

Item No. 11.3.1
Halifax Regional Council
January 28, 2014

TO: Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Mike Savage, Mayor

DATE: January 21, 2014

SUBJECT: Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community

ORIGIN

Healthy Communities has been identified by Regional Council as a Core Priority Area. In October 2013, Mayor Savage hosted the Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community, attended by more than 80 citizens, active in healthy living initiatives, as a way in which to gather community feedback on a broad range of strategic areas under the Healthy Communities Core Priority Area. All Councillors were invited to this event, and many participated.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter - Section 2 - Purpose of Act:

The purpose of this Act is to:

- (a) give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass by-laws, and respect its right to govern the Municipality in whatever ways the Council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given to it;
- (b) enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and
- (c) recognize that the functions of the Municipality are to:
 - (i) provide good government,
 - (ii) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality, and
 - (iii) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

Part I Powers of Council

11 (1) The powers of the Municipality are exercised by the Council.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council, as a part of the Healthy Communities Core Priority Area:

- 1) Include the following activities as a part of the 2014-2015 budget year:
 - a. In conjunction with Halifax Harbour Bridges re-decking project to be carried out in 2015 – 2017, champion the development of a solution to the cycling connectivity challenges at the Halifax end of the Macdonald Bridge Bikeway;
 - b. Develop and implement an urban orchard pilot project plan, which is to include possible sites, best practices, and a funding and process framework with the aim of establishing an urban orchard pilot project in HRM within the scope of the Urban Forestry Master Plan;
 - c. Work with Business Improvement Districts to determine what opportunities exist to improve accessibility in HRM, including consideration of the use of portable accessible ramps for entries that are not already accessible and cannot be made accessible through other means.
- 2) Direct staff to include the statement “HRM is a leader in building an inclusive and accessible community for everyone, including persons with disabilities and seniors” within the Healthy Communities Priority Outcomes, along with a Business Plan to support this Outcome, for consideration by Council in preparation for the 2015/16 planning cycle.
- 3) For consideration in the 2015-2016 budget, as a part of the Healthy Communities Core Priority Area, work with the appropriate Standing Committees to determine what further opportunities exist to achieve a higher level of health and liveability in HRM, as outlined in the Backgrounder to this report, and report back no later than September 30th 2014.

BACKGROUND

The goal of creating a more healthy and liveable HRM has become more urgent in the context of many of the alarming trends in public health. Obesity levels and chronic disease rates have been climbing steadily for the past 30 years and these rates have direct links to the lack of physical activity among Canadians—over half the population 12 years and over are not physically active. In HRM, over two thirds of men and half of all women are overweight or obese (Vital Signs, 2012).

A number of initiatives in support of a healthy and liveable community are already underway in Halifax. These include THRIVE Halifax, Coalitions Linking Action and Science for Prevention (CLASP), the United Way's Healthy Living Document, and Mayor and Council Review of the Task Force on Public Safety. These formal initiatives are further supported by the actions of

organizations, businesses, neighbourhoods and individuals who work to strengthen our community.

The goal of the Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community was to help create a framework for the implementation of the Mayor and Council's Healthy Communities agenda, and to recognize or create opportunities to work together for the benefit of citizens across HRM. By bringing together community stakeholders, this event allowed the Mayor, councillors and staff to listen to ideas that could contribute to a healthy and liveable community, while developing alliances between stakeholders and HRM.

DISCUSSION

The Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community brought together over 80 stakeholders from a wide range of backgrounds and sectors, including active transportation, local food production and promotion, accessibility, transportation, physical fitness, public safety, seniors, youth, students, business and planning.

While Regional Council has adopted Healthy Communities as a Core Priority Area, a preliminary analysis suggests that most current activities in this area may be more "operational" than "aspirational". Therefore, the purpose of the Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community was to establish an understanding of the community's aspirations in establishing a healthy and liveable community.

The Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community began with a visioning exercise, asking participants to imagine and share what Halifax would look like in the year 2020, as the healthiest, most liveable community in Canada. The latter part of the day focused on specific themes and objectives that would be needed to achieve this goal. Participants were free to join groups discussing themes of particular interest to them. The room also featured a "Great Works Gallery" promoting activities and initiatives currently being undertaken, including Hope Blooms, Switch Open Street Sundays, Hubbards Barn & Community Park, and The Old School Community Gathering Place in Musquodoboit Harbour.

A preliminary analysis of the results suggests that there may be opportunities to make measurable progress in the coming budget year on several of the themes that emerged, while progress in other areas may take considerably more time to achieve.

