

1818 Shore Road, Eastern Passage, NS

# Blue Ocean Estates\* Master Plan

February 2022

\*This is an interim name for the development





# Project Team

## The development team

This development project is a partnership between Bedford Land Company and Heliopolis Homes.

## Heliopolis Homes

Heliopolis Homes is a Halifax-based construction company that have over 30 years of experience in residential construction. This company prides itself on building homes that people love to live in. They have completed projects all over Nova Scotia.

## The consulting team

Happy City and Design Point are the main consultants on this project. Happy City leads urban design and engagement while Design Point is lead on engineering.

## Happy City

Happy City is an urban design, planning and research consultancy that helps make cities happier, healthier and more inclusive. They have helped city builders around the world translate research into action to build happier communities. Their Halifax-based staff is the lead urban design team on this project.

## Design Point

DesignPoint is a Bedford-based professional engineering and surveying firm specializing in Civil Design projects, such as new land development projects, transportation engineering and civil engineering. They lead the civil and transportation engineering components of this project.



**Today, people want more than just a nice home. They want to live in a great community.**

They want a place where they can walk outside on safe, beautiful streets. They want a place to meet friends for coffee. They want great public spaces where kids can safely play. They want to know their neighbours. They want architecture that feels local and a community that feels warm, social, and recognizable.

This is what residents told us they want to see on this site. And this is the kind of community we hope to build.







This visual is an early concept of the masterplan. The concept plan has undergone iterations with City staff that may look different than this. But the overall concept remains in line with our final detailed design.

# The Concept

Blue Ocean Estates is a vision for a development that will promote walking and transit use, while offering much-needed amenities for the people of Eastern Passage. We seek to offer the quiet, low-rise feel of a suburban community, while also promoting a healthy, active lifestyle. The project will offer safe streets, three to four small local shops, great parks, and excellent access to transit. The design will feature slow streets and public spaces where children can play and where people naturally want to spend time. We drew on leading research to create a community that fosters neighborliness and strong social ties.



# Answering Our Biggest Challenges



## Housing Crisis

Housing prices are skyrocketing in Halifax's regional centre. According to census data, 43% of renters pay more than 30% of their income on housing in the Halifax Region. The city desperately needs more homes that offer people what they are looking for: a quiet, safe, healthy environment with local shops and excellent access to transit and jobs.



## Climate Emergency

Halifax Council has declared that “the breakdown of the stable climate and sea levels under which human civilization developed constitutes an emergency for HRM.” Walkable, compact communities are a key solution for climate change because they enable people to walk, roll and take transit, reducing their carbon emissions. We will further reduce emissions by building townhomes and multi-family units that share walls, reducing heat loss.



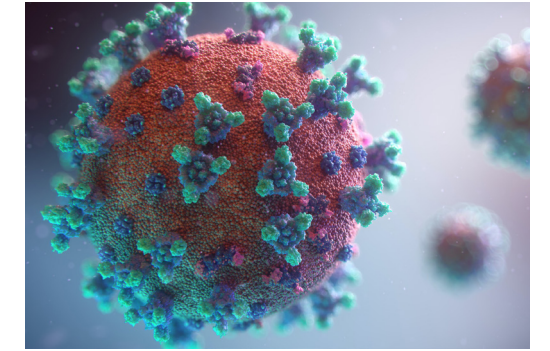
## Aging Population

One in eight people in Eastern Passage are aged over 65, and the proportion of elderly people in Nova Scotia is expected to rise quickly in the coming years. More than ever, we need to create homes where the elderly can age in place — where they can walk safely and access everything they need without driving.



## Health and Active Transport

Fewer than one in five Nova Scotian children walk to school, and only one in 20 high school students meet physical activity guidelines. We need more homes located next to schools and transit to make it easier to live a healthy, active lifestyle.



## The Pandemic

The COVID19 pandemic has revealed that we need more homes that enable neighbours to talk with each other at a safe distance during a pandemic. Simple design solutions can meet this need, such as porches and balconies. We also must design communities to strengthen social bonds, so that residents are prepared to support each other in times of crisis.





