

HALIFAX GREEN NETWORK

State of the Landscape Report



Photo credit: Skyline Studios

The Halifax Green Network Plan – an Open Space and Greenbelting Priorities Plan for the Region – will provide a framework for the conservation of a regional network of open space resources with multiple environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits. Phase 1 identified values, as well as key issues and opportunities that will influence and guide the development of an inter-connected open space system.

Open Space Values

ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY:

Diverse and healthy ecosystems provide important ecosystem services and benefits, such as provisioning (water, food, and fiber), regulating (climate and water), and supporting natural and built environments (habitats, water quality).

WORKING LANDSCAPES:

Working landscapes, managed sustainably, provide important economic development opportunities while ensuring the viability of ecosystems in the long-term. The preservation of traditional land-uses, food security, and the viability of rural communities all strongly depend on a thriving working landscape.

RECREATION AND TRAILS:

Connected parks, wilderness areas, and trails provide a wide range of recreation and active transportation opportunities within reach of communities which can help promote active lifestyles, contribute to quality of life, and stimulate economic investment.

COMMUNITIES:

Parks and open space contribute to a unique sense of place, as well as help shape community identity and community form. Strategic open space protection helps to ensure that growth management objectives are achieved through sustainable development patterns. Accessible urban open spaces are connected by foot, bicycle, and transit, and promote an active lifestyle, as well as contribute to the overall quality of life.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES:

Cultural landscapes, including their historical context and land uses, are the foundations for the communities' sense of place and identity.



HALIFAX GREEN NETWORK (CONT.)

Issues and Opportunities

Key issues and opportunities have been identified in the State of the Landscape Report and include:

ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY

Water quality is being compromised by development close to drinking water protection areas and within vulnerable watersheds. Groundwater resources that supply wells are also at risk of contamination. Landscape connectivity and important habitat is being lost. Critical areas are vulnerable to residential development, natural resource extraction, and utility and transportation expansions. Coastal areas, including productive estuaries, are highly valued but are not adequately protected.

WORKING LANDSCAPES

Mining and aggregate extraction industries are threatened by encroaching development and competing land uses. They are essential but need to be developed and operated in an ecologically-sensitive way to be sustainable. Tourism is important for the region; however, its development requires the protection of key resources such as scenic views along travel-ways. The local food system is threatened by the loss of a limited supply of productive agricultural land. These lands, along with wild harvesting areas for hunting and fishing, should be protected.

RECREATION AND TRAILS

There is a good supply of regional parks and wilderness areas close to communities but connectivity and access is an issue. Water access is also limited due to a fragmented public open space system and privately-owned waterfront lands. While there are many trails and AT routes, the corridor system is not well connected. Incomplete mapping also challenges planning efforts.

COMMUNITIES

Natural edges of communities contribute significantly to neighbourhood identity, recreation, and sustainable growth but are threatened by current development patterns. In some communities, the amount and quality of parkland is not sufficient or underutilized. Broader open space objectives and a park system plan will maximize the benefits of a larger network and inform public lands management. Greater use of streets and urban forest as important open space is also needed.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Cultural landscapes are vital to sense of place and community prosperity. However, Halifax's cultural landscape program is at an early stage. A cultural planning framework will help identify and protect significant cultural landscapes including landscapes of indigenous peoples. The threat to coastal villages and the quality of waterways, coastlines, and scenic views is a concern, along with the erosion of cultural identity and character of urban and rural districts.

PHASE 2

During the next phase, open space network learning scenarios with varying degrees of preservation will be developed and assessed to help understand impacts on the landscape. Community engagement will help shape a preliminary open space network, and planning and implementation framework, which will be presented for Council's consideration in spring 2016. A final Plan will be developed by summer 2016.