

HALIFAX GREEN NETWORK

An Open Space & Greenbelting Priorities Plan for the Region

January 2016

Phase 1 – Foundations
Key Findings + Next Steps

HALIFAX

Regional Plan Objectives

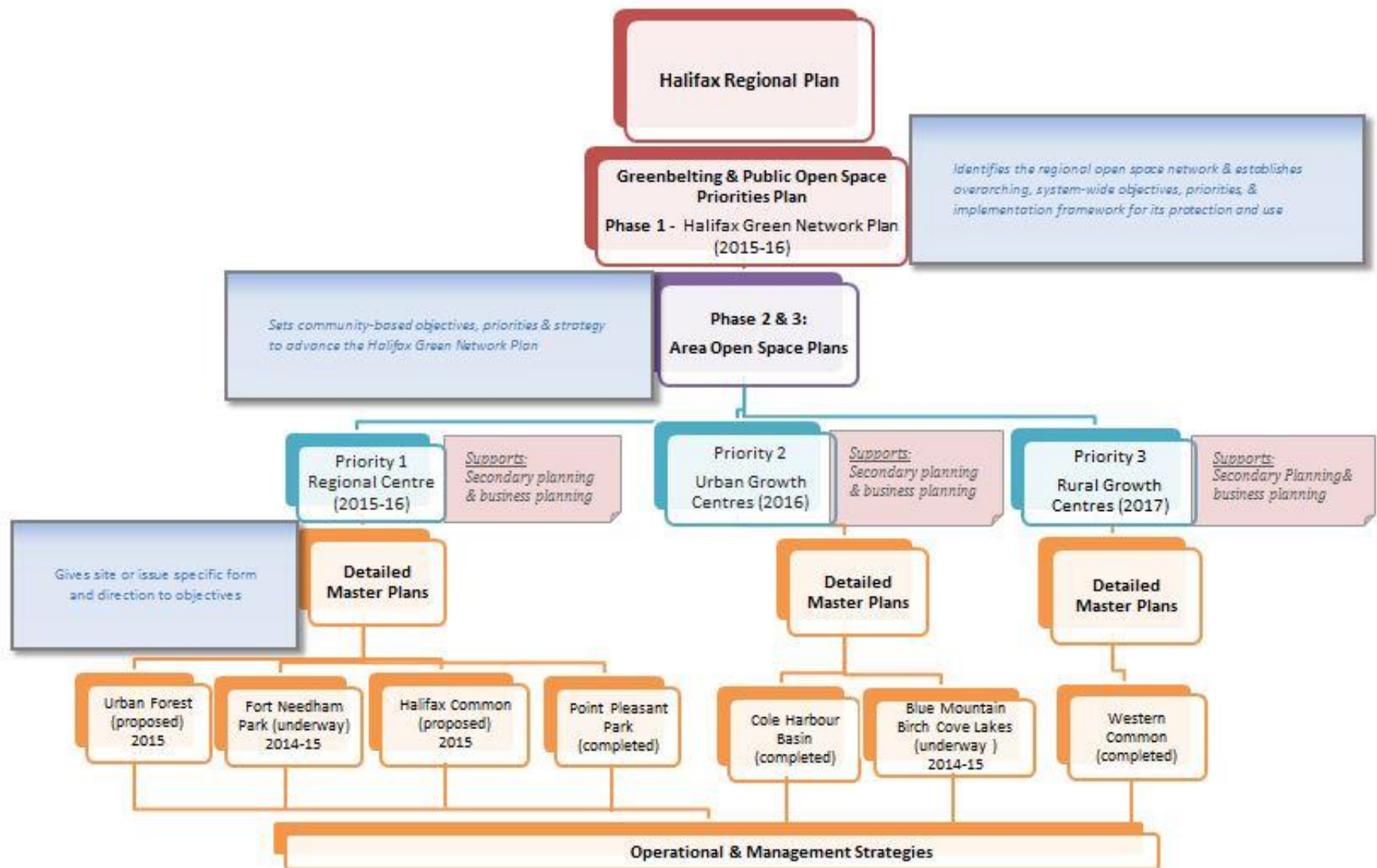
1. Land management and community design that protects important lands and aquatic systems, natural resources, land for public recreation, areas of natural beauty, and sensitive environmental areas
2. A network of interconnected greenbelts and open spaces
3. Identification and preservation of cultural landscapes
4. Support for a vigorous regional economy and viable working lands
5. Development that makes the most effective use of land, energy, infrastructure, public services and facilities
6. Complete communities and integrated transportation systems
7. Conservation of energy and response to climate change