# The Opportunity

Blue Ocean Estates would fill in what is currently a vacant lot right in the centre of Eastern Passage. It will sit next to four schools, a provincial park and a municipal parks complex. The site is served by existing water and sewer pipes, and a major transit corridor. A previous proposal has been approved to build 31 units on this site. However, we feel the site calls for a more sustainable, people-friendly design that will produce greater social return for the municipality’s existing investments in the area.

This site is a perfect place to provide much-needed housing within a walkable, sustainable community that is safe and accessible for the elderly. It is an opportunity to demonstrate how suburban development can be social, resilient and inclusive.



# Design Overview

The plan for Blue Ocean Estates has three main sections:

# 1

## Ocean-Side Patio

This section of the community lines a major transit corridor and a local arterial, Shore Road. It features stacked townhomes and a low-rise multi-family building with a cafe and three-to-four small shops at its ground floor. Our design priorities are to:

- Help make Shore Road a great place to walk, lining the street with attractive buildings.
- Create homes and spaces where locals can enjoy the ocean view.
- Offer accessible apartments so the elderly can age in place.

# 2

## The Village Square

The centre of the community is a generous public square, lined by homes on all sides. Housing here consists of two-story townhomes, offering residents an affordable housing option and a quiet, family-oriented atmosphere.

# 3

## The Common Green

This area is the furthest from transit and is next to multiple schools. We therefore put the site's larger homes here: single-family homes designed to meet the needs of families with children. These homes share a common greenspace, lined with a slow, quiet laneway loop.





# Design Highlights

These are the design goals we sought to achieve in this proposed plan:



## A Cozy Public Realm

A community feels like a beautiful, wonderful place when all its buildings fit together to create a well-defined public realm. We have strategically positioned homes so that, together, they create strong, beautiful streets and public spaces.



## Safe Streets

In too many communities today, kids cannot play outside for fear of fast-moving vehicle traffic. We designed our central street to discourage speeding. The proposed street is narrow and lined with indications that this is a place that prioritizes the safety of kids and families.



## Parks, Play, and Shared Identity

We centred homes around public spaces to engender a sense of common ownership, and to enable neighbours to monitor shared spaces. Research shows that this promotes safety, reduces vandalism, and gives parents more comfort to let kids play outside. We also included pathways to create a comfortable public walking route between Shore Road and The Common.



## Social Design

We designed the site with key features that support social bonds by creating a gradual transition between private spaces (homes), to semi-private spaces (porches and small front yards) and public spaces (parks, coffee shops and sidewalks).



## Context-Sensitive Density

We include a modest cluster of low-rise, compact housing on Shore Road to maximize access to transit while retaining the area's small-scale village character. Density steps down as we move away from Shore Road, offering a quiet, more intimate residential environment.



## Nova Scotian Design

We will design the community to reflect Nova Scotia's design heritage. Our priority is to reinforce Eastern Passage's identity as a historic fishing village using traditional materials and familiar aesthetics.



# Project Principles

Every element of Blue Ocean Estates will be designed and managed according to the following principles:

## Better for All

This community will improve life for all residents of Eastern Passage by ensuring accessible amenities and access for all.

## Walkable and Safe

The community will offer opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to comfortably and safely walk outside.

## Joyful and Beautiful

Every street, park, and building will instill a feeling of joy, pride, and Nova Scotian identity.

## Social

This community will be welcoming to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, offering a diverse range of housing options and ensuring access for all.

## Inclusive

This community will improve access to sustainable mobility networks, encouraging people to walk, cycle, roll and take transit to their destinations, leading to a healthy, active lifestyle.

## Healthy and Sustainable

This community will improve access to sustainable mobility networks, encouraging people to walk, cycle, roll and take transit to their destinations, leading to a healthy, active lifestyle.

## Financially Resilient

This community will use a replicable, financially sound business model that generates more municipal tax revenue than it consumes.

