



# Musquodoboit Harbour

## Vision and Strategic Action Plan

October 2007

### Background – the Canvas

Musquodoboit Harbour is a small community located within the largest municipality in Atlantic Canada. However, this amalgamation of Halifax Regional Municipality is quite recent (1996) and a feeling of independence is still present. This rural area, where many residents commute to the city for work and other purposes, is also far enough from the main urban area that some people make their living locally. Musquodoboit Harbour is strategically situated on the Eastern Shore at the junction of two important rural highways, enabling it to attract people not only from further along the shore, but also from the Musquodoboit Valley. Proximity to a highway leading directly to the Halifax metropolitan area is yet another one of the strategic advantages which make Musquodoboit Harbour attractive to a diversity of businesses, institutions and recreational facilities accessible to a number of communities.

The local community would like to see a variety of services and facilities develop further. This is supported by recognition of Musquodoboit Harbour as a Rural Commuter District Centre in the Regional Plan. Strategic investment then would support a compact mix of residential and commercial development while emphasizing the community's character as a village.

The visioning process has given the community the opportunity to reflect and envision a bright future in a meaningful way. Looking forward, confidence is based on positive action and open communication between community-based liaison groups and the HRM.

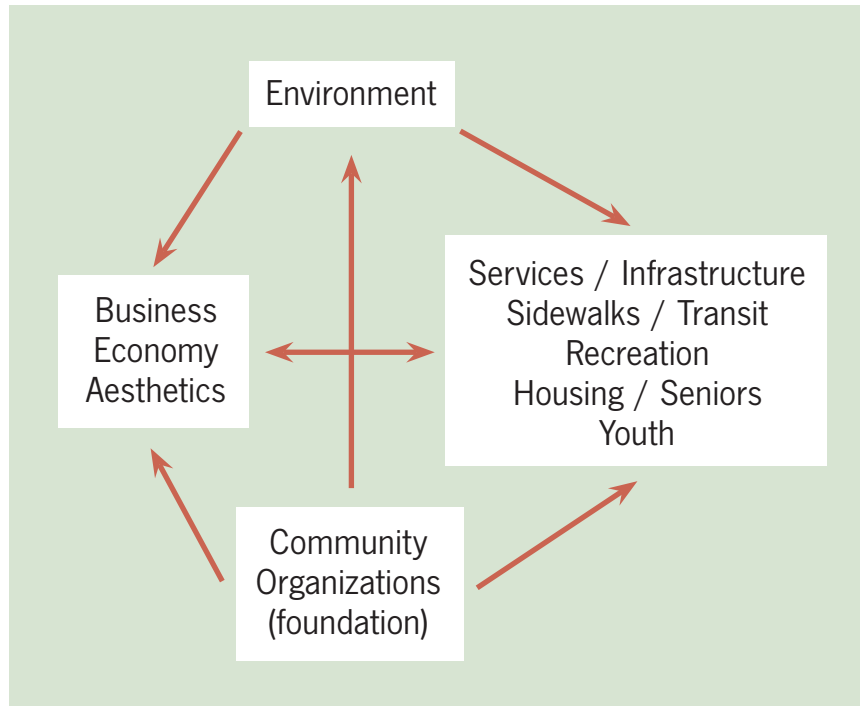
One of the key lessons of this process is the interconnectedness of the goals that came out in the consultation process. Many themes could be grouped under larger headings, but at the same time we don't want to lose sight of how important they are. Two processes were done to assess priorities; one was during the first public meeting, and the other was a community-wide survey started during the second public meeting and sent to over 3000 homes to ensure everyone in



the area had a chance to participate. There was some shift between the two but in the end we realized what is really going to matter most is who steps up to the plate to make sure things get done. It is this voluntary oversight that will be most critical in ensuring implementation of the vision.