Halifax Green Network – “Priorities Plan”

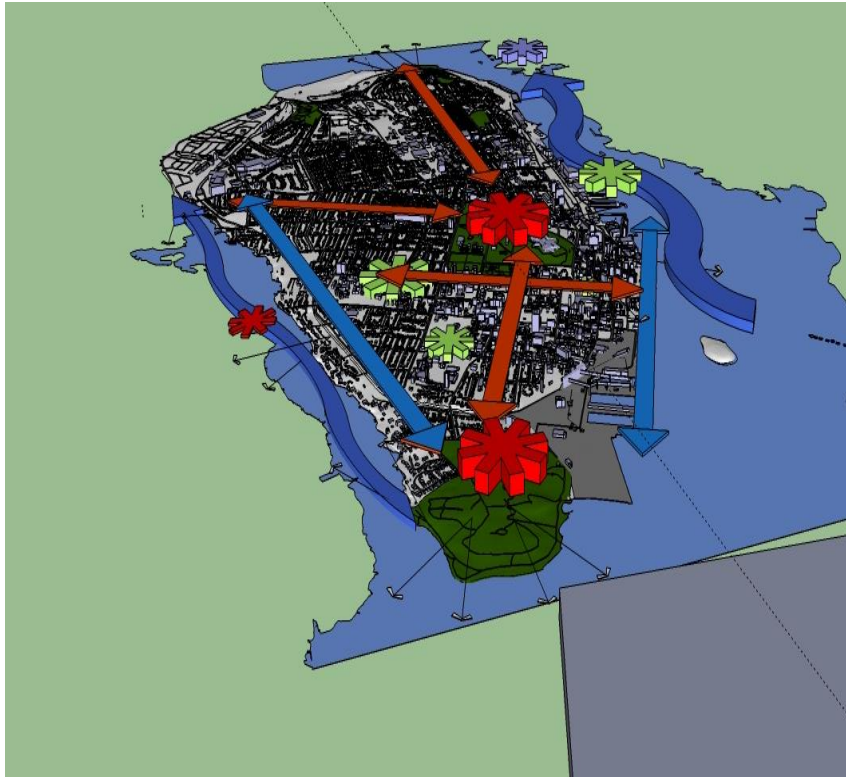
Will provide more detailed study, strategies and priorities to advance Regional Plan directions

Some Key Open Space Objectives:

- Research, identify and designate important areas of natural and public open space
- Establish a regional network and framework for classifying and managing resources
- Develop a comprehensive approach for protecting land and water resources and access to them
- Develop a decision-making framework guiding the why, what, and how



The Approach



Understand & support
Ecosystems (natural & human)

A network that is:

1. Connected
2. Multi-functional & Resilient
3. Diverse & Inclusive
4. Sustainable & Stewarded

Comprehensive & integrated
planning - the open space “lens”

Project Phases

1

FOUNDATIONS

May to July 2015

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



COMPLETED

Major Deliverables:

- 1) State of the Landscape Report (SOL)
- 2) What We Heard Report

2

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

August to February 2016

Output: Policy objectives and ecological and planning assessment



3

DRAFT AND FINAL PLAN

March to June 2016

Output: Comprehensive planning and implementation framework

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Open Space Themes

Five Core Themes frame the study:



Ecosystems + Biodiversity – systems that support life



Working Landscapes – Places that support the economy



Recreation and Trails – Places we use for fun and mobility



Communities – Places we live, work, and play

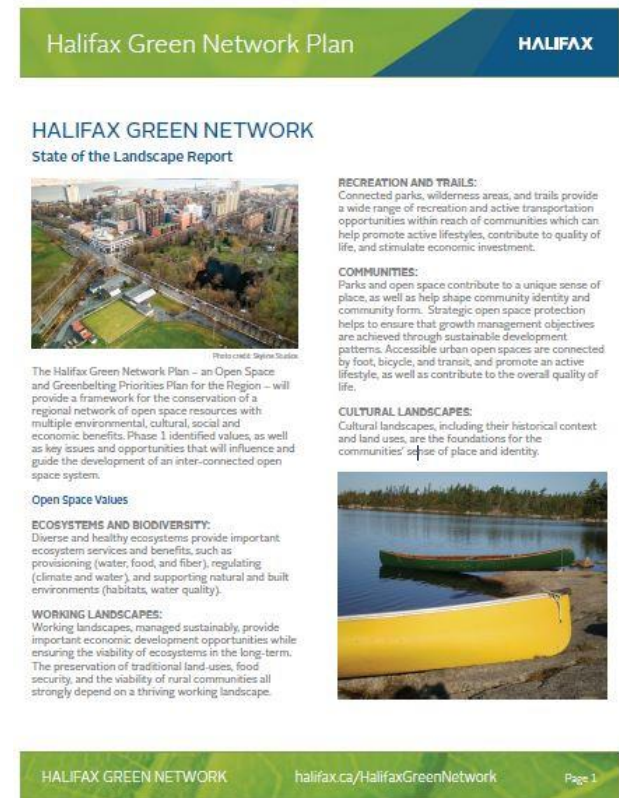


Cultural Landscapes – Places that connect us to our history and define our identity

HALIFAX

Phase 1 - Foundations

- Extensive data collection & assessment
- Identified core open space values
- Identified key issues and opportunities
- State of the Landscape Report



State of the Landscape Report: *Issues + Opportunities*

- Presents a summary of the planning context, current state of the open space system, and overview of the key issues and opportunities
- Integrates public and stakeholder input, government data sets and policy direction, and spatial GIS analysis
- Provides baseline information to understand what we have and how it should be valued and conserved
- Presents a foundation for identifying a preferred open space network scenario and planning framework

Open Space Assessment Key Findings

- Our landscape is relatively intact but there are key areas of concern and/or opportunity
- Most critical issues are related to:
 - Connectivity (landscape, parks, trails, etc.)
 - Habitat loss
 - Water quality impacted by development
 - Access (water bodies and rivers, parks, trails, etc.)
 - Conflicting land uses and objectives
 - Lack of adequate planning tools (coastal areas, cultural landscapes, etc.)

MAP 1 | LAND COVER

HALIFAX

LEGEND

- First Nations
- Road
- Active Rail Line
- Airport

Land Cover Classes

- Agriculture
- Barrens and Open Cover
- Open Water
- Human Footprint
- Recently Harvested Forest
- Forest
- Wetlands
- Ocean