## The Wellbeing Wheel

These principles are adapted from Happy City’s Wellbeing Wheel, a framework for building communities that support human happiness.





# Public Engagement

## Our Approach

We reached out to Eastern Passage residents to hear their perspective on their needs and desires. Our approach to public engagement was guided by four principles:

- **Meet residents where they are at — rather than asking them to come to us.**
- **Connect with residents who are often unable to participate in public forums.**
- **Offer a variety of easy, accessible and inclusive ways to give feedback.**
- **Respect COVID19 restrictions.**

We used the following strategies to reach out to the community.

## Online and mail-in survey

### REACH

51 responses

### DESCRIPTION

Residents provided feedback on the types and scale of future shops and services, public amenities, housing typologies, and architectural design and style.

## Flyers

### REACH

150 homes

### DESCRIPTION

The flyer offered an overview of the project and gave residents the option to mail in a survey, fill out an online survey, or set up an appointment for a phone call. We also discussed the project with residents — at a safe distance — while dropping off flyers, to better understand their insights.

## Locally-Targetted Facebook Ad

### REACH

2,200+ people reached.

140+ people clicked, liked, shared, or commented.

### DESCRIPTION

The Facebook ad directed people to the online survey. Residents commented on the ad itself, which offered further insight on local preferences.

## Phone Calls

### REACH

2 conversations

### DESCRIPTION

Two residents set up appointments to discuss the project with us directly, providing deeper insight on their point of view.

**100%** of respondents live in Eastern Passage. More information can be found in our **Public Engagement Report**, attached in Appendix 1.



# Public Engagement Responses

## Housing Typologies

Two thirds of respondents support a mix of duplexes and townhouses. Respondents' opinion on low-rise apartments was more divided, with only 51% supporting low-rise apartments. Residents did, however, express strong support for affordable housing, housing for families, and accessible units where elderly residents can age-in-place.

## Shops and Services

Two-thirds of residents told us they would like to have more local shops and services, and 54% expressed a specific desire for cafes, bakeries or restaurants. Multiple residents also asked for a convenience store, an arts-and-craft shop, a doctor's office, or other locally-serving shops and services.

## How We Responded

We have designed 250 m2 of commercial space along Shore Road that will offer space for a small locally-serving cafe with an outdoor patio overlooking the ocean. We will also create small, more affordable leasable commercial spaces that enable local residents to open businesses in their own community.

## How We Responded

We also have selected a mix of housing types to meet the diverse needs of families and other residents, including single-family homes and townhouses. We have designed these homes to be modest in size to make them more affordable for young families. To provide affordable, accessible units for the elderly, we also propose to create a low-rise, four-storey apartment building with an elevator. However, we recognize that support for apartment buildings is mixed, and so 97% of the site will be free of apartment buildings.

## Housing Design

Two thirds of residents supported using a traditional Nova Scotian approach to housing design, and many voiced strong enthusiasm on this point.

## How We Responded

Our design goal is to create homes that look and feel like traditional Nova Scotian construction, inspired especially by Fisherman's Cove.

## Public Realm Amenities

Three quarters of residents expressed a preference for having new public amenities on the site. The two most popular amenities were equipment for play and amenities for dogs, including an off-leash dog park or a place to walk dogs. Many also mentioned a desire for walking paths.

Residents also expressed a desire for a beautiful place to relax, with picnic tables, a pond, an outdoor dining area, native flowers, shaded seating, and sculptures. Others requested food gardens and fruit-bearing trees.

## How We Responded

We propose creating three public spaces: a central village square, a common green, and pocket plaza overlooking the ocean. We have not yet designed these spaces in detail, but will consider how best to incorporate many of the features residents have requested, including potentially play equipment, flowers, and sculptures.

We will also provide a walking path through the site connecting the ocean and the Shore Road sidewalk to the Eastern Passage Common. This will provide residents with an excellent, pleasant route for walking their dog or going for a stroll.

