

Beechville Zoning Proposals

Introduction

In 2017, at the request of the Beechville Community Development Association, Halifax Regional Council initiated a community planning exercise in Beechville to review impacts of development and work with residents to address community concerns. Beechville is one of the oldest African Nova Scotian communities in the province, dating back to 1813. Throughout the 1970s and 80s governments encouraged industrial development in the area, and significant residential development began in the 1990s. The original African Nova Scotian community has shrunk significantly through expropriations and tax sales not always considered fair or appropriate.

In recent years HRM has been working to address historic injustices that contribute to social and economic disparities experienced by African Nova Scotian communities. Council adopted a Framework for an Anti-Black Racism strategy that addresses historic inequities and strengthens municipal service delivery to African Nova Scotian communities in June 2021. With primary responsibility for land use planning, one of HRM's most effective tools is to bring community priorities into municipal planning strategies and land use bylaws. In September 2020, Regional Council approved HRM's first Community Action Plan for Beechville: a process that supports residents in developing a vision for the future of their neighbourhood. Residents identify strengths and weaknesses, create a vision for the future of the community, and, with support from HRM, develop an action plan outlining steps to achieve it. The Beechville Community Development Association created a list of issues and priority areas that form the basis of the Community Action Plan, which HRM has been working to advance over the past two years.

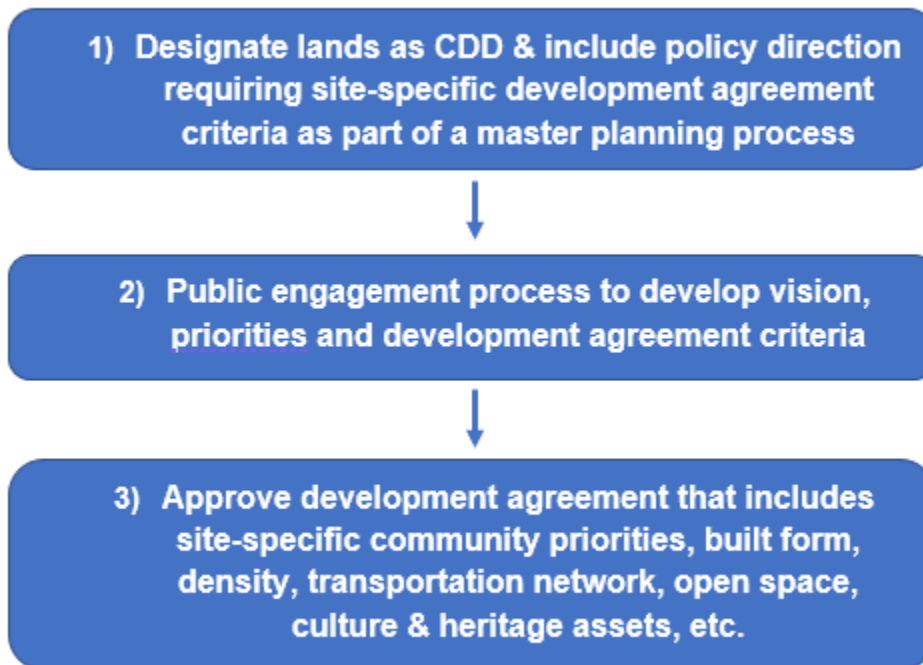
The full report and details on Beechville's Community Action Plan may be found at: <https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/200929rc1116.pdf> It includes a list of priority areas for action, such as more housing, green space for community use, and protection of cultural and heritage assets. HRM is proposing changes to land use planning documents that would incorporate these priorities.

Beechville Comprehensive Development District

There are large, undeveloped tracts of land between the Munroe subdivision and Highway 103, and between Sheppards Run and Highway 103. Given their size, these lands have the potential to be developed as new subdivisions. HRM is proposing a new policy and zone that would ensure these lands are developed according to community vision and objectives.

The lands are currently zoned R-1, which allows single unit dwellings to be constructed. Changing the zone would change the existing development rights for the lands. HRM is considering creating new policies that would require a comprehensive neighbourhood design plan for development.