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Revised Sept. 23, 2015

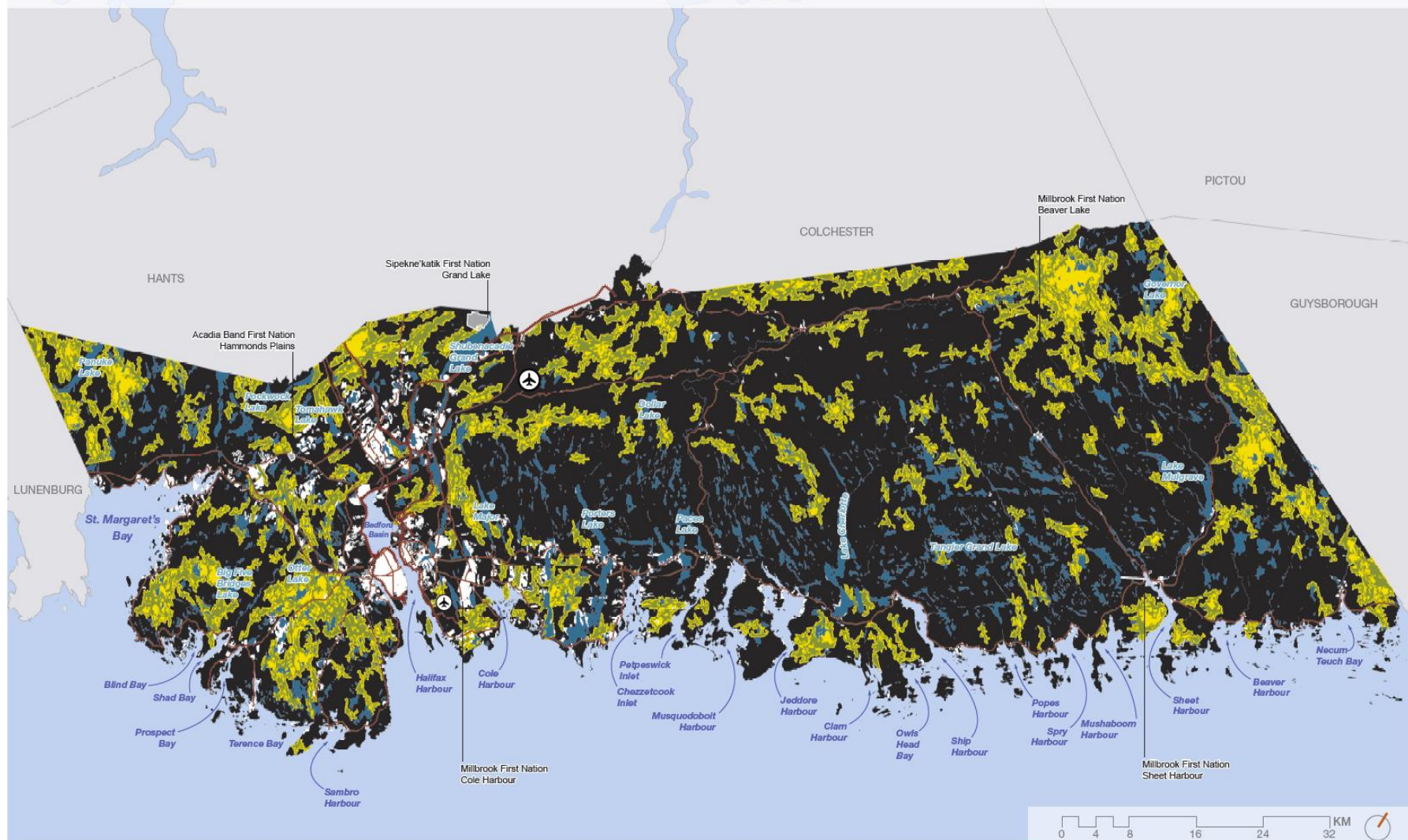


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LEGEND

-  First Nations
 Road
 Active Rail Line
 Airport
 Areas With Greatest Likelihood of Wildlife Movement
 Areas Important to Connectivity
 Areas With Diffuse Wildlife Movement
 Areas With Lowest Likelihood of Wildlife Movement





Ecosystems + Biodiversity – SOL Report Key Findings

- **Water-quality** is negatively impacted by increased development, compromising source water protection areas and watersheds. Shallow depth to groundwater makes contamination of wells a major issue.
- **Landscape connectivity** and **habitat loss**, including extensive fragmentation surrounding urban areas, are increasing concerns. Critical areas are vulnerable to expanding residential development, natural resource extraction, and utility/transportation corridor expansions.
- **Coastal areas** are not adequately recognized through current planning and land management practices.



Working Landscapes – SOL Report Key Findings

- **Mining and aggregate extraction** and other working landscapes are challenged by encroaching development, competing land uses, and protected area designations.
- The majority of **forested lands** are privately owned, making consistent sustainable management and coordination of objectives a challenge.
- The local food system is threatened by the loss of an already limited supply of **agricultural lands**, as well as the impact of climate change.
- **Tourism** is critical to the viability of rural communities and requires a high quality, broader landscape context, but potential conflicts with other activities (i.e. forestry or settlement), as well as ribbon development can have a serious, negative impact.



Recreation and Trails – SOL Report Key Findings

- The HRM has a good supply of **regional and wilderness parks** within, and in close proximity to settlement areas. However, access to amenities, and connectivity to and between open spaces are serious issues.
- **Public water access** to both coastal areas and inland waters is limited in many parts of the HRM.
- The HRM has a wide variety of **trails and AT routes**, but lacks a comprehensive corridor system that is connected and accessible