We will work with HRM to identify opportunities for residents to access amenities in the Eastern Passage Common that are too large to fit on our site, such as an off-leash dog park.



# Context

The site is ideally suited for infill development. It is a section of vacant land in the centre of a Eastern Passage on a major street, Shore Road, well-served by transit, with access to existing underused water and sewage utilities. The site is also adjacent to three elementary schools, a high school (under development), and two major public spaces: the Eastern Passage Common and MacCormack Beach Provincial Park. By building here, we can offer more families direct walkable access to these schools, parks, and transit, promoting a healthier lifestyle — and reducing the number of children who need to be driven to school.

The area has few local-serving businesses. The community's primary commercial centre, Fisherman's Cove, is located beyond walking distance for homes in the neighbourhood. The site therefore offers the opportunity to create small shops to serve local residents and the schools.



## Eastern Passage Common Master Plan

The Halifax Region is currently undergoing a major planning exercise to upgrade the Eastern Passage Common, bringing new sports fields, amenities, and gathering places. We propose connecting our site to the Common with a public, multi-use trail. This will provide new residents with better access to the schools and the Common. It would also provide students of the school and visitors in the Common with better access to the small shops and services on our site. The connection will, moreover, create an attractive recreational walking route from the ocean to the Common. In all, this will reduce short-trip vehicle traffic in the surrounding community.



## Transit and Job Access

The site is located on one of Halifax's 10 primary Transit Corridors, connecting the community directly to Downtown Dartmouth, both ferry terminals, and the Bridge Terminal. The transit corridor will also pass through a proposed Bus Rapid Transit Lane in Dartmouth's downtown.

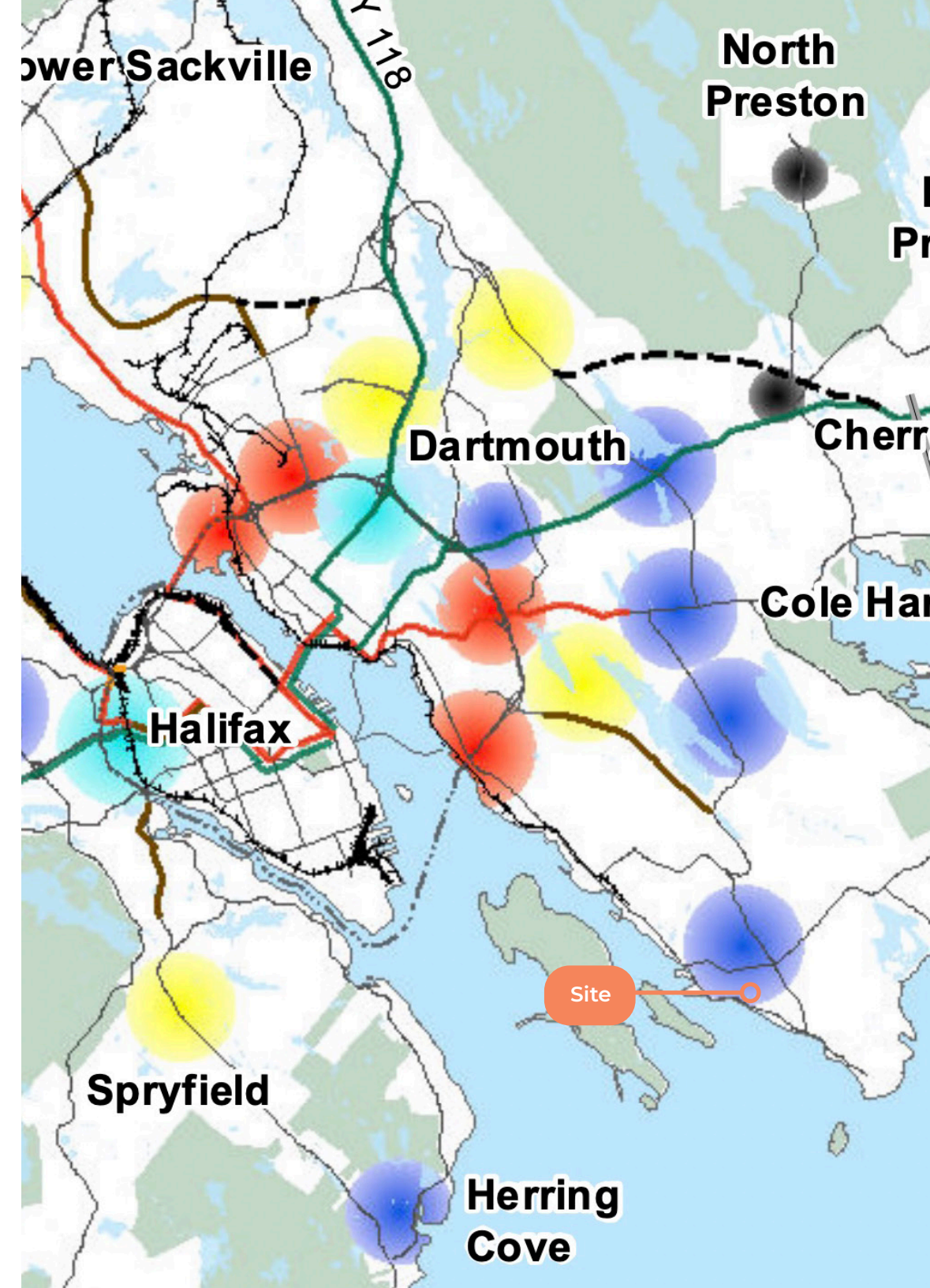
This development will help bring high levels of ridership to this transit corridor, which, overtime, will help justify increased transit frequency, improving transit access for existing residents.

