

Healthy Growth for HRM

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Spring 2004

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Public Hearing on Interim Growth Management

As part of the Regional Planning process, Halifax Regional Council will consider amendments to the HRM municipal planning strategies, land use by-laws and the Subdivision By-law at a public hearing on March 30th.

At the public hearing, Regional Planning staff will present the recommended approach to interim growth management. Council will ask questions for clarification. Then the public will be invited to express their opinions, either in favour or against the recommended approach.

This will be followed by a Council debate on the issue. Council may decide to approve the approach or they may ask that specific changes be made.

These amendments will ensure that the public and Council have options for determining where the region will grow in the future.

Public Hearing
Tuesday, March 30, 2004
3:00 p.m.

Halifax City Hall
Council Chambers
1841 Argyle Street
Halifax, NS

Come out and have your say!

Residents can also send their written comments to the Regional Planning project office. Contact information is listed on page 8.

Read more about Interim Growth Management in HRM on page 7.

The Big Picture - How your input is shaping up

Public feedback on the Regional Plan so far has centred on articulating values, in an increasingly detailed fashion. General values were developed into a series of clear Principles, then more specific Goals & Objectives relating to the economy, settlement patterns, environment, transportation, Halifax Harbour and the Capital District.

An exciting picture of the future region is emerging from this work. HRM residents have told us what they want and we're working to realise their vision.

With a proper Regional Plan HRM will be a beautiful, safe and flourishing region into the future.

The Regional Plan will help ensure that coastal areas are protected and there will be an abundance of green space and wilderness.

Our natural and rural resource areas will continue to be productive and will be successfully integrated with adjacent areas. They will be connected to inter-regional transportation systems and make up an integral component of a strong and diverse regional economy.

HRM will be the economic and cultural centre of Nova Scotia, Atlantic Canada and beyond.

Along with strong sectors in health, education, military, service and government, the Capital District will continue to be the regional destination for urban entertainment, culture and commerce.

Building on an already transit-friendly culture and a land use and settlement pattern conducive to transit service will prove key to achieving the integrated transportation system that residents have said they want.

The Regional Plan will ensure that settlement and employment centres are linked by corridors, enabling ease and efficiency of transit service and the economic benefits of clustering. Mixed-use town centres and rural villages will support their surrounding areas with convenient local services.

Tax dollars will be spent wisely in HRM, keeping our tax base competitive. Large new developments will be located where services can easily and suitably be installed. This means making the best use of existing streets, roads and piped services, and planning the best locations for new infrastructure.

This isn't a view of utopia. It's not a pipe dream. It's the reality that we can achieve through a well-thought out and researched Regional Plan - a Regional Plan that we need *your* help to complete.



Alternatives Generation - Where do we go from here?

During the Fall 2003 public consultation process, HRM residents provided feedback through the *Directing the Action* workbooks, stakeholder meetings, focus groups and workshop sessions. With increasing detail, this feedback has centred on the economy, settlement patterns, environment, transportation, Halifax Harbour and the Capital District.

As we begin to develop alternative solutions for growth in HRM, we need to generate maps that reflect how our region might look. We need to answer more specific questions about what this region will look like in the future. The goals and objectives provide an excellent starting point for creating these alternative solutions, because they have been developed based on research and public consultation.

But what exactly are the more detailed questions that still need to be answered? Below is a sample of what has been determined through the public consultation process so far, and what still needs to be determined as we move forward with developing the actual, tangible alternatives for growth in our region.

Determined

An interconnected open space system shall be established.

Underground and surface water quality and quantities shall be maintained.

To be determined

Where will the interconnected open space system be located and how extensive will it be?

Where is there sufficient water supply to support future unserved development?

What methods are required to protect water quality?



Determined

The heritage and culture of communities shall be protected.

To be determined

How do we protect and retain heritage and culture while enabling communities to remain robust, vital centres?

Determined

Using energy efficiently is a necessity.

To be determined

How do we design communities and transportation systems to reduce energy consumption?

Determined

HRM shall continue its predominant position as Atlantic Canada's financial and commercial centre.

The Capital District will remain the cultural and economic hub of HRM and Atlantic Canada.

HRM's economy must maintain its diversity to remain globally competitive.

To be determined

What job sectors will drive HRM's economic growth?

What are potential emerging growth industries and how can HRM attract them?

