

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 1. What is Open Space?

Open space includes unbuilt lands and waters set aside and reserved over the long-term for public service, conservation, and community-shaping purposes. It includes public and privately-owned lands such as parks and trails, significant habitat and wilderness areas, natural resource lands (our working landscapes), corridors for active commuting and connecting communities, water resources, cultural landscapes and coastline.

### 2. Why is the municipality developing this Plan?

[The Regional Plan](#) establishes the municipality's core objectives and policy direction for sustainable regional growth and community liveability. Key to this is the protection of the natural environment and a regional network of open space resources. "Priorities Plans" – including the "Halifax Green Network" a greenbelting and open space priorities plan for the region, are used to advance the Regional Plan policy directions and to provide more detailed objectives and actions for implementation. Toward this end the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGNP) will establish a planning and land management framework for open space to help advance multiple environmental, social, cultural and economic objectives of the municipality and its communities. Some of these benefits include healthy lakes and streams, storm-water management and flood protection, protection of vital natural ecosystems and environmentally sensitive lands and waters, conservation of natural resources to support farming, fishing, forestry and mining, access to nature and recreational spaces, and more connected and "complete" communities.

### 3. How can I participate in the Plan's development?

Your participation is important to the overall quality and success of this Plan. Multiple opportunities for public and stakeholder engagement will be offered throughout a year-long planning process:

Phase 1 – Planning Foundations the values, issues and goals - will happen over May and June 2015 and includes Public Open Houses and "Pop-Up" displays at community events and facilities, an [online mapping tool](#) and survey for people to identify points on the map and describe why they are important and what we need to consider for their long-term protection and use. The Halifax "Shape Your City" community engagement hub and project web-site will provide regular updates and key information.

Phase 2 – Planning Direction – will happen over the Fall of 2015 using many of the above engagement opportunities to help shape policy objectives, open space scenarios, and planning and implementation directions.

Phase 3 – Draft and Final Plan – will happen over the winter and spring of 2016 and will include open houses and pop-up displays in communities across the municipality, the Halifax "Shape Your City" Community Engagement Hub and online and paper comment forms.

### 4. What is greenbelting and how will it affect Halifax?

Greenbelting is a land planning tool used by certain jurisdictions world-wide to protect near-urban open space lands and important natural resources for long-term environment, social and

economic sustainability. Through legislation and regulatory methods these lands are protected from urban development. In this respect greenbelting is used as a tool to contain urban growth. The Halifax [Regional Plan](#) establishes support for a greenbelting approach for protecting a network of open space resources and managing urban growth however, the exact approach to be taken has not been defined. Instead, the [Regional Plan](#) establishes the importance of comprehensive, ecosystem-based planning that reflects the unique settlement patterns and historical influences that have shaped the Halifax landscape. Multiple land-use planning and land management methods that are integrated in their objectives and outcomes will be required. Greenbelting, on its own will not achieve Halifax's regional planning objectives for open space protection but could offer a land-use tool to help achieve specific outcomes in specific areas. The HGNP will explore the opportunities for greenbelting and will provide Regional Council with options for its potential implementation.

#### **5. Will greenbelting be used to prohibit development of my land?**

No. Land development in the municipality is regulated primarily through a land use By-Law. The legislation governing the municipality ([Halifax Regional Municipality Charter](#)) states a land use By-Law can only prohibit development on lands under very limited circumstances such as land subject to flooding, steep slopes, lands susceptible to subsidence, erosion or other geological hazards, swamps, marshes or other environmentally sensitive areas. An objective of this Plan is not to prohibit development but rather to manage the impact of development on vital ecological functions and important open space lands to protect and further the economic, social and environmental interests of the municipality and its communities. The Plan will include GIS data assessment to identify which kinds of lands are most important for protection, where they are located within the regional open space network, and tools for their long-term protection and use.

#### **6. How do Parks & Recreation fit into this Plan?**

A key outcome of the HGNP will be a planning and land management framework to guide decisions around municipally-owned parks and open spaces such as trails, community greenspaces, public streets, and community corridors. The provision of parks and recreation spaces and opportunities is a priority for the municipality and the HGNP will provide greater clarity for what kinds of spaces are important and why, where key connections and gaps are in the regional network, and priorities for land acquisition and strategic investment. Although this Plan is regional in scope the methodology for identifying and evaluating lands and the policy objectives and implementation tools for their protection and use will be transferrable to other landscape scales at the community and site level. Although community and neighbourhood parks will not be assessed through this Plan the trends, issues and opportunities that are shaping outdoor recreation needs and demands for developing communities will be identified and assessed as part of an open space network approach.

#### **7. Can my lands be zoned parkland?**

Yes, the municipality does have the authority to zone private property for public use. However, the [Halifax Regional Municipality Charter](#) requires the zone also provide for an alternative use and the municipality must purchase the land within one year from the date of applying the zone or the alternative use is permitted. Although Regional Council has this authority, the approach sought through this Plan is to identify lands that should be preserved for public use and then seek the co-operation of the owners to acquire them.

#### **8. What is a working landscape and why is it included in this Plan?**

Working landscapes include lands that provide long-term, sustainable viability for forestry,

farming, fishing and resource extraction. Ensuring the ongoing productivity of these natural resource lands is important to the economic health of the Region. Other demands for the development and use of these natural resource lands impacts their sustainability as working landscapes. While the Province has jurisdiction over natural resource management, the municipality has significant impact on these working landscapes through land-use regulation and public lands planning. The HGNP will identify where the important resources areas are located and by engaging with the public, private land-owners, and government agencies and jurisdictions will establish appropriate objectives, guidelines and tools for their long-term protection using land-use planning, public lands management, and stewardship approaches.