In particular, three key themes emerged whereby progress appears to be achievable over the next budget year:

- 1) Active transportation
- 2) Local food production
- 3) Accessibility

Within each of the above theme areas, staff and community stakeholders were consulted so as to determine activities that could both make a measurable impact, and which could reasonably be undertaken over the next budget year. Each of these activities is consistent with priorities,

programs and initiatives already established by Regional Council.

Bike Ramp at MacDonald Bridge

The most mentioned single project during the review of HRM's Transportation Strategy was to "improve the Halifax connection to the Macdonald Bridge Bikeway." With the re-decking project to be carried out in 2015 – 2017, it would appear to be timely to begin working with Halifax Harbour Bridges to champion a shared solution to this challenge. This priority was endorsed by the Active Transportation Advisory Committee at its January 2014 meeting.

Urban Orchard Pilot Project

Following public feedback and direction from the Community Design Advisory Committee, the draft Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS) cites "promote community food security" as one of its objectives. Moreover, the idea of planting fruit and nut-bearing trees was repeatedly raised during the community consultation on the Urban Forestry Master Plan (UFMP), and one of the objectives stated in the UFMP, unanimously adopted by Regional Council, is to "increase the amount of edibles available from the urban forest."

Portable Wheelchair Accessible Ramps

The idea of portable accessibility ramps was raised at the October 2013 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), and a motion was passed to "review options for portable ramps for existing commercial businesses in HRM and discuss opportunities for HRM to promote their use including potential linkages with Business Improvement Districts." Portable accessibility ramps were also frequently raised at the AAC's Town Hall meeting in September 2013, and at its December 2013 meeting, the AAC endorsed the Mayor's Office further exploration of this idea as a way to improve accessibility at HRM businesses.

A range of other issues were also identified by participants. These issues have been broken into identifiable themes, each of which supports 2014/15 Priority Outcomes and/or policy direction articulated by Draft 3 of the 5 year review of the Municipal Planning Strategy. Progress on these issues may be achievable over the longer-term. Specific examples of potential initiatives can be found in the backgrounder, attached to this report. This analysis should include, but not be limited to, activities in the following areas:

Use of Facilities

Municipally-owned facilities support a "range of choices for citizens in structured and unstructured leisure and recreation activities" (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Healthy Communities). In addition to the formal recreation programs and facilities, municipally owned buildings offer an opportunity to work with community groups to initiate and promote activities for citizens of all ages.

Building Community Capacity

The municipality can support citizens in creating “an attractive, welcoming, and sought after business and residential destination” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Economic Development). Businesses and families are attracted to communities where strong neighbourhoods and not for profit organizations work together to ensure safe and healthy communities that encourage innovative social, recreational and cultural activities.

Public Safety

HRM plays a key role in ensuring “citizens and visitors are safe where they live, work, and play” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Healthy Communities). Currently, a review is underway of the 2008 Report of the Task Force on Public Safety. It is anticipated that this report will offer direction on additional public safety priorities and initiatives.

Local Food Production and Promotion

Local food production supports rural economic development, which is “an integral component of HRM’s overall economic prosperity” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Economic Development). Moreover, recent RP+5 public consultations and direction from the Community Design Advisory Committee on updating the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS) illustrates that access to food is a significant issue for citizens. This feedback resulted in the introduction of an objective in the draft RMPS, to “promote community food security.” The Draft RMPS states that “Community food security exists when community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.”

HRM’s consideration of food security dovetails with community mobilization around food issues. The HRM Food Strategy Group is a coalition of organizations and citizens with a range of interests such as health promotion, poverty reduction and environmental and social wellbeing. The Group is working to raise awareness of food issues and develop a food strategy for HRM. Working more formally with the HRM Food Strategy Group may present greater opportunities to integrate food security considerations into the municipal planning process, leading to healthier community outcomes.

Accessibility

The municipality is to ensure that all “HRM citizens have access to facilities and natural assets that enable a range of choices for structured and unstructured leisure and recreation activities” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Healthy Communities”). This can best be achieved by working with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and others to create an overarching accessibility framework for HRM;

Active Transportation

The municipality is to promote policies that ensure “people and goods move easily from place to place using a combination of multiple transportation modes, such as auto, transit, walking and cycling” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Transportation). The following initiatives are to be

considered and reported back to the Transportation Committee at the same time as the review of HRM's Active Transportation Strategy:

- a) Liaising with other municipalities in Canada that have implemented protected bicycle lanes¹ with the goal of including protected bicycle lanes as a part of HRM's revised Active Transportation Strategy.
- b) Investigating opportunities to pilot temporary public spaces projects, with the aim of making HRM streets more animated and pedestrian-friendly.