As one sees from the web map of these key themes, Business and the Economy are in many ways interdependent with Services and Infrastructure. One needs the other and vice-versa. And the Environment is a key component of both. People are attracted to this community because of the natural environment, and the environment provides for many key service opportunities such as recreation (ie. Musquodoboit Harbour Rail Trail, Martinique Beach and swimming and sailing in Petpeswick inlet). Not to be forgotten, though it was ranked low on the list probably because it is more a means to the other ends, Community Organization is the foundation on which everything else is based.

Moving forward, the key component to this process is ensuring things do get done. Everyone wants to know what's going to be different this time – we've been through this before and



nothing happens. In answer to that we need a steady stream of communication from signs that proclaim when something has been achieved as a result of the new community vision, to an on-going discussion / update forum on the web where anyone can tap in anytime to see what the status of an idea is (and provide ideas themselves to help move things along), to an at least once a year newsletter providing updates so even those who are not computer savvy can stay abreast of the latest info.

## VISION STATEMENT - The painting

Musquodoboit Harbour is a self-contained, self sufficient and sustainable community where most of residents daily needs can be met. Its population growth is such that it is capable of sustaining small business infrastructure, restaurants, social programs, education, medical, police and postal services, tourism, arts, culture, and vibrant voluntary organizations – but its development also stays true to the nature of a ‘village’.

Musquodoboit Harbour protects and capitalizes on its natural assets by protecting its coastline and water resources, while developing a range of opportunities for outdoor recreation and ecotourism.

Musquodoboit Harbour is a walkable centre that acts as a hub of services that meets the needs of a welcoming, inclusive, self-renewing, multi-generational community where children, youth, seniors and families feel safe, appreciated and have opportunities to be part of the community.

As a Rural Commuter District Centre in the Regional Plan Musquodoboit Harbour maintains



its connection to the Regional Centre and other communities through a commuter and community transit system and excellent road connections.

Development in Musquodoboit Harbour builds on its seascape and rural village charm, its natural and built heritage through architectural guidelines that promote compact,

small business development and a range of housing options that supports aging in place, and is clustered to support preservation of maximum open space.

Musquodoboit Harbour is a healthy community with sidewalks, trails, excellent sports facilities catered to youth and adult sport, offering year-round athletic options and providing a positive focus for the region's youth.

## Action Plan -The brush strokes

The goals listed below are necessary to achieve the Vision. They are organized under the main themes which emerged during the visioning process.

More detail about the action plan is found in the appendices or at [www.halifax.ca/visionhrm/musquodoboitharbour](http://www.halifax.ca/visionhrm/musquodoboitharbour).

A Priorities Survey was mailed out so everyone in the community could have a chance to participate. This survey asked local residents to prioritize the main themes that emerged from the first public workshop. Of course, the implementation of these projects will depend also on resources available in the community and within HRM.

### 1 Business/Economy

Business/economy ranked first in this mail out survey with an emphasis on small-scale, local enterprises and businesses serving local residents and surrounding communities.

- Maintain and enhance basic services for local residences and the district beyond village core to support a self-sufficient community with a strong commercial core
- Encourage tourism through a greater range of events, attractions and accommodations
- Fully develop the potential of the industrial park to support local businesses
- Develop incentives to develop locally owned and invested small businesses at the community level and at an appropriate scale
- Encourage commercial and residential development that pays for itself and contributes to the community
- Long term growth which sustains a community we value ie. water access, friendly neighbourhoods



## 2 Public Transit & Sidewalks

Public Transit & Sidewalks ranked second, recognizing a need for convenient connections to the metro area, crosswalks and safe sidewalks, especially for children and seniors.