What locations are strategically important for these job sectors and industries?





Determined

The 'working harbour' will continue to be a major contributor to the local and regional economy.

Addressing the Harbour's environmental issues is critical to its future attractiveness and usability.

To be determined

How do we balance the competing demands for future land uses around the Harbour?

What sites should be reserved for marine and industry-related uses, residential development, parks and other public access points?

How can we improve and restore the environmental quality of the Harbour, given the inevitability of further infill projects?

Determined

More focus should be put on building communities in defined, mixed-use clusters.

Residents should be encouraged to live and work in existing communities where services already exist.

The availability and affordability of a variety of housing options needs to be preserved for all citizens, including the elderly, singles, families and citizens with special needs.

To be determined

Where should community clusters be located and how large should they be?

What densities, services and mix of uses are appropriate in each cluster?

How do we best ensure a range of housing choices for all ages and income levels?



Determined

Greater transportation choices shall be provided.

Public transportation should be improved and expanded.

The freight system needs to be reliable and integrated.

To be determined

Where and how do we provide a settlement pattern that is conducive to transit service and active transportation?

Which transportation corridors are appropriate for high capacity transit and other transit services?

How do we optimise freight systems and infrastructure?





What Could Happen If...

What will the future of HRM look like if we continue growing as we have been?

Theoretically, HRM could continue to grow as we have been over the last 20 years without making any changes to our style of growth.

Our current style of growth is a result of market forces, but also of far-reaching public finance and policies. For example, the 1976 Regional Plan and the 18 separate municipal planning strategies, were put in place to regulate growth. However, the 1976 plan has since been repealed and the municipal planning strategies do not always reflect the interests of the region as a whole, leaving us with no region-wide plan for the municipality.

Some of our current growth pattern was unintended. For example, large public investment in the provincial highway system has made more distant locations attractive for new housing. As well, because our highways are paid for through taxes and fees, we don't always associate these costs with the decision to commute every day, but it is an important factor in the cost of living.

If we don't change the way we're growing, how would our region's future compare with the seven Regional Planning principles and the goals and objectives, established through public consultation and endorsed by Regional Council?

How would tomorrow's HRM compare to the vision of today's residents?

To answer this, we have to look at many factors, including population projections, the type of development we've seen in the past and our current commuting habits.

By 2028, close to half a million people will be living in HRM. That's up to 100,000 more residents in up to 60,000 more households.

Without changing our current trends, the rural commutershed, just outside the suburbs, would continue to be the fastest growing settlement area of HRM, growing by 50% over the next 25 years. The urban core, which has existing piped services like sewer and water, would grow by only 10% over the same period.

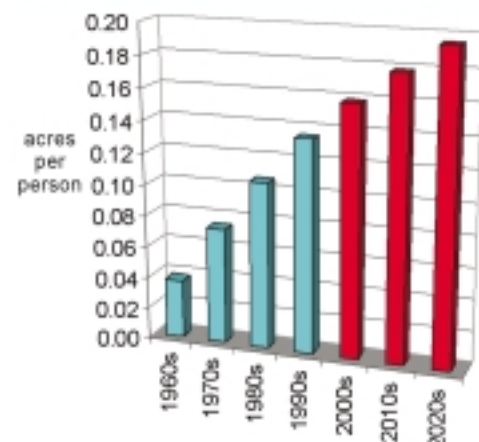
Most of the commutershed area does not receive municipal piped services. Continuing with unplanned unmanaged development in this area means extensive and expensive extensions of these services.

More land is needed for residential development in rural areas. To accommodate on-site wastewater disposal systems, a typical unserviced residential building lot is about 10 times larger than one serviced with central sewer and water.

The consumption of land per person has quadrupled since the 1960s. (See bar chart below) At our current rate of land consumption, we will need approximately 50,000 more acres for residential land by 2028 to accommodate 100,000 more people.

This has implications for our environment, culture & heritage, economy, transportation, Halifax Harbour, settlement patterns and water supply. In general, these trends will affect our quality of life.

Land Consumption by Decade



> Housing lots are getting increasingly larger

The Environment

As we consume larger amounts of land for residential development in the unserviced areas, we reduce our opportunities to preserve public open space and shoreline access.

As we develop in dispersed, unconnected areas, transit is more expensive or impossible to deliver and residents will use their cars more often. Following our current growth pattern, we can expect another 70,000 cars to be on HRM roads by 2028.