Because HRM is currently supporting initiatives in a number of these areas, a key part of any work in further promoting healthy and liveable communities would be to take stock of current activities, including relationships with individuals and business that support this work.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost to develop the implementation plan for the activities to be carried out can be accommodated within the existing operating budget. Costs to complete the recommended activities in 2014/15 will be included in the proposed operating budget to be approved by Regional Council. Any additional costs will be brought back to Regional Council for approval.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community brought together over 80 stakeholders from a wide range of backgrounds and sectors, including active transportation, local food production and promotion, accessibility, transportation, physical fitness, public safety, seniors, youth, students, business and planning. In addition, a range of stakeholder groups, including the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Active Transportation Advisory Committee, were consulted in the development of recommendations.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications identified.

ATTACHMENTS

Backgrounder on the Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community.

¹ A protected bike lane is an exclusive bicycle facility that is physically separated from motor traffic and parking, and distinct from the sidewalk. Methods of separation vary and may include curbs, bollards, planters, rows of parked vehicles, or any other type of physical barrier. These are also known as "cycle tracks" or "separated bike lanes" in other jurisdictions.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Joshua Bates – Senior Policy Advisor (Mayor's Office) 490-2454

Financial Approval by: _____ Original Signed _____
Greg Keefe, Director of Finance & ICT/CFO, 490-6308

Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community

OCTOBER 24, 2013



Introduction

A healthy, liveable community no doubt has an efficient, responsive and compassionate health care system, but it isn't defined by it. Rather, a healthy, liveable community is one where "everyone wakes up in a warm safe place with nutritious food", where "people are working happily", where there are "intergenerational interactions and cooperation", where crime is low and graduation rates are high, where public art and green spaces draw people outside, and where a diverse population shares mixed, walkable and friendly neighbourhoods.

These are some of the descriptions of a healthy, liveable community shared by people attending the Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community in October, 2013.

Some cities, such as Vancouver, have undertaken the creation of a healthy city strategy. In Calgary, a commitment to end homelessness led to the establishment of the Calgary Homeless Foundation. Other communities are working on community gardens and food sustainability; on increased physical activity; on youth engagement and senior mentoring; on creating rest spaces in urban centres, and active green belts.



Context

In Halifax, many initiatives reflect a new recognition of the role of the municipality and citizens in creating a healthy community. These range from the recently constructed Emera Oval on the Halifax Common to the innovative community oven in Dartmouth. Community gardens thrive, and farmers markets offer a range of fresh produce—much of it grown within HRM. Entrepreneurs are finding ways to share cars. Young entrepreneurs at Hope Blooms have built a garden and have learned to market the results. A transit re-think is expected to lead to improvements in public transportation. A review underway to update the report of the Mayor's Round Table on Violence will yield recommendations to improve public safety.

Some organizations are working on more formal strategies to support citizen efforts to lead healthier lives. These include THRIVE Halifax; the Capital District Health Authority's Coalitions Linking Action and Science for Prevention (CLASP); and the United Way's Healthy Living Document.

The Mayor himself has established his personal commitment to a healthy, liveable community for all citizens. In December, 2012, Council established Healthy Communities as a core priority area for programs and services.

There are solid economic justifications for municipal involvement in healthy community initiatives. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities estimates that physical inactivity costs more than \$2.1 billion in direct health care costs annually for the treatment of chronic diseases that are largely preventable, and carries an estimated annual economic burden of \$5.3 billion.



For municipalities, healthy living initiatives, such as the creation of safe, walkable communities can reduce the burden of infrastructure construction and maintenance, as well as the cost of crime. Young people who are engaged in their communities are less likely to become involved in criminal activity and more likely to contribute through volunteer or other means of participation.

The goal of creating a healthy and liveable community in HRM has become more urgent in the context of many of the alarming trends in public health. Obesity levels and chronic disease rates have been climbing steadily for the past 30 years and these rates have direct links to the lack of physical activity among Canadians—over half the population 12 years and over are not physically active. In HRM, over two thirds of men and half of all women are overweight or obese (Vital Signs, 2012).

Clean air, the availability of fresh, healthy food, recreational opportunities, and access to safe public spaces contribute to healthy and liveable communities, and are all within the mandate of HRM. Fresh produce from community gardens can encourage healthy food choices, while bike lanes and hiking trails encourage physical activity. Projects like Solar City reduce energy consumption, creating a cleaner and healthier environment.

Indeed, the municipality has many of the policy levers to improve the health of the community. These include:

- Pedestrian friendly neighbourhoods
- Transportation
- Zoning and land use
- Parks and recreation
- Police and fire services
- Water quality
- Local food sustainability
- Green building practices
- Accessible building guidelines.

Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community

As an indication of his commitment to achieving a healthier community, and to provide some guidance as Council and staff consider budget allocations for 2014-15 and beyond, the Mayor convened a group of over 80 citizens who are actively engaged as volunteers, entrepreneurs, or professionals in healthy community initiatives. The group included senior program staff and several members of Council. The event was facilitated by Heather Hampson, an Engagement Strategy Advisor with the Capital District Health Authority.

The day began with participants collaborating to create a vision of a healthy Halifax. Participants identified the elements of a healthy and liveable community, and considered how their community could be different from today. Following that exercise, participants identified six topics to discuss ways to achieve a healthier community. These were:

- Unstructured play
- Seniors in the community
- Healthy food for everyone
- Neighbours getting to know one another
- Enabling community organizations to help move the vision forward
- Safety

The discussions identified a strong desire within the community to play an active role in creating a healthier community, and to work more closely with the municipality. Participants also saw a role for the municipality in removing regulatory barriers and working with other levels of government to achieve the goal of a healthier, more liveable community.



Actions

A report has been prepared for Regional Council, recommending specific actions in the 2014-15 budget year to support Council's Healthy Communities Core Priority Area. These actions are:

- a. In conjunction with Halifax Harbour Bridges re-decking project to be carried out in 2015 – 2017, champion the development of a solution to the cycling connectivity challenges at the Halifax end of the Macdonald Bridge Bikeway;
- b. Develop and implement an urban orchard pilot project plan, which is to include possible sites, best practices, and a funding and process framework with the aim of establishing an urban orchard pilot project in HRM within the scope of the Urban Forestry Master Plan;
- c. Work with Business Improvement Districts to determine what opportunities exist to improve accessibility in HRM, including consideration of the use of portable accessible ramps for entries that are not already accessible and cannot be made accessible through other means.

A second recommendation is to include the statement “HRM is a leader in building an inclusive and accessible community for everyone, including persons with disabilities and seniors” as a Priority Outcome to be considered by Council in preparation for the 2015/16 planning cycle.

The third recommendation would see HRM staff working with the standing committees of Council to identify additional Healthy Community initiatives. Suggestions from the Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community are provided here for consideration in the development of recommendations to Regional Council. These suggestions have been broken into themes, each of which supports 2014/15 Priority Outcomes identified by Council.

Use of Facilities

Municipally-owned facilities support a “range of choices for citizens in structured and unstructured leisure and recreation activities” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Healthy Communities).

- a. Providing program space for interaction between seniors and youth to increase shared activities and learning;

- b. Improving access to early childhood health and learning;

- c. Increasing knowledge of nutrition and cost-effective, healthy food preparation, including reviewing the province's forthcoming healthy eating and recreation policy for possible implementation at a municipal level.

Building Community Capacity

The municipality can support citizens in creating “an attractive, welcoming, and sought after business and residential destination” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Economic Development).

- a. Increasing the rate of volunteer activity by all age groups in cooperation with schools and not for profit organizations;
- b. Strengthening community organizations, including the possibility of a “Community Navigator” position at City Hall;
- c. Encouraging neighbourhood projects and activities;
- d. Encouraging residents to access public spaces;
- e. Identifying unnecessary obstacles to initiatives of community groups, including hosting public events;
- f. Reviewing legal liability as a barrier to innovation by municipality and community organizations.

Improving Integration and Effective Communication with Citizens:

- a. Improving integration of newcomers with the community, and advancing effective communication with all citizens through civic engagement, such as voting and increasing the diversity of citizens in positions of leadership within HRM;
- b. Identifying opportunities to further engage all citizens in the promotion of a healthy and liveable community, including through the use of informal citizen advisors.

Public Safety

HRM plays a key role in ensuring “citizens and visitors are safe where they live, work, and play” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Healthy Communities).

- a. Increasing safety in public spaces, including through the consideration of recommendations in the Mayor and Council Review of Task Force on Public Safety.

Local Food Production and Promotion

Local food production supports rural economic development, which is “an integral component of HRM’s overall economic prosperity” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Economic Development). Moreover, recent RP+5 public consultations and direction from the Community Design Advisory Committee on updating the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS) illustrates that access to food is a significant issue for citizens. This feedback resulted in the introduction of an objective in the draft RMPS, to “promote community food security.” The Draft RMPS states that “Community food security exists when community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.”