- Provide an express commuter transit service from Musquodoboit Harbour to Dartmouth/Halifax along with supporting infrastructure (e.g. parking) and community transit to other Eastern Shore communities
- Develop sidewalks in the village core to support walkability, health and transit use

## 3 Community Services

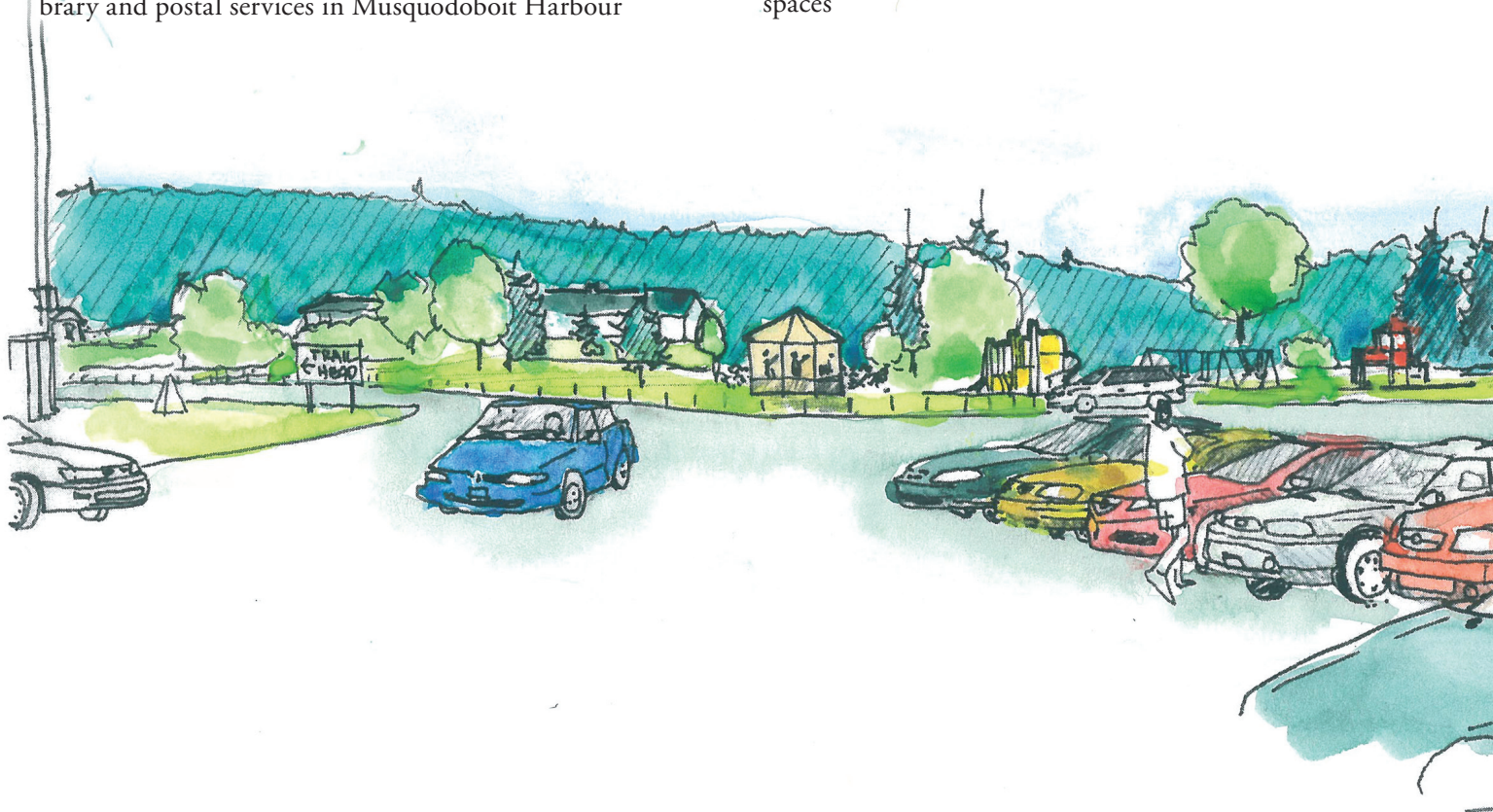
Community Services ranked third, including a need for more doctors, larger medical facilities, longer library hours and child care.