By focusing growth here, rather than on the auto-dependent urban edge, this project should help reduce traffic over the long term.



## Regional Plan

The project is located within one of the Regional Plan's Growth Centres. It fulfills the plan's goal to encourage financially-efficient, healthy, sustainable, mixed-use growth within existing communities, connected by high-quality transit to jobs and our downtowns. The project seeks to exemplify the spirit of the Regional Plan, showing how to create walkable complete communities within the city's existing built-up area.







# The Proposal: A Healthy, Sustainable Multigenerational Community

The site can be envisioned as three distinct sections, which we examine in detail below:

- 1. Ocean-side Patio
- 2. The Village Square
- 3. The Common Green



# Ocean-Side Patio

This site has one of the best views of the ocean in the entire Halifax urban region. We seek to achieve three primary goals with these buildings:

- Create a beautiful place for residents and people in the surrounding neighbourhoods to enjoy this view.
- Ensure as many residents as possible live directly next to transit and the ocean view.
- Make Shore Road an even better place to walk.



- 1 GENTLE DENSITY:** We propose to line the street with two rows of stacked townhomes and a multi-family building. (Stacked townhomes position some units above or below each other, while retaining each unit’s access to the street). In this way, we seek to cluster homes along transit in a way that is appropriate for Eastern Passage’s residential character. The townhomes also create a buffer between surrounding homes and the multi-family building.
- 2 HIDDEN PARKING:** We have strategically placed buildings to block the view of parking lots from Shore Road to protect the street’s visual integrity. We also line the parking lot with a hedgerow buffer to protect neighbours’ views.
- 3 DESIGN INSPIRATION:** Even our multi-family buildings will emphasize the look and feel of larger traditional Nova Scotian homes, such as those pictured in Mahone Bay.
- 4 COMMERCIAL SPACES:** The mixed-use building will have 250 square metres of ocean-fronting commercial space, or roughly 3-4 small shops. These spaces are small, aimed at shops that serve the local area. Their size also makes them more affordable if locals wish to open up a business. We will design one of the spaces specifically to suit a cozy cafe.
- 5 POCKET PLAZA:** We will create a public space in front of the multi-family building, next to the cafe seating, so that anyone can sit and enjoy the view without needing to pay for a drink.
- 6 ACCESSIBLE UNITS:** The apartment building will be designed to accessibility standards, offering elderly people an attractive option to age in place.