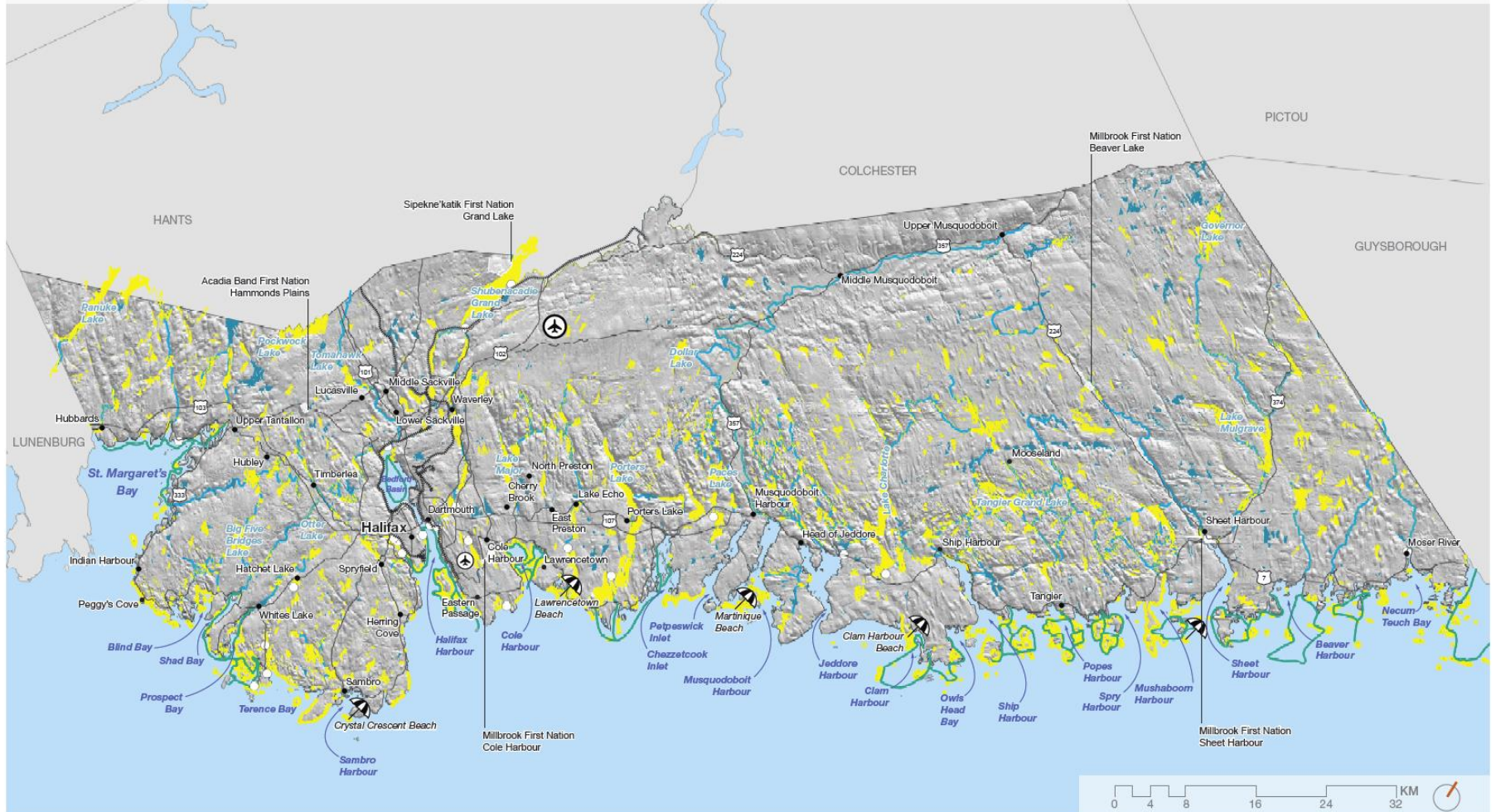
LEGEND

- First Nations
- Road
- Active Rail Line
- ✈ Airport
- Boat Facilities / Access
- Inland Water Routes
- Coastal Water Routes
- Public Shorelines*
- ☼ Public Beaches

*Estimated based on available public land data.

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Revised Sept. 23, 2015





Communities – SOL Report Key Findings

- While **natural edges** of communities and access to green space contribute to community identity and sustainable growth patterns, they are threatened by inefficient, leap-frog development, and sprawl.
- **Urban forests** across many areas will require extensive maintenance and replanting efforts in the near future, and substantial tree removal in certain suburban and waterfront developments is an issue.
- The amount, quality, and/or location of **park space** in some communities creates areas where open space is either not sufficient or is underutilized. This is particularly true in more recent developed communities.
- The HRM lacks a detailed **park system plan** to inform the potential reconfiguration, acquisition, and/or removal of open space at strategic locations.



Cultural Landscapes – SOL Report Key Findings

- The identification and management of significant cultural landscapes is vital to the HRM's sense of place and long-term prosperity.
- The lack of **mapped data** on the pre- and post-European contact landscapes of **indigenous peoples** is an issue, limiting the identification of potential culturally significant landscapes.
- The threat of **inappropriate development** to the landscape and sense of place in the HRM's coastal villages, waterways, coastlines, much-loved scenic views, and traditional hunting and gathering areas is a concern for many communities.

Next Steps

- Develop “valuation” methodology and mapping to understand where the high-value areas are located
- Develop network scenarios that consider the impacts of development and regional growth objectives
- Consult with stakeholders to refine a “preferred” scenario
- Stakeholder Workshop *early February*
- Develop a Planning & implementation Framework
- Public engagement *early spring*
- Recommend preferred scenario and framework to Council
- Draft the final Plan and present to Council *summer 2016*