- Expand high speed internet to more areas
- Maintain, promote and expand health, emergency, library and postal services in Musquodoboit Harbour

## 4 Recreation

Recreation for all ages ranked fourth, with calls for an indoor swimming pool, a new hockey or curling rink, a larger community/fitness centre, trails and beach access.

- Maintain, expand and improve the existing Recreation Centre including facilities such as a second ice surface, a women's change room, a fitness/ wellness centre, a community indoor pool
- Improve and fully realize opportunities for outdoor recreation for all ages in particular the following areas: Rink Property to be a real meeting place for all ages, School field to expand its use, Trails - to develop trail connections
- Develop opportunities for waterfront recreation for all ages, eg. boat launch, life guards, swimming lessons, public access to Musquodoboit River
- Develop opportunities for community cultural entertainment and recreation
- Preserve and expand public access to common open spaces



## 5 Environment

Environment ranked fifth, with interest in a green community, green energy, trash or hurricane cleanup and concern about clear cutting.

- Develop environmental principles for the development of Musquodoboit Harbour as a “green community”, eg. forestry practices, water quality, waterfront development, alternative energy sources and transportation, street lights, and eco-tourism
- Expand and protect a connected network of open spaces
- Enforce and strengthen current regulations to protect the quality of water, soil and air
- Control development adjacent to Martinique beach
- Designate particular areas for jet-ski and ATV uses

## 6 Infrastructure

Infrastructure ranked sixth, with calls for improved or extended roads, high speed internet and piped water to major facilities. Piped water and sewer could also be a catalyst for other topic areas which received higher priority.

- Explore options for the provision of water and sewer in the Musquodoboit Harbour village core to protect the environment and stimulate local economic development
- Improve the quality and connection of local roads



# 7

## Housing/Seniors Development

Housing/Seniors Development ranked seventh, including accommodation for seniors and a need for compact or innovative housing options. Increasing the number of residents without creating sprawl would enhance other higher-ranked opportunities while helping protect the environment.

- Provide a greater range of affordable housing options close to services and amenities, including apartments and condos and integrated into the community
- Provide opportunities for aging in place, including seniors housing, assisted living and co-housing options and small options homes integrated in the community

# 8

## Youth

Youth ranked eighth, with calls for space, activities and facilities for children and teenagers. Youth issues will also be addressed through many of the other topic areas which received higher priority.

- Maintain education opportunities
- Develop sports facilities
- Develop a youth centre with youth-centered activities
- Involve and retain youth

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## Looks/Aesthetics

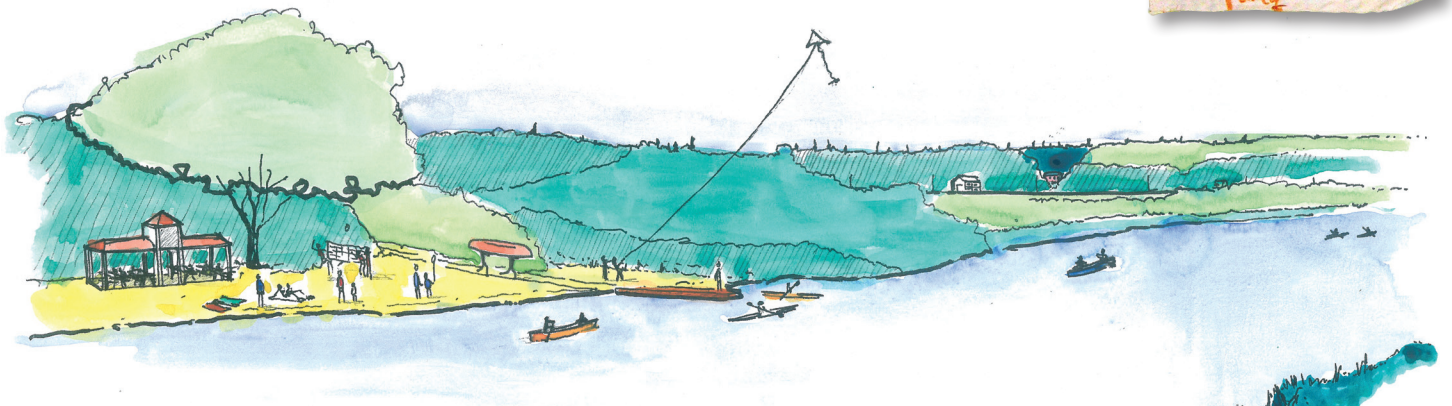
Looks/Aesthetics was ranked ninth, with most comments concerning signage. To the extent that new housing options and economic growth are seen as important, the retention of a village scale will need to be considered.

