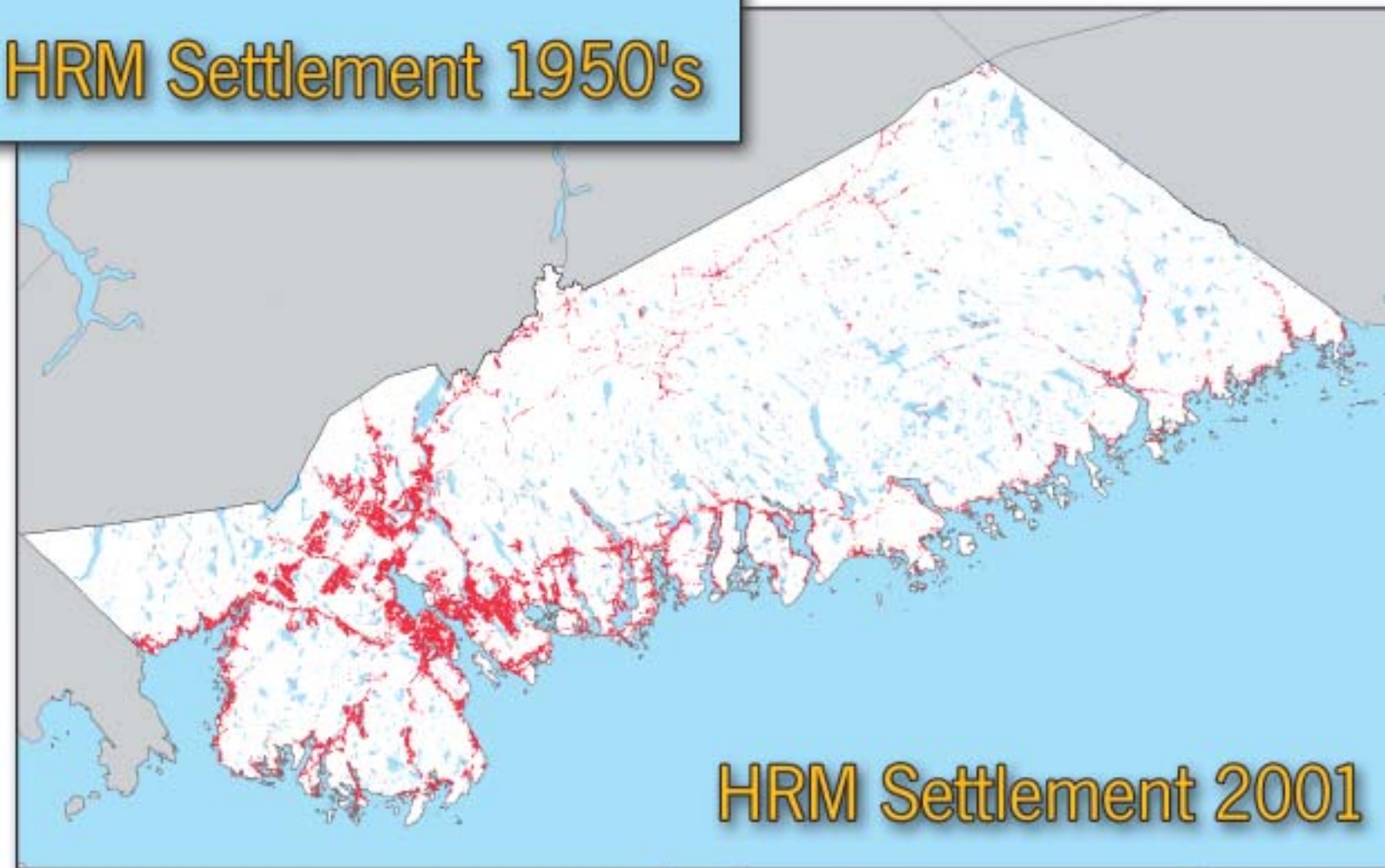
**Public policy** - For example, in the 1970s, many people became first-time homeowners because of a provincial housing program in Sackville and Forest Hills that enabled reasonably-priced homes to be built in these strategic neighbourhoods on property previously owned by the Province. Municipal governments also shaped the community through the development of local plans, identifying specific areas for growth.

**Public finance** - New provincially-funded roads and highways, for example, increased access to many communities, making automobile commuting from remote areas much more convenient. Our tax structure and past economic incentives have also affected our pattern of growth.

**Geography** - For example, surface water - lakes, rivers and streams - covers nearly 8% of our region, providing natural barriers to development.

**Land ownership** - More than a third of the land in HRM is owned by the Province and is not available for development.

**Market factors** - The baby boomer generation, for example, has greatly affected the housing market, shifting the focus to their current needs, which are different today than they were in the 1950s and will continue to evolve.



To receive this newsletter directly, contact the Regional Planning office to be added to our mailing list.

Regional Planning  
PO Box 1749  
Halifax, NS  
B3J 3A5

Phone: 490-5857  
Fax: 490-5730  
Email: [regplan@halifax.ca](mailto:regplan@halifax.ca)



## ***A long range plan for Halifax Harbour***

Imagine Halifax Regional Municipality without Halifax Harbour, without the downtown waterfronts of Halifax and Dartmouth, without the Bedford Basin, Northwest Arm or Chebucto Head.

Imagine the municipality without our naval activities or the revenue from the port.

**The Harbour is such an important part of HRM, it's impossible to imagine where we'd be without it.**

Halifax Harbour is the second largest natural ice-free harbour in the world. It has been a strategic port and an integral part of life in Halifax for centuries. It has long been recognized as the heart of our region.

### ***'The Working Harbour'***

The uses of Halifax Harbour, and the activities that rely on it, are extensive and varied. Our Harbour is a 'working harbour', and continues to be a very active part of HRM.

The Harbour plays a significant role in HRM's economic development, through national defense, ship building and international shipping.



**Fourteen million tonnes of cargo are shipped through the Port of Halifax each year.**

The Harbour's ideal natural characteristics have also enabled growth of marine-based industry. The ongoing production of offshore oil and gas will continue to reinforce HRM's working harbour and advance economic growth for the entire region.

The waters and shoreline on both sides of the Harbour have also been instrumental in growing HRM's tourism industry, with the waterfront drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

**In 2002, Halifax Harbour welcomed 87 cruise ships with approximately 157,000 passengers.**

The Harbour also provides opportunities for many recreational activities. In addition to sailing, canoeing and other boating, the Harbour offers many waterfront walking trails and parks.

The potential for further development of the Harbour and its adjacent lands as an international cultural showpiece is widely recognized.

In addition, more and more HRM residents are choosing to live downtown, including a growing demand for waterfront homes. This trend is expected to continue with several hundred units anticipated for construction over the next five years.



## Leading the Charge

HRM is leading the charge to maximize the benefits of one of the region's most valuable resources and to preserve it for future generations. Through an inter-governmental work team including the Halifax Port Authority, Waterfront Development Corporation Limited and the Department of National Defense, we're coordinating a planning process designed to address our issues and maximize our opportunities. Public and stakeholder participation is a key element of the process.

The Harbour Plan will create policies and action plans to guide the use, development and management of the Harbour, including its waters, shoreline and harbourfront lands, from Eastern Passage to Chebucto Head, including Bedford Basin and the Northwest Arm.



As well as its beauty and varied uses, Halifax Harbour also has some well documented concerns. The Harbour Solutions Project is underway, planning three sewage treatment plants for treating our wastewater. The project will both enhance the environmental integrity of the Harbour and create opportunities for enhanced public use of Harbour waters and shoreline.

HRM's Harbour Plan will address both the imminent and long-range growth scenario, providing a 25-year blueprint for development and resource management.

HRM will coordinate this planning initiative, relying heavily on consultation and input from the residents of HRM, and all other stakeholders, including non-government organizations, landowners, government agencies and the business community.



Halifax Harbour is one of the region's greatest assets. Planning today will ensure the Harbour remains an important, strategic part of our future, continuing to contribute to the beauty, identity and economy of the region surrounding it.

**As HRM embarks on this Harbour Plan, and throughout its preparation, we want to hear from you.** We need to know why the Harbour is important to you and what you want our Harbour to look like in 25 years. See page 8 for a Harbour Survey to fill out, identifying key elements of the Harbour Plan.





## The Regional Planning Process

The Regional Plan will take approximately two years to complete. The major steps and timing in the process are outlined below.

The process will include two major public consultation opportunities, at Step 2 and Step 4. Public participation is critical to the success of the Regional Plan. The goals, objectives, opportunities and alternatives generated and evaluated via this consultation will shape growth in HRM over the next 25 years. **We need your input to make this work.**

For more information on how to get involved, contact 490-5857 or email us at [regplan@halifax.ca](mailto:regplan@halifax.ca). Watch our website as well, at [www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning](http://www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning) for updates.

### Regional Planning Process and Time Frame

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



## Harbour Survey

The working harbour, including all port and shipping operations, and our naval operations, is a critical element of HRM's economy. Cruise ships and other tourism activities bring hundreds of thousands of tourists to our shores each year. These are important activities that need to be maintained and enhanced, but there are other uses of the Harbour water and lands, like recreation and residential. We'd like to hear what you think is important. Please take a few moments to give us your thoughts.

1. What facilities or activities would you like to see on or adjacent to Halifax Harbour? Please explain.

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2. Are there specific sites within Halifax Harbour, including Bedford Basin and the Northwest Arm, that you feel require special attention or present unique opportunities? Please explain.

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3. Are there any other comments or opinions you would like to share concerning Halifax Harbour?

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\*Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Send in your completed survey and you could win a free golf shirt. \*Name and phone number required for prize draw only.

Please drop completed surveys in the boxes provided at the HRM Customer Service Centres located in Acadia School in Lower Sackville; Alderney Gate and Cole Harbour Place in Dartmouth; West End Mall and Scotia Square Mall in Halifax; and in Musquodoboit Harbour.



You could also send your response to:

Regional Planning  
PO Box 1749  
Halifax, NS  
B3J 3A5

Phone: (902) 490-5857  
Fax: (902) 490-5730  
Email: [regplan@halifax.ca](mailto:regplan@halifax.ca)