

HALIFAX GREEN NETWORK

An Open Space & Greenbelting Priorities Plan for the Region



Project Overview

Protecting open space is a core value for Halifax citizens and a primary objective of the 2014 Halifax Regional Plan. Halifax's open space landscape is exceptional in its beauty and diversity and in its environmental, socio-cultural and economic value.

Being deliberate about how we protect and use open space over the long-term is important to advancing regional planning objectives for sustainable growth and the development of more liveable, complete communities. A regional network of open space is critical to the success of the Region and its communities and includes unbuilt lands and waters set aside and reserved over the long-term for conservation, service delivery and community-shaping purposes.

Halifax Regional Council has identified the need for a strategic vision and planning and implementation framework for protecting and managing open space.

To achieve this goal, the development of the **Halifax Green Network Plan - an Open Space and Greenbelting Priorities Plan for the Region** is now underway. The Plan will be based on a comprehensive view of open space as an important resource performing multiple ecological, recreational and community planning functions.

Using principles of greenbelting and landscape ecology, an interconnected network of open space will be identified including areas important for wilderness and biodiversity, lands for sustainable forestry, agriculture, and resource extraction, coastal and cultural landscapes, public parks, community greenspaces, and urban squares and streets important to the regional open space network.

The Regional Plan seeks to “foster a land management and community design approach which integrates preservation of lands of ecological, cultural and environmental significance, lands suited for renewable resource extraction, and lands suited for parks, trails and corridors which provide recreational and educational opportunities and the adoption of “development practices that sustain air, land, water and groundwater resources and respond to climate change”.

Key to this approach is an understanding that both public and private open space work together in shaping and defining the regional and community landscape. Therefore, the Plan will provide direction for public lands planning

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and management as well as guidance for land-use policy, regulation and other mechanisms to shape the planning and management of privately-owned open space. Open space protection requires active participation and commitment by government, citizens, land-owners and organizations working together to ensure conservation objectives can be met.

The Halifax Green Network Plan will establish **what** lands are important and **why** based on ecological science and needs assessment, **where** the important lands are located within the open space network and **how** they will be protected through public policy and land management and through land-use planning, community design and development.

The outcome of this work will be a strategic vision and decision-making framework for future open space protection and use. The Plan will not contain new zoning or regulation but rather it will provide the necessary land evaluation, public policy direction, and implementation tools and priorities to shape future community planning process. Any future land-use planning must be considered and approved by Regional Council following focussed public consultation.

The Planning Process:

Over the next year the Halifax Green Network Plan will be developed using a combination of ecological classification and suitability mapping, public values and objectives, and sophisticated GIS and technical analysis. We will determine which open spaces are most important for long-term protection for public service delivery, conservation, and community-shaping.

The project will be advanced in three phases:

1 FOUNDATIONS May to July 2015

Output: State of the Landscape Report and community values, issues, and goals

Understanding what we have, what we value and where we want to go

2 PLANNING FRAMEWORK August to February 2016

Output: Policy objectives and ecological and planning assessment

Evaluating and refining open space scenarios and options, and developing planning and implementation directions

3 DRAFT AND FINAL PLAN March to June 2016

Output: Comprehensive planning and implementation framework

Finalizing preferred scenarios and solutions – finalizing the Plan

The public and stakeholders will have multiple opportunities to participate in the process and shape the Plan at each phase.