- Plant a diversity of street trees in Musquodoboit Harbour
- Encourage and develop clear, consistent, concise, complementary and attractive signage for MH (including directions)
- Develop a town square with green space in village core
- Maintain human scale, mixed and attractive development
- Street lights: Have lights that shine downwards, special lighting for main street area, bury electrical cables
- Protect heritage/ cultural buildings and landscapes

# 10

## Community Organizations

Community Organizations ranked last, but will be a critical means in ensuring the successful implementation of all other priorities.



## Consultation Method

### First Public Meeting

On April 14th a public meeting was held with over 150 people attending at the Eastern Shore District High School. A flyer was sent out to 3054 households to let everyone know about the meeting, as well as ads and posters. There was also a youth event held concurrently. The purpose of the meeting was to find out what residents would like to see in their community and begin to set priorities.

### Focus Groups

Eleven local groups were also consulted directly on their ideas for the community.

- Volunteer Firefighters
- Eastern Shore District High School students
- Harbour Lights Seniors Club
- Petpeswick Yacht Club
- Lions Club
- Musquodoboit Trailways Association
- Twin Oaks Board
- Eastern Shore Community Centre
- Eastern Shore Ground Search & Rescue
- Eastern Shore Family Resource Association
- Farmers Market group

### Second Public Meeting

On June 2nd, 2007 another public meeting was held at the Eastern Shore District High School and over 30 people attended. A flyer was sent out again. The objectives of the 2nd meeting were:

- to enable the community to share info with each other about what was already underway in community towards goals (Ideas Fair)
- to review the results of consultation to date, and some preliminary action planning
- to clarify any goals that needed more information and further develop action plans
- to determine how the community would like to monitor progress to ensure things do happen

### Web Forum

Information and several key questions to prompt discussion were also posted on HRM's website and people were encouraged that if they couldn't make a meeting, then they could still have input online. This is still the case. Meeting dates, interim results of meetings and any reports are also posted online for easy access. The website is included in all promotional material.

### Eastern Shore Summer Fair Days

This event was an opportunity for the Community Liaison Group to distribute the first draft of the Vision and Action Plan along with Vision Musquodoboit Harbour frisbees.

### Priorities Survey

A questionnaire from the Second Public Forum and the Fair Days was also mailed to all local households during the summer. The survey asked residents to prioritize major themes, and 130 responses were received.

Musquodoboit Harbour is one of the first three communities taking part in HRM's Community Visioning process - a way to engage local residents in a dialogue on what their community should look like, feel like and be like up to 25 years into the future.

The Musquodoboit Harbour CLG presented the final Vision and Action Plan to HRM Regional Council in October 2007.

Now approved, the Vision and Action Plan will be used in HRM's business planning, community planning and budgeting process.

Successful implementation of the action plan will require the support and participation of the residents of Musquodoboit Harbour and surrounding communities.





## How to get involved...

For news of what's happening with Musquodoboit Harbour's Vision and Action Plan, how to get involved or if you have ideas to share, please visit [www.halifax.ca/visionhrm/musquodoboitharbour](http://www.halifax.ca/visionhrm/musquodoboitharbour).

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