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MEMORANDUM

TO: Fred Morley, Chair – Community Design Advisory Committee
CC:
FROM: Jacob Ritchie, Urban Design Program Manager – Planning & Development
DATE: 2016-09-21
SUBJECT: **Draft Plan Release, Steps & Schedule**

Dear Chair & Committee Members,

The attached Centre Plan Roll-Out Primer articulates the schedule and intent for the release of the Draft Centre Plan over the next 6 weeks. Additionally, the Primer document includes a summary of the introductory chapter of the Draft Centre Plan and the objectives for each of the theme areas.

In brief, the roll-out includes the following steps

October 11 – Objectives & Policies Launch Event:

Release of supporting policies for each theme area for consideration.

October 19 – Centre Plan Urban Structure Presentation & Open House:

Release of the updated urban structure map, objectives for each area, and the policies proposed to apply to those areas.

October 26 – CDAC Discussion of the Full Draft Centre Plan:

Draft Plan available in its entirety, complete with an implementation and monitoring chapter.

Throughout November:

Public and stakeholder engagement events that will provide the opportunity for detailed review with staff and the consultant team to help ensure all are able to provide feedback.

Through the arc of this project – including major consultations in the spring of 2016, the Community Workshops in May, the analysis and creation of the Growth Scenario in June, and the continued meetings with property owners through the summer – we have been able to create a Draft Plan that we believe responds to the mandate of the Centre Plan project. We look forward to the release, engagement, and review of the Draft Plan through October and November.

Regards,

Jacob Ritchie
Urban Design Program Manager
Planning & Development

Planning & Development

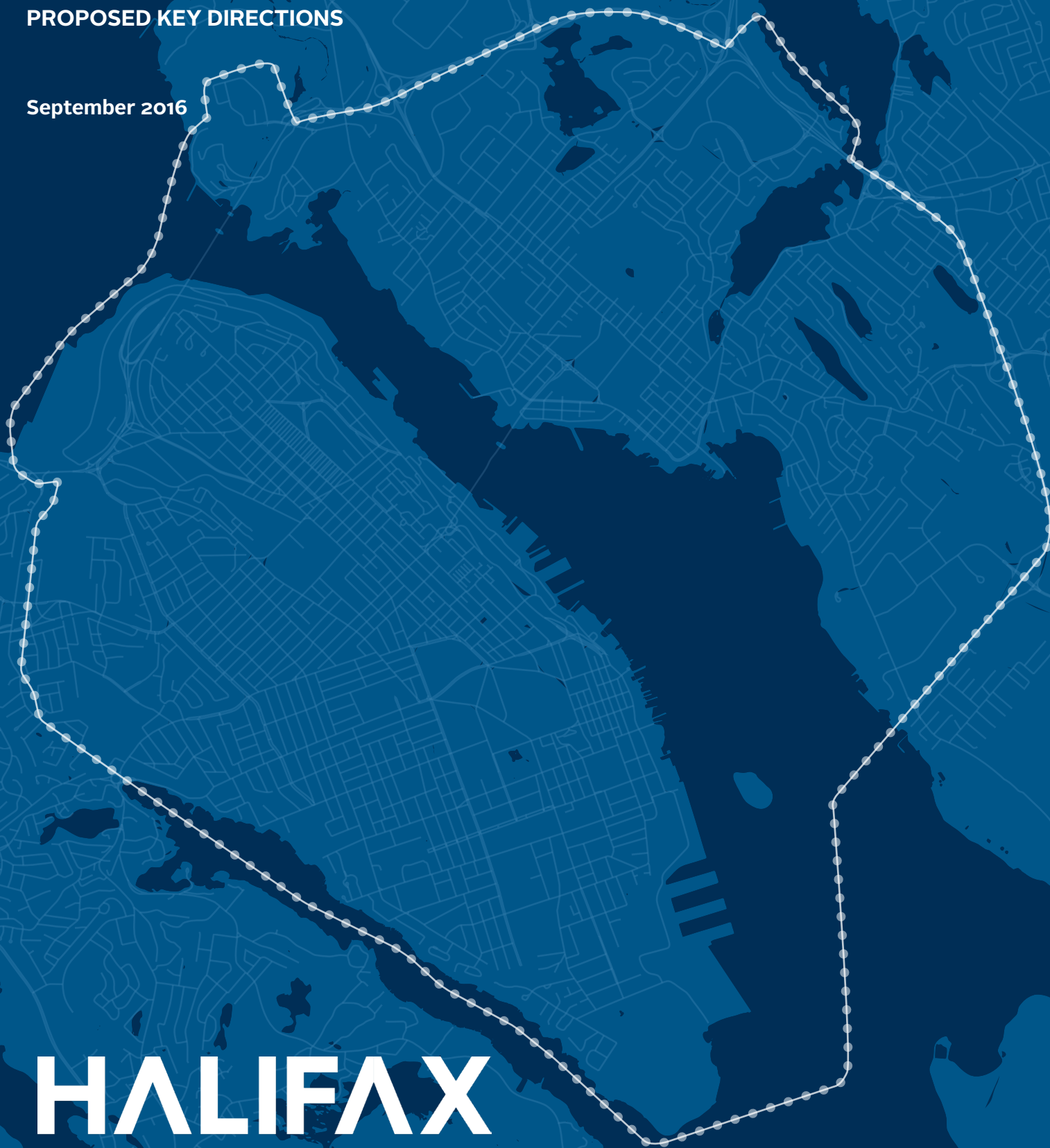
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CENTRE PLAN ROLL-OUT:

PROPOSED KEY DIRECTIONS

September 2016



HALIFAX

CENTRE PLAN

Prepared for

Halifax Regional Municipality

Prepared by

O2 Planning + Design, Inc.

CENTRE PLAN OVERVIEW

The Centre Plan will be the first comprehensive planning policy for the Regional Centre. The Draft Centre Plan has been developed through extensive consultation with the citizens of the Halifax Regional Municipality.

The release of the Draft Centre Plan is an important moment in the planning of the Municipality and is being released in installments from late September and throughout the month of October. The installments will be coordinated with a series of events and conversations to allow the time for considered review and public input for each section of the Draft Plan.

This primer has been created as a guide to the Draft Center Plan. It is the first of a series of public engagement that will explain the draft policies and ask for feedback. As a comprehensive plan, the Centre Plan address seven theme areas and the different components of the urban structure. This document, The Centre Plan Purpose and Theme Area Overview, summarizes the introductory chapter of the Draft Centre Plan and includes the objectives for each of the theme areas.

October 11 – Objectives & Policies

Public Launch Event: Release of supporting policies for each theme area for consideration at public event.

October 19 – Centre Plan Urban Structure Presentation & Open House:

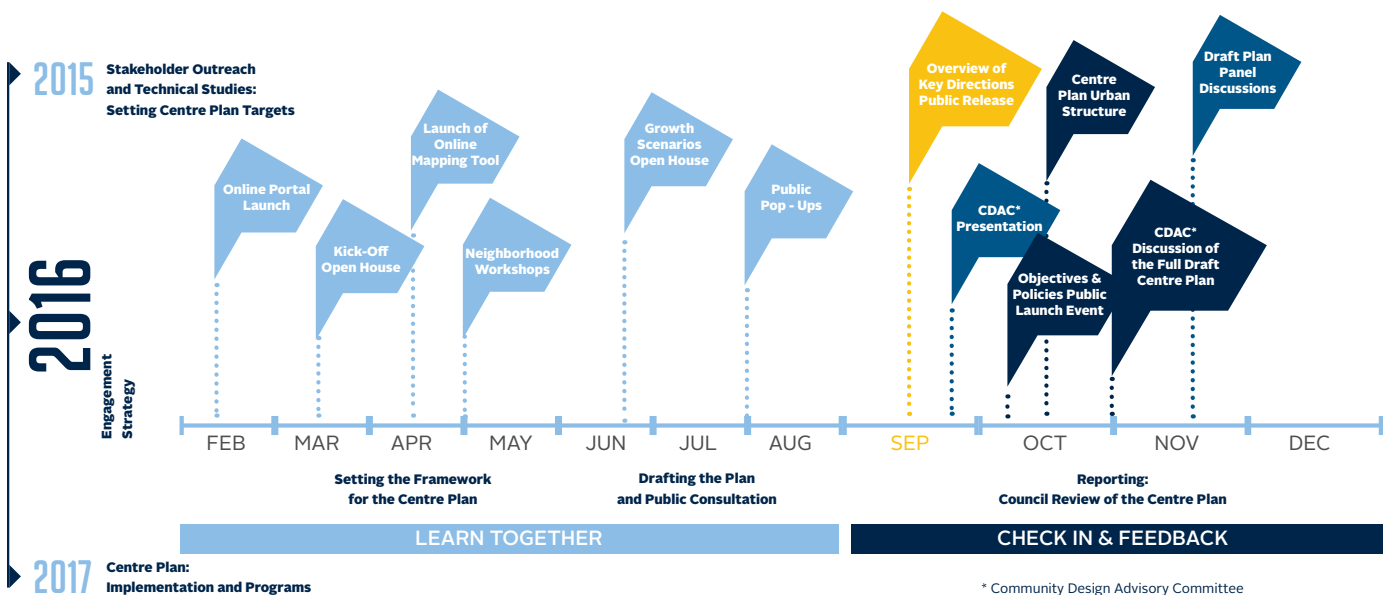
Release of urban structure map, objectives for each area, and the policies that apply to those areas.