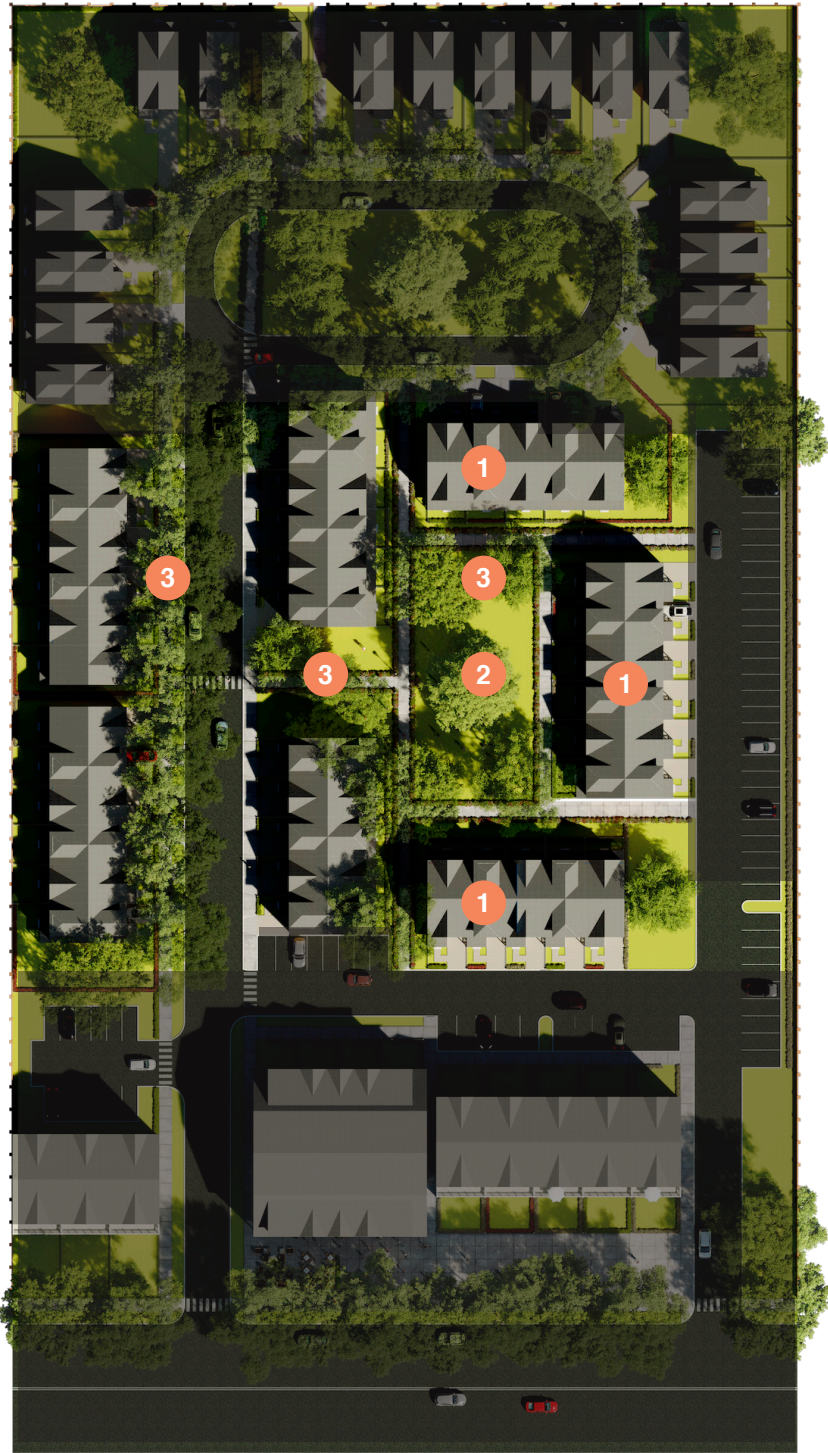


This visual is an early concept of the masterplan. The final park will be somewhat smaller in scale.