More cars will result in more greenhouse gas emissions. Commuters in those additional cars will travel 900,000 more km every day in 2028, emitting an extra 45,000 tonnes of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, every year.

Research shows that wildlife habitat is disrupted for up to 600 metres from roads, so the more roads we build, the more disruption we cause. Short of outright land purchase, HRM now has only a limited ability to protect and preserve wildlife and maintain habitat areas for the future.

Culture, Heritage and Community Identity

A strong sense of cultural identity and the recognition of heritage resources contributes to the overall quality of life in the region, but many cultural and heritage resources remain unrecognized.

These elements are also critical for a strong tourism industry. People visit HRM for the festivals, cultural activities and the heritage resources we have to offer and contribute \$700 million to the local economy.

Without recognizing, mapping and preserving these resources, we run the risk of losing them to ongoing development.



... We Don't Change the Way We're Growing?

The Economy

As the population increases, new employment will be needed. A strong economy is needed to help create and maintain those jobs.

Economic growth depends on a strong business centre and an attractive lifestyle to draw businesses to the region. It also depends on a safe and efficient transportation system. Without a comprehensive, long-range economic development plan, it's difficult to coordinate economic development and the transportation systems needed to support it.

Capital District

A strong regional centre is critical to a strong economy. HRM's Capital District is the employment, cultural and tourism hub of the region.

Military, health care, government and banking all contribute to the strength of this cluster. If dispersed settlement continues, there will be less emphasis on and reduced access to the Capital District, diminishing the strength of our region's primary economic cluster.

This also has a significant effect on the efficiency of public transit, as more routes will be needed to serve the downtown, but with fewer passengers per route.

Halifax Harbour

The Harbour has historically been the life-blood of the region. However, we have recently seen an increase in competing residential and commercial demands for Harbourfront property.

Continuing as we have been, without a logical and well-thought out plan to balance these demands, we risk losing the great potential contributions the Harbour could make to HRM's economy and settlement pattern.

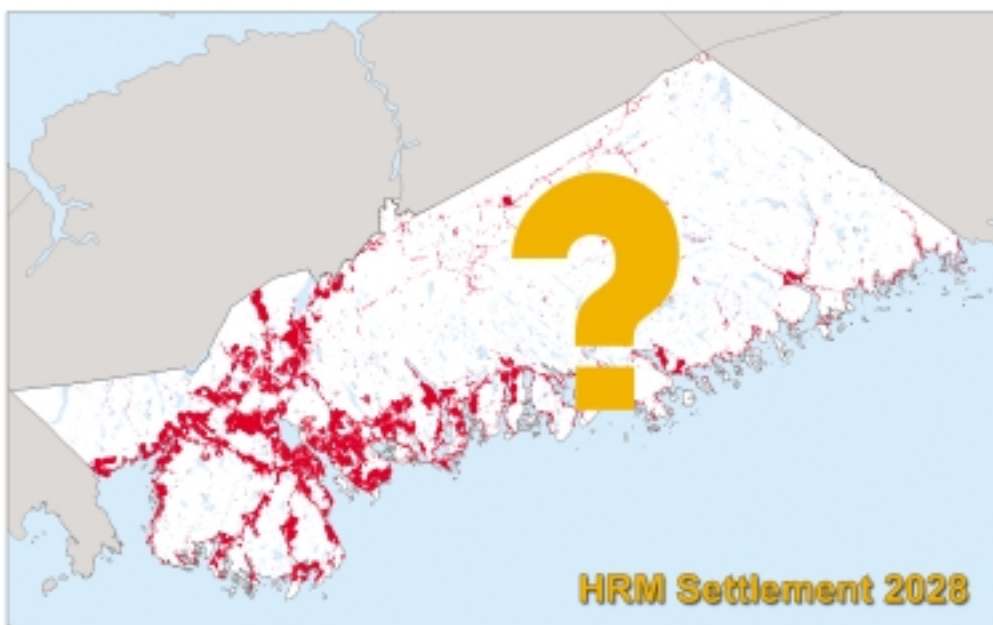
Development & Settlement Patterns

HRM has enough capacity in the built up area to accommodate growth using existing infrastructure, without negatively impacting existing neighbourhoods. If past trends continue, opportunities to capitalize on this infrastructure and create dynamic mixed-use communities will be lost.