October 26 – CDAC Discussion of the Full Draft Centre Plan:

Plan available in its entirety, complete with an implementation and monitoring chapter.

Throughout November: Opportunity for public to provide feedback about the draft plan to inform the final form.

Thank you for your continued interest in the Centre Plan!



THE CENTRE PLAN'S PURPOSE

The Centre Plan is a secondary plan that guides the development, use, and form of the Halifax Peninsula and Dartmouth within the Circumferential Highway – called the Regional Centre. The Regional Centre is expected to undergo significant change over the next 15 years. This Centre Plan will guide how that growth should occur and what amenities, supports and protections are needed to ensure that it occurs in an appropriate and sustainable manner.



THE ROLE & SCOPE OF THE CENTRE PLAN

The power to create plans is granted to municipalities by the Province of Nova Scotia; the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), in particular, has the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter to provide further clarity and direction to guide plan content. The Regional Plan follows this direction and provides high level direction for green space, resource management, sustainability, growth, form, transportation, economic development, culture, heritage and governance, to guide all further planning work. These higher level documents and policies are the Centre Plan's guiding framework.

It is also important to note, that there are numerous priority plans that have been developed, are being developed, or will be developed that impact the Regional Centre. These are subject matter plans, such as the Moving Forward Together Plan, The Active Transportation Plan and the Greater Halifax Economic Strategy. The Centre Plan aligns with the recommendations in these documents and during its regular reviews will continue to be examined in light of best practice or changes to local circumstances throughout its 15 year life span.



HOW IT WILL BE USED TO INFORM DECISIONS

Together with HRM's suite of planning documents and bylaws, the Centre Plan will be used in the following ways:



1. **Inform Council decision making** about growth, investment and programming by identifying areas that are appropriate for growth and managing the form that growth can take while also considering the amenities and other supports needed for a growing Regional Centre.



2. **Provide certainty about the future direction** of the Regional Centre and its sub-areas for residents, organizations, businesses, community groups and developers so they are aware of the uses, forms and directions that apply to their communities and sites.



3. **Guide other planning initiatives** including studies, plans and bylaws to regulate the future form, use and design of the Regional Centre.



4. **Establish a policy framework** for the review of subdivision, development permit and rezoning applications to respect the overall vision and objectives for each area of the Regional Centre.



5. **Highlight areas for further investment.**

GROWING CHALLENGES

HRM is experiencing diverse challenges managing change and the impacts of this growth in the Regional Centre. These challenges were identified through the public engagement process and during the analysis undertaken to create this plan. They include:

- » **Physical Accessibility:** Many of the buildings, sidewalks and spaces were developed before the need to consider multiple transportation modes and abilities.
- » **Affordability:** Population growth places pressure on commercial and residential affordability.
- » **Climate Change:** As the world's climate changes, municipalities need to remain adaptive and resilient.
- » **Changing Demographics:** HRM, like many communities across Canada, has an aging population; however, some communities within HRM are getting younger as Baby Boomers begin to downsize from their current homes.
- » **Suburban Competition:** Though there is renewed interest in urban living, the Regional Centre continues to face competition from suburban locations.
- » **Lack of Diversity in Real Estate:** A vibrant city depends on demographic and commercial diversity and both of these require a range of housing types and commercial spaces.
- » **Finite Market Demand:** There is a finite amount of development demand in the Regional Centre over the life of this plan.
- » **Moving People:** Future land use decisions must consider how to provide residents with a variety of transportation options within a limited amount of space.
- » **Process:** Planning must balance the need to provide certainty while remaining flexible and open to innovative designs, changing markets and shifting expectations.
- » **Public Spaces:** New residents will place additional pressure on existing public spaces and amenities.
- » **Sensitive Development:** The Regional Centre has a strong built heritage to respect and consider.
- » **The Unknown:** Technology and society are always changing. Some trends can be anticipated while others cannot, which requires an adaptive and open Centre Plan.

VISION

The Regional Plan defines the vision for the Centre Plan as:



The Regional Centre will build on its **DISTINCTIONS AND ASSETS** to nurture an urban context that enhances quality of life, enriches daily life and becomes a global destination.



The Regional Centre's cultural vitality is rooted in its **DIVERSE POPULATION** and accordingly it will strive to be an open, safe, affordable, accessible and welcoming place to people of all walks of life.



The Regional Centre's **VIBRANCY, ANIMATION AND ECONOMIC HEALTH** will be strengthened through the cultivation of a compact, civic inspired and human-scaled urban fabric of streets, blocks and buildings.

The Regional Centre will assert and affirm a **LEGIBLE AND ORDERED URBAN STRUCTURE** that will reinforce the best qualities and characteristics of its unique neighbourhoods and districts.

The Regional Centre is the **SYMBOLIC, HISTORIC AND FUNCTIONAL HEART** of the Municipality. It is distinguished by its rich past as is evident in: its historic architecture, traditional neighbourhoods and national landmarks; its natural features as shaped by its grand parks, harbour, lakes, waterways and rolling hills; and its regional importance as an economic hub, capital district, educational centre, health focus and cultural heart.

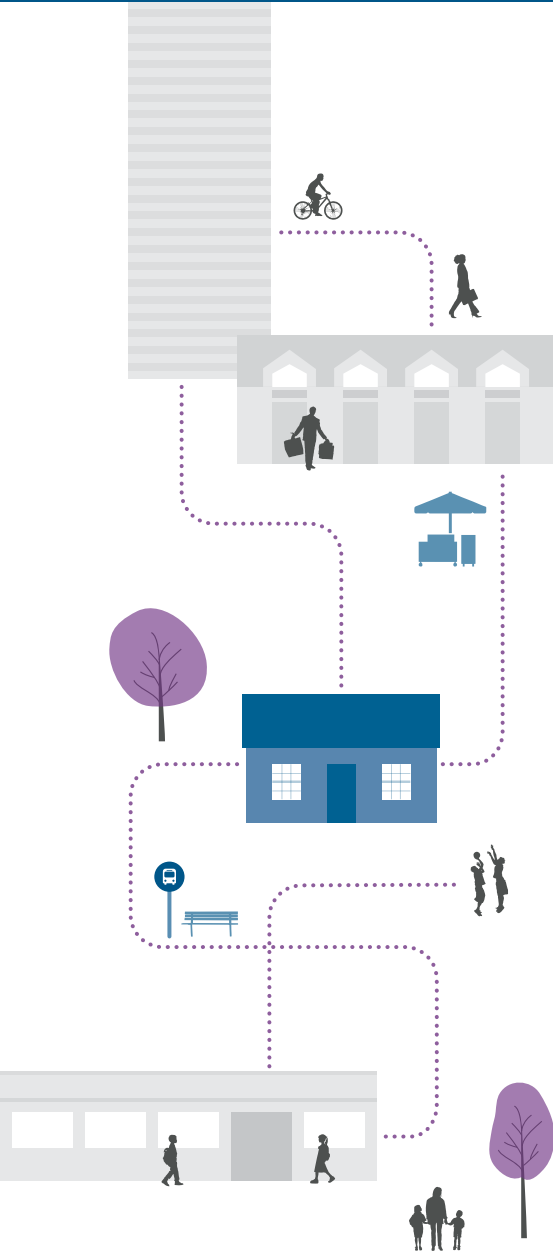
CORE CONCEPTS

The vision of the Regional Plan is supported through Core Concepts which are woven throughout the draft Centre Plan to ensure consistency and clarity in direction.