## The Village Square

The best communities have a strong central place that defines local identity and civic pride. This is our goal with the village square: to create a gathering place for the local and wider neighbourhood, framed by townhomes on all sides.

- 1 **TOWNHOMES AND FAMILIES:** This will be an excellent place to raise a family, with front lawns facing directly onto common space, easily monitored by parents, friends, and neighbours.
- 2 **AMENITIES:** We hope to work with future residents to choose amenities for the village square, such as gardens and works of art.
- 3 **BENCHES:** We will layout benches in small clusters to promote social interaction and a friendly neighbourhood atmosphere.







## The Common Green

Here the development offers larger family-oriented homes centred on a local laneway and a quiet common greenspace.


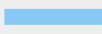


- 1 SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES:** This sub-section of the development is for families who desire more space and larger private yards. It is the site's lowest-density area, located furthest from transit. It also provides families with direct access to neighbouring schools.
- 2 A LANE AROUND A GREEN:** We sought to deliver something more family-friendly than a cul-de-sac, which often require a large amount of under-utilized asphalt. In this design, cars will follow a one-directional lane around a central public space. This replaces asphalt with a space that families can enjoy.
- 3 COMMON GREEN:** We seek to create a green space that is both attractive for residents and low-cost for HRM to maintain. Two brick-paver paths will meet in the centre of the space, where we will create a hardscape area for residents to meet and sit and for kids to play. We will landscape the four corners of the green with low-growing, low-maintenance vegetation and trees.
- 4 MULTI-USE PATHWAY:** We will build a small multi-use pathway connecting this community to the Eastern Passage Common. We hope to work with the school board and HRM to continue this pathway to Horizon Elementary School and to the other pathways in the Common.





# Beautiful, Safe Streets and Paths

One of our central design priorities is to ensure that people will feel comfort, safety, and a sense of joy walking anywhere in this site. We have therefore identified the most logical routes people will walk so that we can design each to ensure walking feels enjoyable and pleasant throughout.

-  This is the **primary pedestrian corridor** through the site, connecting to schools and the Eastern Common in the north, and shops, transit, and Shore Road in the south. One of our central goals was to ensure this route feels excellent throughout.
-  This is a **secondary pedestrian route**. Here we aim to respect pedestrian desire lines, without encouraging this as a primary walking route.
-  **This route connects parking to the shops and other homes.** We will colour and texturize a section of asphalt to provide a pedestrian priority-path along the parking lane until it can connect with other pedestrian paths.
-  **Shore Road** is an important pedestrian connection for the larger community. We seek to strengthen the street for walking with a consistent, attractive streetwall.



## The Central Street: A Safe and Social Design

We seek to create a street so slow and safe that residents can feel comfortable letting their children play outside. We have made lanes as narrow as possible following Halifax's new Complete Street Design Guidelines (the updated "Red Book") to discourage drivers from speeding. We will also create a sidewalk bump-out at the central crosswalk, which serves the dual purpose of helping residents cross the street to the square, while also helping to slow cars.






In suburban communities, on-street parking often goes unused, which can make a street feel excessively wide. This, in turn, encourages fast driving. We therefore eliminated on-street parking on one side of the street and reduced it on the other.





# Enclosed Streets and Parks



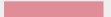
Public space feels most comfortable when it is lined on all sides by great buildings — especially when they establish a clear, well-defined sense of space. We therefore carefully positioned homes to define the edges of the streets and public spaces. In particular, we have sought to create a strong, consistent sense of space for the entire primary pedestrian corridor.

-  The **single-family homes and townhouses** enclose the laneway around the Common Green.
-  **Townhomes** provide a clear, consistent border for village square on all sides.
-  The street here risks feeling like a back alley as it passes along a parking lot and the sides of buildings. We will visually **screen the parking lot with stonework and greenery**, as well as **activate the sides of buildings with windows, doors, and architectural detail**.
-  The **multifamily building will be surrounded on both sides by townhomes** (some built into the multifamily building). We will seek to retain a sense of enclosure on this laneway by partially blocking the view of parking.
-  We will create a **consistent, attractive streetwall** along Shore Road to help make it a great place for people to walk.