As well, disjointed outward development will significantly alter the traditional form and character of rural communities and impact the assets they wish to protect. This growth will strain limited community services like roads, schools and recreation services and limit their potential of remaining self-reliant, vibrant rural centres.

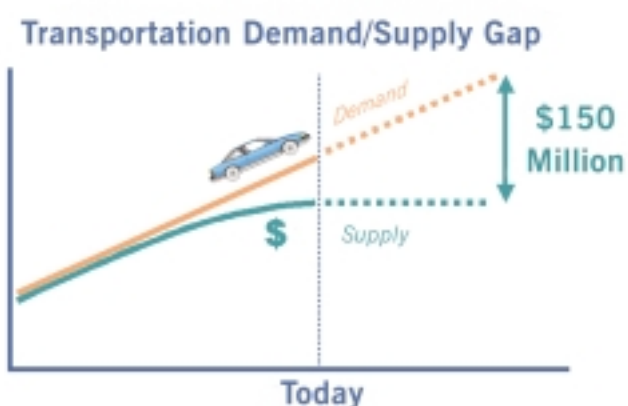
Water Supply & Wastewater Management

There is currently a sufficient supply of piped water to meet our needs for the next several decades. But this is not always the case in areas relying on private well water. Some of these areas are already experiencing water shortages and more problems are likely to develop if we don't take adequate water supply into consideration when determining where to build new subdivisions.



Transportation

As the number of cars increases, we will place a strain on existing roadways and highways. There are already several traffic "hots spots" in HRM. Increasing car traffic will mean these and other congested areas will create more demand for street and road improvements - at a cost to the taxpayer.



By 2028, HRM will need to spend about \$150 million on new streets and highways to meet that demand. As well, if all our funding goes to help reduce congestion, spending on more efficient forms of transportation suffers.

For example, in a 2002 survey of HRM citizens, 22% of respondents with a well reported having a problem with their well running dry. Additionally, since 1980 HRM has spent approximately \$80 million on extending sewer and water services to remediate problems in previously unserved areas.

In neighbourhoods not connected to sewer lines, wastewater is treated on site, using large amounts of land for each household. Yet our current regulations don't allow for land-conserving alternatives like clustering houses to share a common septic system.

Clearly, continuing to grow as we have been is not a viable option for HRM. Dispersed development, reliance on cars for transportation and limited protection for our environment will continue to be the result. This form of growth doesn't reflect the public's Regional Planning principles, goals and objectives.

We need to change the trends before HRM develops into the very opposite of what residents envision for the region's future.



Research Findings

Below is a description of some important research, which will help to identify new opportunities for accommodating growth in HRM.

Some research is still in progress, but most is available to the public and is posted on our website www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning.

Municipal Land Use Policy & Housing Affordability Study

This study identifies key housing affordability issues in HRM, assesses the effect of the regulatory environment on the supply of affordable housing, and assesses and recommends the most promising and applicable regulatory, financial and planning measures for HRM.



Cost of Servicing Analysis

This analysis determines the relative costs of basic services such as roads, transit, sewer and water, waste management, schools, recreational facilities, and emergency services under several development scenarios.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) & High Capacity Transit (HCT) Opportunities Analysis

This analysis will identify the transit mode technologies that would work best within several transportation corridors in the region within the context of existing and future land use patterns and right-of-way opportunities.

Transit and Land Use Form

This report summarizes research studies regarding the influence of land use form, such as density, mix and design, on transit ridership.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Options

This report summarizes TDM programs designed to reduce the number of single-occupant vehicle trips and promote the use of alternative forms of transportation and non-traditional land use forms, while making the existing transportation network more efficient.

Parking Supply Management Options

This report summarizes strategies that manage the quantity of parking within an area in order to maximize the efficient use of existing parking facilities and off-street spaces.



Economic Study

This study researches, analyses, describes and quantifies HRM's key economic sectors and potential new growth industries. It provides forecasts for economic growth potential and suggests locational criteria and infrastructure requirements to support such growth.

Greenfield Areas Servicing Analysis

This study assesses the cost of serving residential development in new locations, which have not been previously urbanized. The study estimates cost thresholds for 10 greenfield sites, including the cost of piped services, treatment plants and transportation services, and it determines the sensitivity of these costs to changes in density and level of public transit use.