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

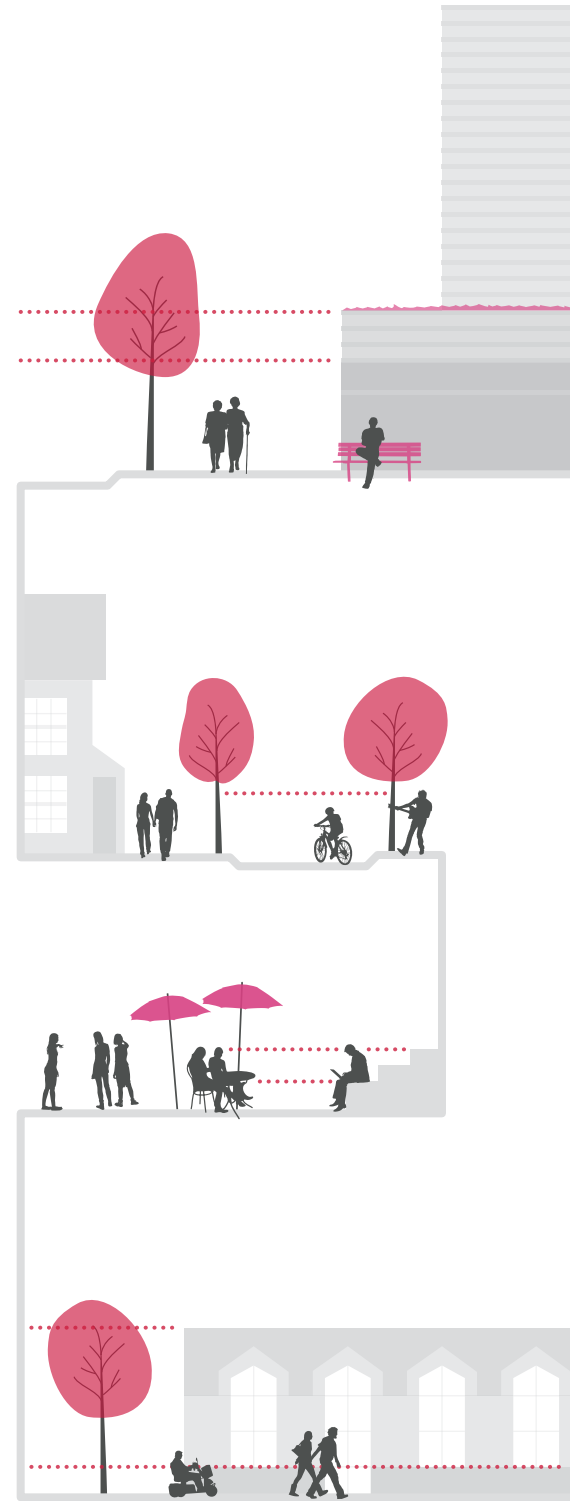
Complete communities are places that offer and support a variety of lifestyle choices. These choices allow people of all ages and abilities to live, work, shop, learn, and play in close proximity to one another. The Centre Plan provides the land use and design policies to promote the mixed use and compact development that enables people to safely and conveniently access the goods and services they need in their daily lives, all within a short journey.