Master neighbourhood planning requirements are implemented by using Comprehensive Development District (CDD) policies and zones. CDD policies require site-specific criteria to be created and addressed in a development agreement – essentially a contract between a developer and the Municipality setting out what can be constructed. Development agreements generally set out road connections, park and open space locations, infrastructure like water servicing, and number and type of units permitted. They can also address site-specific considerations, which in this case would be community priorities. These priorities are established through a public engagement process to allow residents more control over the future of their community.



While there are already CDD policy and development agreement requirements in the current Timberlea-Lakeside-Beechville Municipal Planning Strategy, this proposal is to create new, separate CDD and development agreement policies specifically for the undeveloped areas between the Munroe subdivision and Highway 103, and between Sheppards Run and Highway 103. No development would be possible until the master neighbourhood planning process is complete and development agreement criteria are established. The only development that would be permitted in the meantime are those currently enabled through the existing R-1 zone (see Appendix A for complete list of uses permitted under the R-1 zone). Subdivision and creation of new public streets would not be permitted, and those specific properties would not be eligible to apply for the existing CDD zone.

In summary, a new Beechville CDD zone would still allow development but would require it to be done in partnership with the community to ensure that development achieves certain goals. It does this by making the community goals the conditions for a development agreement. In the case of Beechville, those goals would be the priorities set by the community (e.g., shared housing such as housing for seniors, protection of cultural & heritage assets, green space, etc).

Industrial to Commercial Rezoning

Originally the type of land use along St Margaret's Bay Road in Beechville was primarily residential. In the 1970's and 80's many properties were rezoned to I-1 (Light Industrial), to encourage industrial development in the area. Introducing industrial zones to a historically residential area created incompatible uses side-by-side – an issue that remains today.

Limiting further industrial encroachment has been a consistent priority for the community. There is interest in allowing some level of commercial use to support small local businesses, but not uses that involve large trucks, heavy machinery, vehicle repair or other uses with intrusive noise or smells. Rezoning the remaining I-1 properties along the south side of St Margaret's Bay Road to Local Business (C-1) would permit single unit dwellings, variety stores, food stores, and service and personal service shops (see definitions of what these include in Appendix B).

Appendix A: List of Permitted Uses in the R-1 Zone

Residential Uses

- Single unit dwellings
- Existing mobile home parks
- Day care facilities for not more than fourteen (14) children and in conjunction with permitted dwellings
- Business uses in conjunction with permitted dwellings (max 25% of gross floor area or 300 sq ft).
- Secondary or backyard suites (one suite permitted per single dwelling)

Community Uses

- Permits both Open Space uses and Institutional uses, except day care facilities, medical clinics and fraternal centres and halls.

Institutional Uses:

- Educational institutions and uses
- Denominational institutions and uses
- A single dwelling unit in conjunction with a day care facility
- Fire and police stations
- Government offices and public works
- Public libraries, museums and galleries
- Community centres and halls
- Public transit terminals

Open Space Uses:

- Public and private parks and playgrounds
- Recreation uses
- Cemeteries
- Day camps
- Historic sites and monument

Shared Housing

In August 2022, Council approved amendments to all HRM's municipal planning strategies, that applied a common definition and approach to shared housing. This includes special care homes, rooming houses, supportive housing (shelters and group homes), seniors' housing and assisted living arrangements. The amendments allow shared housing in all residential zones, and enable a dwelling with up to 10 bedrooms, as long as the building meets the zone's built form regulations (ie, in an R-1 zone the building must be an R-1 single dwelling).

Appendix B: List of Permitted Uses in the C-1 Local Business Zone

Residential Uses

- Single unit dwellings

Commercial Uses

- Variety stores
- Food stores
- Service shops – includes shops for sale and repair of household articles such as radio, television and appliance repair shops, but shall not include industrial or manufacturing or motor vehicle repair shops
- Personal service shops – includes services administering to personal needs such as barber shops, beauty parlors, automatic laundry shops, hairdressing shops, shoe repair and shoe shining, and tailoring, laundry and drycleaning collection depots and shops