# Blocking the View of Parking

We needed to add some surface parking to meet the requirements of shops and other buildings—and to ensure that visitors never use the surrounding neighbourhood for parking. We have, however, sought to minimize the visual impact of these parking lots by strategically positioning buildings to block their view.

-  We will block the view for our neighbours to the East with a two-metre hedgerow buffer.
-  Townhomes will block the view of parking from the village square. Townhomes and single-family homes will block the view of parking from the Common Green.
-  The apartment building and stacked townhouses will block the view of parking from Shore Road.





# Urban Forest

Trees are essential for creating a healthy, sustainable community. They are especially important in Eastern Passage, to quell the area’s heavy ocean winds.

We will plant a diversity of shade trees every 10 metres in the 1.5 metre furnishing zone between the sidewalk and the street, as per HRM’s new Complete Streets Guidelines.

In the Village Square, we will plant eastern hemlock, sugar maple and yellow birch trees to support the Urban Forest Master Plan’s intention to plant these trees on public lands in Eastern Passage.

We will design the Common Green with a mix of trees and low-maintenance greenery, including grass, low ground-cover plants, and appropriate bushes to complement the hardscape elements without adding major maintenance costs for the municipality. We will explore inviting residents to adopt sections of public parks to landscape and garden.



# Social Infrastructure

Canadians face rising levels of social isolation, especially among the elderly. Loneliness is as bad for health as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day, and it surged during the pandemic. Our neighbourhood design offers the following strategies to nurture social ties:

- 1 SOCIAL PORCHES.** We will design porches on our single-family homes and townhouses to be large, comfortable, and inviting, and will locate them within 10-15 feet of the street. This distance is ideal for building social ties because it is close enough to the sidewalk to maintain a comfortable conversation, while being far enough to maintain a sense of privacy when desired. We will also align porches with each other, as this creates opportunities for neighbours to casually meet and talk.
- 2 BRIDGING SPACE.** We will design the space between porches and the sidewalk to encourage gardening and relaxing, creating more opportunities for conversation between residents and pedestrians on the street.
- 3 LOCAL PUBLIC SPACES.** Each cluster of homes is associated with a small, adjacent public space. This promotes a sense of common ownership and increases the likelihood that immediate residents will meet each other.
- 4 A THIRD SPACE.** The cafe aims to be a “third space,” meaning a place for people to meet outside of work and home. Third spaces are a critical stepping stone for acquaintances to become friends, offering a place to gather.
- 5 PANDEMIC-READY DESIGN.** Porches, bridging space, and the low balconies all enable safe opportunities for residents to see each other and socialize during pandemics.





# Conclusion

Blue Ocean Estates is, to us, a demonstration project. We aim to show how to build sustainable, healthy, transit-oriented homes appropriate for a quiet, suburban community. In this way, we seek to help achieve the goals of the Regional Plan and Integrated Mobility Plan.

Local public engagement shaped this project, and we hope to deliver many of the things that residents expressed they most desire: accessible senior housing, family-friendly homes, a cafe with a view, a small handful of local shops, beautiful green spaces to gather, and Nova Scotian design. The development will create new walking routes, connecting the Eastern Passage Common to the ocean. It will also help to strengthen Shore Road as a great

place to walk, with a consistent line of attractive buildings lining the street.

This project matters because Halifax can only meet the rising demand for housing if projects outside the Regional Centre can offer the kind of homes people increasingly want, offering a great quality of life, local shops, a great mix of transport options, and a strong sense of identity. We need to grow in ways that utilize existing infrastructure, and that reinforce the success of transit, inside our suburban communities.

We hope to create a neighbourhood that will inspire others to build similar healthy, sustainable communities in the Halifax Region.