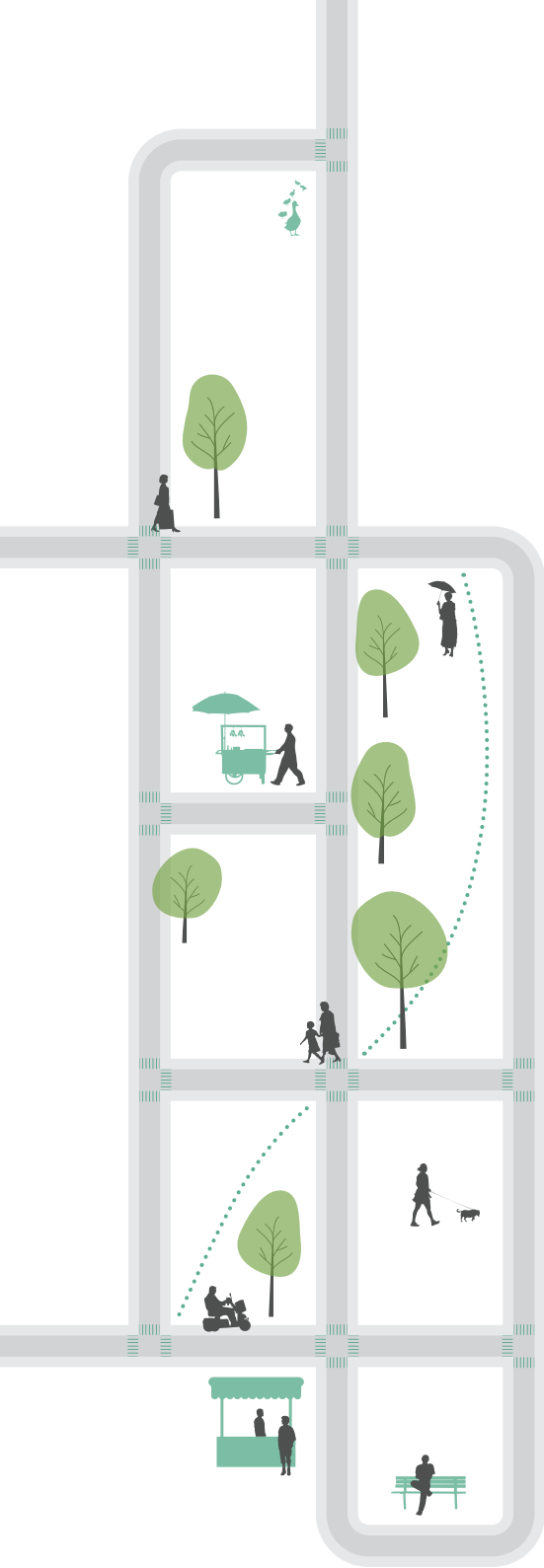
The Regional Centre is comprised of many distinct and unique neighbourhoods, some of which are already complete communities, while others have some components of complete communities in place. The Centre Plan contains policies that, over time, will strengthen existing communities, enhance the elements that make a complete community and bring these elements to all communities within the Regional Centre. This is accomplished by establishing higher density mixed-use areas and by encouraging infill and a variety of housing forms to provide the necessary number of people to support a variety of businesses, services and public amenities, such as parks. These uses are then complemented by opportunities to walk, cycle and take public transit. All of these components, taken together, form a complete community.



HUMAN SCALE DESIGN

Human scale design makes people feel at ease and allows them to relate to their surroundings. It refers to a relationship between the size, texture, and articulation of components of the urban environment that matches the speed and way that people move around cities. Buildings and streets, as well as elements like trees and street furniture, are all physical elements that can be designed and built at a scale that is comfortable for people. Moderately sized as well as taller buildings with a lower scale podium and architectural detailing work together with narrow streets, plazas, and small pocket parks create an intimate environment and comfortable experience. Human scale design makes urban environments more interesting, encourages exploration, and draws more people to local shops and services. The Centre Plan provides direction to scale the built environment to respect this scale.





PEDESTRIANS FIRST

Pedestrians first policies incorporate the elements of planning and urban design to prioritize the needs and comfort of pedestrians first. The intent is to create safe, comfortable and more enjoyable environments for people of all ages and abilities to move through and enjoy. Pedestrians first design makes walking more convenient and viable as a transportation choice, as well as leading to other community benefits such as a reduction in emissions and improved public health.

Specific pedestrian orientated design elements include connected streets, short blocks, four way intersections, hard surfaced pathways and an extensive sidewalk network. Sidewalks, paths, and other pedestrian connections should link to key destinations like retail and services, employment centres, schools, and public transit stops. Pedestrian friendly sidewalks need to be wide enough to accommodate commercial activity and community interaction while still allowing for the unobstructed movement of people. Infrastructure and connections, in addition to amenities like benches, streets trees, and other landscaping elements, create a pleasant environment that promotes walking. In the Regional Centre, well-designed sidewalks are a key element of pedestrian oriented design. Since all citizens are pedestrians, placing pedestrians first improves the urban environment for everyone.