- a. Identifying roles and opportunities in promoting local food production, including formally supporting the HRM Food Strategy Group in its development of an HRM food strategy. The HRM Food Strategy Group is a coalition of organizations and citizens with a range of interests such as health promotion, poverty reduction and environmental and social wellbeing. The Group is working to raise awareness of food issues and develop a food strategy for HRM. Working more formally with the HRM Food Strategy Group may present greater opportunities to integrate food security considerations into the municipal planning process, leading to healthier community outcomes.

Accessibility

The municipality is to ensure that all “HRM citizens have access to facilities and natural assets that enable a range of choices for structured and unstructured leisure and recreation activities” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Healthy Communities).

- a. Working with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to conduct an assessment of the accessibility gaps within each department and a scan of best practices in other jurisdictions, with the aim of establishing an overarching accessibility framework for HRM.

Active Transportation

The municipality is to promote policies that ensure “people and goods move easily from place to place using a combination of multiple transportation modes, such as auto, transit, walking and cycling” (2014/15 Priority Outcomes, Transportation). The following initiatives are to be considered and reported back to the Transportation Committee at the same time as the review of HRM’s Active Transportation Strategy:

- a. Liaising with other municipalities in Canada that have implemented protected bicycle lanes¹ with the goal of including protected bicycle lanes as a part of HRM’s revised Active Transportation Strategy.
- b. Investigating opportunities to pilot temporary public spaces projects, with the aim of making HRM streets more animated and pedestrian-friendly.

¹A protected bike lane is an exclusive bicycle facility that is physically separated from motor traffic and parking, and distinct from the sidewalk. Methods of separation vary and may include curbs, bollards, planters, rows of parked vehicles, or any other type of physical barrier. These are also known as “cycle tracks” or “separated bike lanes” in other jurisdictions.

Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community

List of Participants

Mayor's Conversation on a
Healthy and Liveable Community

OCTOBER 24, 2013

Mayor Mike Savage

Organizing Team

Joshua Bates
Chris Bryant
Dale Godsoe
Heather Hampson
Shaune MacKinlay
Donna McCready
Kathleen Patterson
Gaynor Watson-Creed

Councillors

Steve Craig
Barry Dalrymple
Darren Fisher
Bill Karsten
Waye Mason
Lorelei Nicoll
Jennifer Watts

Staff

Heidi Boutilier
Richard Harvey
John Henry
Deputy Chief Roy Hollett
Patricia Hughes
Chief Jean-Michel Blais
Hanita Koblents
Richard MacLellan
Dave McCusker
Sylvia Parris

Transportation & Public Works
Community and Recreation Services
Community and Recreation Services
Fire & Emergency Services
Metro Transit
Halifax Regional Police
Planning & Infrastructure
Planning & Infrastructure
Planning & Infrastructure
African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration

Community

Julianne Acker-Varney Dr. Frank Atherton	FEED Nova Scotia Deputy Medical Officer of Health, Department of Health & Wellness	Sue LaPierre Geoff LeBoutillier Kate MacDonald Sarah MacKeigan Sarah MacLaren Lil MacPherson Roxanne Manning Michael/Susan McCurdy	United Way
Gina Brown Sara Burgess Mark Butler Margaret Casey Miranda Cobb Gwendolyn Colman	Bluenose Marathon Common Roots Urban Farm Ecology Action Centre North End Health Clinic Ecology Action Centre Genuine Progress Index for Atlantic Canada	Jayne Melrose Chris Morrissey Jane Naus Paul O'Hara Frank Palermo Lisa Roberts Jacinda Rudolph	Halifax Regional School Board Stepping Up Halifax Leave out Violence (L.O.V.E.) Wooden Monkey Dartmouth Family Centre Spencer House Common Roots Urban Farm Clean Nova Scotia Halifax Regional Police North End Community Health Centre Planning & Design Centre North End Community Circle Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services
Pam Cooley Wayne Crawley Debra Dickey Terry Dixon Richard Donald Gina Dunn Andy Fillmore	CarShare HFX Unique Solutions Dartmouth Community Food Centre Community YMCA Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture Shore Active Transportation Association Waterfront Development Corporation and Strategic Urban Partnership	Ali Shaver Ross Soward Don Spicer Sheila Stevenson Dan Troke Grant Wanzel	Capital District Health Authority Switch Halifax Shelter Nova Scotia
Sheila Fougere Norman Greenberg Barbara Hart Claudia Jahn	Community Carrot Co-op Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia	Jonathan Williams Marjorie Willison Laura Whitman	Housing Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia Students Nova Scotia
Paul Kent	President & CEO, Greater Halifax Partnership		
Kathleen Kevany Katherine Kitching	Outdoor Active		Awesome Halifax



Mayor's Conversation on a
Healthy and Liveable Community

OCTOBER 24, 2013