

HALIFAX

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Item No. 1
Halifax Regional Council
March 5, 2019

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by 

Kelly Denty, Director of Planning and Development

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 7, 2019

SUBJECT: Bloomberg Harvard Joint Initiatives

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Staff Initiated report.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39

BACKGROUND

In July of 2018, Mayor Savage was invited by the former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg to join the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative. The Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative is a collaboration among Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Business School, and Bloomberg Philanthropies. Its mission is to inspire and strengthen city leaders, as well as equip them with the tools to lead high-performing, innovative cities. The program offers leadership and management training to mayors who lead cities with vision and purpose, and two senior officials from each city who are most crucial to affecting organizational change. Through Mayor Savage's attendance, the municipality was invited to participate in several projects and programs supported by the Bloomberg Harvard Initiative which provides support and assistance to municipalities. The municipality submitted applications under two initiatives and received approval of assistance on:

- Certification under the “*What Works Cities*” program to enhance the use of data and evidence based decision making in local governments – includes Public Safety Strategy; and
- Participation in a Harvard Kennedy School graduate course that provides analytic services to cities and other public-sector organizations – Regional Land Use / Financial Model.

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of both of these initiatives

DISCUSSION

“What Works Cities” Certification - Public Safety Strategy

“*What Works Cities*” is a program launched in April of 2015 by Michael Bloomberg, in partnership with the following organizations: the Behavioral Insights Team, the Government Performance Lab at the Harvard Kennedy School, the Center for Government Excellence at John Hopkins University, Results for America and the Sunlight Foundation.

Acceptance into the program provides cities with 12 months of access to knowledge and learning opportunities, program support and an executive monthly coaching session with local government Senior Executives. This provides an opportunity to advance the use of data within the organization by applying these learnings and support on a local priority. Certification achieved through this program is a strong indicator that the municipality has the capability and commitment to the use of data when making decisions.

The municipality joined the program in late 2018 and our program activities started in January of 2019 with the core local team made up of the CAO, the CFO and the CIO and project/program support. The initial assessment of the “*What Works Cities*” team, showed that our organization already has strong capabilities and we have a high likelihood of achieving certification.

As the Public Safety Strategy is a priority area that touches many facets of life in Halifax, it has been proposed as the focused area for our certification program. Halifax’s Public Safety Strategy is an evidence-based plan to enhance the factors that contribute to community safety and wellbeing. Given the trans-departmental scope of the Strategy, and its evidence-based approach to making and monitoring investments in community safety and wellbeing, the Halifax team selected the Strategy as a framework for ‘What Works Cities’ certification. The team leads met with the Public Safety Advisor to select a certification project that would enable them to build on HRM capacity and skills to use data and evidence to make more informed decisions, deliver more effective services and programs, and improve residents’ lives. The project selected is the development of a Community Safety and Wellbeing Index, focused on one or two priority areas.

This index is based on the premise that by measuring and tracking levels of wellbeing across the municipality against *where, how, and to what degree* the municipality and other key stakeholders deliver programs, services and key infrastructure to communities, we can identify areas of vulnerability. Vulnerability in this context refers to the gap between challenges faced by a community and the resources available to overcome those challenges. By identifying these gaps, we can work more collaboratively and effectively to refine and target our services to ameliorate the vulnerabilities. The key deliverables for this project are:

- a framework for understanding the factors contributing to safety and wellbeing for the selected one or two priority areas;
- a system to track and measure those factors over time at the dissemination level;
- the identification of stakeholder roles in contributing to safety and wellbeing for the selected one or two priority areas at the determined dissemination level; and
- a data-driven approach to making future investments in community safety and wellbeing for the selected one or two priority areas.

Regional Land Use / Financial Model

Under the Bloomberg-Harvard Initiative, additional support is provided by enabling municipalities to participate as a client organization in a spring 2019 graduate level course on “Advanced Applied Management, Operations, and Budgeting Field Course”. This course gathers graduate students to provide analytic services to municipalities and cities. The Municipality submitted a project for consideration and was accepted into the program where Harvard graduate students create a framework for a Land Use and Financial model that evaluates policy changes and decisions. The course runs from February to May 2019. The Municipality was the only non- American jurisdiction chosen.

This project is in response to the adoption of the Regional Plan in 2006, which changed land use policy to slow the expansion of the municipality beyond its service boundary and concentrate more development in the urban core and Regional Centre. In 2014, Council revised the Regional Plan to further support this intent which resulted in development trends changing within the municipality.

An issue facing the Municipality is the demand for more greenfield land to be included within the service boundary, which has a greater cost to the municipality. There is a need for a tool to enable the municipality to evaluate the financial cost of a variety of land use trends and policy changes to determine when and where the boundary should be expanded.

To maximize financial resources, the Municipality already has launched several initiatives to reduce the need for such an expansion, including:

- Adoption of Centre Plan - demonstrates Halifax's support for growth and development in the Regional Centre.
- By-law Simplification - reduce the number of Plans & By-laws to modernize our standards and processes.
- Green Network Plan - understanding where to direct growth and preserve natural areas.

To support these initiatives and to monitor the outcomes, it is important to understand what the financial cost of any proposed changes would be, before changing policy or procedures – otherwise known as Evidence Based Decision Making. Staff from Planning and Development and Finance are reviewing the original financial model for the Regional Plan with a goal of updating and expanding the model. At this point, the details and objectives of the project are being finalized. The task for the students is to provide the municipality with recommendations based upon the agreed upon objectives.

To make evidence based decisions, the municipality needs to improve how it manages and uses its data resources. Halifax has several major data sources but there is no comprehensive approach to it from a development, growth or financial perspective. The goal is to understand how this data and others in the future can be compiled in a comprehensive manner to enable the municipality to determine trends geospatially and the financial impacts of new or existing planning policies. The project will also give the municipality the ability to better monitor and report changes/trends and determine the financial impacts of those changes and new policy. This project will assist Halifax in evaluating and implementing key initiatives of the municipality such as: the Integrated Mobility Plan, provision of services, transit, the Cultural and Heritage Priorities Plan, the Green Network Plan, and others.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

None.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

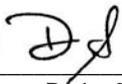
A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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