STRATEGIC GROWTH

To encourage economically and environmentally responsible growth, the Centre Plan is designed to accommodate 40% of the Region's Growth throughout the Regional Centre. This growth will be distributed throughout the centre in context-appropriate forms. This means that the majority of growth throughout the Regional Centre will occur in moderate height buildings with tall buildings located strategically. Established residential areas can accommodate growth through hidden density, which means housing forms that do not alter the appearance and built character of the community, such as garden suites and secondary suites. This ensures housing choice while respecting the existing built character of the Regional Centre.



THEME AREA OBJECTIVES



At the beginning of the Centre Plan process, seven themes were identified as critical to ensuring a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to planning. Below are the objectives for each of these theme areas that frame the policy direction of the plan.

LAND USE & DESIGN

- 1.** To improve communities for every resident within the Regional Centre where they can walk to a range of uses and amenities.
- 2.** To ensure new development responds to the surrounding context through appropriate transitions, uses, limited off-site impacts, and a positive relationship to the sidewalk.
- 3.** To implement a consistent human-scale approach to street design and frontages.
- 4.** To promote all-season design for new developments that creates pleasant microclimates for pedestrians throughout the year and in different weather conditions.
- 5.** To encourage a variety of housing choice in diverse forms, tenures and densities throughout the Regional Centre.



MOBILITY

1. To ensure development and planning decisions place pedestrians first followed by cycling, public transit, car sharing, utility and private vehicles.
2. To implement an integrated mobility approach throughout the Regional Centre that designs for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and drivers in all street designs and re-designs.
3. To support greater public transit and active transportation use through public infrastructure, land use, and the built form.
4. To enhance and expand pedestrian corridors and pathways to provide safe and convenient connectivity within, to, and from the Regional Centre.
5. To manage and optimize parking requirements.



PUBLIC SPACES & PLACES

1. To protect and enhance the Regional Centre's public parks and open spaces for future generations.
2. To consult and work with residents, organizations, businesses and other stakeholders on parks programming and design.
3. To grow the open space network in the Regional Centre and integrate it within the larger municipality.
4. To improve the accessibility of public amenities, including water bodies and community facilities for all residents.
5. To accommodate a wide range of activities within The Regional Centre's diverse public spaces.



CULTURE & HERITAGE

- 1.** To provide innovative and holistic heritage and land use planning policies to ensure community-identified heritage values are considered in decisions affecting land use.
- 2.** To develop an evidence-based inventory of potential historic properties in the Regional Centre to inform land use and development decisions affecting cultural heritage.
- 3.** To enable the definition of potential heritage conservation districts and cultural landscapes within the Regional Centre.
- 4.** To establish a range of monetary and non-monetary incentives and develop partnerships for the encouragement of public and private sector investments in cultural heritage conservation and arts and culture initiatives.
- 5.** To encourage and support the on-going growth of a diverse range of publicly accessible arts and cultural venues, cultural events and seasonal celebrations.



HOUSING

- 1.** To provide housing choice and variety throughout the Regional Centre that is attractive to a diversity of people, including families and individuals of all ages.
- 2.** To increase affordable housing units throughout the Regional Centre.
- 3.** To enhance opportunities for new units within existing structures and infill housing.
- 4.** To support special care facilities through the Regional Centre.



SUSTAINABILITY

1. To improve/innovate in stormwater management, water and sewer capacity, and water quality.
2. To promote renewable energy, district energy, and energy efficiency to reduce the Regional Centre's overall energy consumption.
3. To support and promote tree planting, restoration initiatives and other natural processes when possible.
4. To promote and expand urban food production and harvesting yields to result in greater choices in local and healthy food.



JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. To work with hospitals, universities, colleges, and other levels of government to support the continued success of these employers in the Regional Centre.
2. To support small businesses and entrepreneurial activities through land use regulation, programs and initiatives.
3. To foster economic participation through support service provision for residents.

HALIFAX
CENTRE PLAN