Water Resource Management Study

This study develops a set of policy recommendations for water resource management, including rivers, lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands and the ocean shoreline.

On-site & Small Scale Wastewater Management Options Study

This study assesses wastewater treatment options for rural areas and will identify effective management programs for their on-going maintenance. It also studies the ability of HRM's soil, groundwater and surface waters to accommodate various treatments.

Land Use Opportunities for Sustainable Development

The purpose of this research is to create a Geographical Information System (GIS) based inventory of land uses as well as biophysical and physical features of lands within HRM to assist in research, analysis and decision making for the HRM Regional Plan.



Urban Residential Capacity Analysis

This analysis determines how much land is potentially available for residential development in the urban core, while respecting the integrity of existing neighbourhood communities.

Housing Demand Study

This study forecasts future age group populations and the type of housing demand based upon those forecasted population age groups.

Freight Options Study

Although the south end container port is well situated for marine traffic, the need to truck containers through a congested downtown creates undesirable social impacts and risks and longer delivery times. The freight options study looks at options for moving containers, including exclusive truckways and a new intermodal terminal.

For more information on any of these projects, please contact the Regional Planning project office.

Interim Growth Management

On January 22, 2004, Halifax Regional Municipality was granted a 90-day Ministerial Order by the Province affecting residential developments in many unserviced areas in the region. It's important to be clear that interim growth measures are intended to manage development while the Regional Plan is developed. It is not the intention to stop development.

Once the 90 days are complete, existing community plans will be changed to include interim growth management measures. These measures are intended to prevent pre-emptive growth from occurring.

The controls are needed because as the Regional Plan takes shape, land developers may perceive that their ability to develop land will be restricted. Without interim growth management in unserviced areas, some developers may request development approvals faster than normal to avoid the new regulations. This could cause accelerated unplanned development.

This kind of development could exert undue pressure on public debate and severely restrict or undermine Regional Council's decision-making regarding the new Regional Plan.

For example, HRM residents could decide that we should be focusing new development primarily along transportation corridors. But if new subdivisions have already been approved for many of the region's outlying areas in a haphazard fashion, it could be too late to implement the public's vision for HRM's future.

Implementing interim growth management while these decisions are being made will preserve the public's right to make the choices that will affect the future of the whole region.

We are entering into the most important stage of consultation in Regional Planning. Members of the Regional Planning Committee and staff will be in communities throughout the spring to get advice on how best to implement the Regional Plan.

HRM has recommended an approach for interim growth management in the region. This approach will be discussed by Regional Council and the public at a public hearing at 3:00 pm on March 30, 2004 at Halifax City Hall.

Everyone is welcome to attend the public hearing. Come out and have your say! Get involved. Help plan our future!

The Amendments

The amendments will apply to the "Interim Growth Management" area shown below. Residential development will only be permitted on existing roads and/or on lots shown on completed subdivision applications (final, tentative, concept and preliminary) submitted prior to January 22, 2004.

However, concept plans will be limited to 25 lots per year and restrictions will be placed on the amount of road constructed. The amendments will also recognise existing approved development agreements and those currently in process. However, new rezonings and development agreements will be restricted to existing roads.

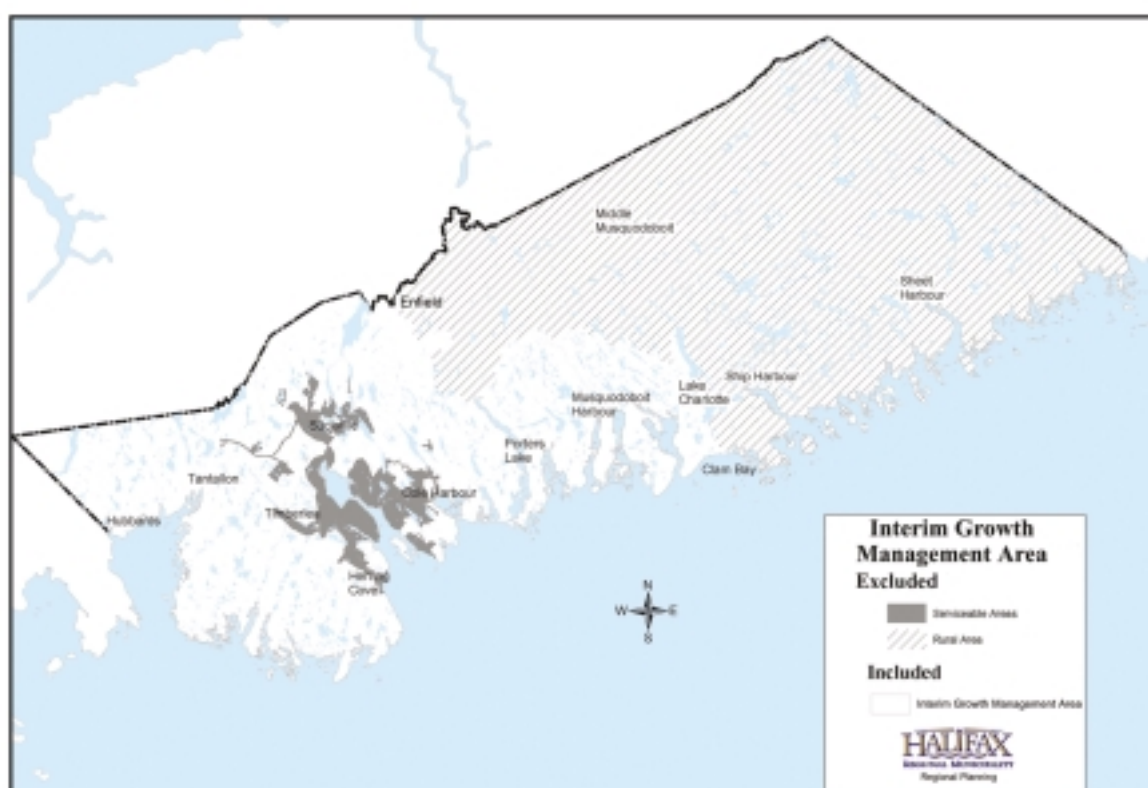
Existing growth management measures that pre-date the Ministerial Order will continue and HRM will be requesting an amendment to the Municipal Government Act to permit hydro-geological assessments to address water issues. To ensure interim growth management measures are achieving their intent, staff will provide an annual report to Regional Council.

Affected Planning Areas

The affected planning areas include:

- Beaver Bank/Hammonds Plains/Upper Sackville
- Bedford
- Chebucto Peninsula
- Cole Harbour/Westphal
- Dartmouth
- Eastern Passage/Cow Bay
- Eastern Shore West
- Halifax
- Lawrencetown
- Musquodoboit Valley/Dutch Settlement
- North Preston/Lake Major/Lake Loon/Cherry Brook/East Preston
- Porters Lake/Lake Echo/Chezzetcook
- Prospect
- Sackville
- Shubenacadie Lakes
- St. Margaret's Bay
- Timberlea/Lakeside/Beechville

Eastern Shore East is exempt from the amendments.





Upcoming Public Consultation Opportunities

Regional Planning is a Team Effort. Get Involved. Help Plan Our Future

Halifax Regional Municipality is developing alternatives for how the region will grow and develop over the next 25 years. Research shows up to an additional 100,000 people will be living in HRM by 2028.

The Regional Plan will propose ways to maintain the safe, vibrant, healthy way of life that draws people to HRM and keeps them here. You can be a part of making those decisions.

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

Come out to tell us your views on the draft alternatives for future growth.

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



Kick-off & Launch of Draft Alternatives for Growth

Saturday, May 15, 2004
9 am to 12:30 pm
Seton Academic Centre
Mount Saint Vincent University

Please contact the Regional Planning project office for more information or visit www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning for a complete list of times and locations.

Get Informed

A Citizen's Handbook describing each alternative will be available at least two weeks before the launch of the draft alternatives. This booklet will form the primary public educational and information piece for this phase of public consultation. It will contain a description of each alternative and its implications. Be sure to receive your copy.

Stay up to date!

Things are happening very quickly now with Regional Planning. To best keep you up to date, we're putting together an email distribution list. We will only use it to keep you informed of upcoming events or major milestones in the Regional Planning process. If you would like to add your name to the email list, please contact us at regplan@halifax.ca or 490-5857.



Regional Planning Process and Time Frame

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| 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) |



Contact information:

Regional Planning
PO Box 1749
Halifax, NS
B3J 3A5

Phone: (902) 490-5857
Fax: (902) 490-5730
Email: regplan@halifax.ca
Website: www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning