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Item 8.1

**Item No.**  
**Community Design Advisory Committee**  
**April 26, 2017**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Community Design Advisory Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original signed by  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner & Director, Planning & Development

**DATE:** April 6, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Centre Plan Adoption Path

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**ORIGIN**

- April 29, 2014, Regional Council Item 11.3.3, Regional Centre Plan Project Next Steps
- January 28, 2015, Regional Council Item 11.3.3, Centre Plan - Community Engagement Plan

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Attachment B.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Community Design Advisory Committee (CDAC) recommend that the Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Authorize the direction contained within the Centre Plan document in Attachment A as a framework for amending existing planning documents and developing new planning documents as may be necessary to implement the Centre Plan direction; and
2. Direct staff to adopt 'Step 4 Approvals Process' of the Centre Plan Engagement Strategy as the public participation program as set out in Attachment C.

## **BACKGROUND**

Land use in the Regional Centre is regulated through the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, Regional Subdivision By-law, four Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies (SMPS) and four Land Use By-laws (LUB). A list of the planning documents is as follows:

- Regional Municipal Planning Strategy;
- Regional Subdivision By-Law
- Municipal Planning Strategy for Halifax;
- Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-law;
- Municipal Planning Strategy for Dartmouth;
- Dartmouth Land Use By-law;
- Downtown Dartmouth Secondary Planning Strategy;
- Downtown Dartmouth Land Use By-law;
- Downtown Halifax Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy; and,
- Downtown Halifax Land Use By-law.

Planning policies and land use regulations in this area date back to the late 1970s. With the exception of those for Downtown Halifax, these planning documents are in need of revision to bring them into alignment with current planning standards and best practices; as well as with the Regional Plan. An overview of the history of the Centre Plan can be found in Introduction Chapter of the Centre Plan document (Attachment B).

Broadly, the key milestones in the Centre Plan timeline include:

- October 4, 2011 Regional Council initiated Centre Plan;
- February 28, 2012 Commercial Corridor work initiated by Regional Council in Regional Centre. This work was predicated on getting Halifax Regional Municipality Charter amendments to allow density bonusing and site plan approval processes that consider the external appearance of buildings for areas outside of the Downtown Halifax Plan Area. Work on the Centre Plan was placed on hold until amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter were granted and staff was reassigned to work on RP+5;
- Amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter received Royal Assent on May 10, 2013. These amendments required that affordable housing be one of the public benefits provided in any Incentive and Bonus Zoning Agreement;
- April 29, 2014 a staff report was brought forward to Regional Council entitled "Regional Centre Plan Next Steps". The report outlined methods for moving components of the Centre Plan forward, such as new policy for low-density housing areas and improved development agreement policy criteria to address large-scale and mixed use projects, and other background studies necessary to support the Centre Plan.
- December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 Regional Council approved amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Community Design Advisory Committee.
- January 28, 2015 Regional Council adopted the Engagement Strategy for the Centre Plan as revised to include input from the CDAC and outlined in the document entitled *Centre Plan, Community Engagement Strategy* dated December 5, 2014;
- November 10, 2015 Regional Council recommended the award of Consulting Services in the Support of the Regional Centre Plan. This contract included external services including a lead consultant to provide planning expertise on land use, urban design, project management, and policy drafting in support of the project, while also providing consulting expertise in public engagement in line with the approved Centre Plan Community Engagement Strategy;

- March of 2016 the public engagement was initiated at an open house in Dartmouth at Alderney Landing and engagement continued through 2016;
- Release of the initial Draft Centre Plan document occurred in late October 2016,
- December 6, 2016 Regional Council direct staff to develop an incentive or bonus zoning program for affordable housing benefits; and
- Release of the final Draft Centre Plan document to CDAC and the public occurred on March 29, 2017.

As outlined in the direction from Regional Council in the motion of April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 policies for low-density housing and policies defining development agreements are outlined in the Centre Plan document, and will be further defined through the process outlined in this report. Additionally, the studies recommended for inclusion in the Centre Plan have been completed through the process to date, or work is currently being completed in processes parallel to the process outlined within this report.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Centre Plan document provides direction to accommodate growth within the Regional Centre in a sustainable and locally appropriate manner to maintain and create vibrant places and enhance quality of life. The Centre Plan document guides strategic growth, fosters the development of complete communities, and places pedestrians first in a human scaled environment. Achieving a great Regional Centre requires that attention is paid to these interconnected and mutually supportive concepts.

The Centre Plan document is a result of extensive data analysis and research, comprehensive public engagement, as well as ongoing involvement by the Community Design Advisory Committee. This document serves as a guide to facilitate the next steps of the project, including amendments to planning documents to allow the creation of a Land Use By-law (LUB) for the Regional Centre. Municipal staff will also use the Centre Plan document as a tool guiding corporate and cross-departmental decision-making and recommendations with respect to business planning, potential investments in capital projects, and other municipal initiatives.

It has been expressed by citizens and the committee alike that it is important to establish our shared commitment to the ideas contained in the Centre Plan document. At the same time, it is not possible to implement the land use components of the plan in full without finalizing the land use regulations. Staff has evaluated a series of options and recommends that the best way forward is an incremental adoption path. Our first step in this adoption path will be to authorize the direction contained in the Centre Plan. This is similar to authorizing the document as a strategic plan guiding the remainder of the work program.

This is an important milestone in the path to the ultimate goal of a Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law. It provides the knowledge that Committees and Council are generally supportive of the manner by which the plan regulates and directs growth and development of the Regional Centre, but still allows the plan to change and evolve further as learn from stakeholders in the finalizing of the regulations.

### **Centre Plan Project Next Steps**

Upon Regional Council authorization of the direction outlined in the attached Centre Plan document, staff will proceed to finalize policy and draft amendments and regulations. Staff are seeking initiation by Regional Council to make necessary changes to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, Regional Subdivision By-law, Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-laws as required to support the creation of a Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law. Given the complexity and number of these documents, staff are proposing a phased approach in their adoption. The rationale behind this phased approach is as a result of a number of considerations:

Meaningful Engagement

The scope and detail of the documents required to implement the Centre Plan document is extensive. Public Hearings will be required to amend or replace each of the planning policy documents and Land Use By-laws referenced above, with a variety of Centre Plan stakeholders likely having an interest in speaking at the public hearings. Phasing the approval of these documents will provide for a better opportunity for stakeholders to speak to the nuances of the plan, providing for better feedback to Council in advance of their decision.

Existing Development Interest

Since the adoption of the Engagement Strategy for the Centre Plan in early 2015, considerable development interest within the Regional Centre has continued. While much of this interest can be accommodated within the various plan and by-law regulation already in existence, some proposals require amendments to Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy documents.

Regional Planning staff are preparing to return to Regional Council with a report defining the go forward process forward on projects that have requested consideration for Municipal Planning Strategy amendments in the Regional Centre. Staff received public input on these projects through a public meeting held on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at the Hotel Atlantica on Quinpool Road in Halifax.

In prioritizing policy and by-law changes within centres, corridors and nodes identified within the Centre Plan document as appropriate for redevelopment, Development interests can be facilitated more efficiently than through a single-phased adoption approach. Given the benefits of the proposed approach, staff has conceptualized stepping forward with the potential packages of work:

<p><i>Adoption Package A</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Necessary amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, Regional Subdivision By-law, Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-laws to allow for:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy;</li> <li>○ A Regional Centre Land Use By-law; and</li> <li>○ Required implementation processes or mechanisms.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Policies in the RMPS to enable a Land Use By-law applicable to the <i>Centres, Corridors, Higher Order Residential areas, and Future Growth Nodes</i>, as generally identified on the Centre Plan Urban Structure Map, Figure 6, acknowledging that these areas have the most anticipated change, and are the most strategic for Regional Planning.</li> <li>• Staff will target a fall 2017 review of Package A by CDAC for recommendation to the CPED Standing Committee.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Adoption Package B</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amendments to any planning documents, including the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law as applicable to the <i>Established Residential Areas, Parks and Public Spaces, Intensive Employment, Intensive Employment, Small-Scale Institutional, Employment Areas</i>, as generally identified on the Centre Plan Urban Structure Map, Figure 6.</li> <li>• Staff will target a winter 2018 review of Package B by CDAC for recommendation to the CPED Standing Committee.</li> </ul>

After CDAC has reviewed these packages their recommendations will be provided to the CPED Standing Committee, who will in turn provide a recommendation to Regional Council to provide first reading on the proposed amendments and schedule a public hearing. Following any adoption of amendments to

planning documents (including, but not limited to, the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy and any other Municipal Planning Strategies) the amendments will be forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for review.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Costs for the Centre Plan Step 4 Engagement process and the resulting amendments of planning documents can be accommodated within the proposed 2017-18 Planning and Development operating budget, cost centres C002 (Urban Design) and C320 (Policy & Strategic Planning). Incremental resource requirements in future years, for the full implementation of the Plan, will be brought forward through the corporate budget planning processes, as required.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The HRM Charter requires that Regional Council approve a public participation program concerning the preparation of new planning documents. Attachment C outlines the Centre Plan Engagement Strategy that was adopted by Regional Council in January of 2015. The Engagement Strategy outlines the methods by which staff will engage with the community during the approvals process. In addition to community and stakeholder meetings, this will include formal consideration of the amended and proposed new planning documents by Regional Council through a public hearing process.

The input received from residents, community and industry groups, and key stakeholders have been factored into the preparation of the directions contained in the Centre Plan. Three phases of region-wide community engagement have been conducted since March 2016, with Phase 4 remaining. The results of this engagement program as of February 2017 can be found here:  
<http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/documents/170301CDACItem81a.pdf>

### **RISK IMPLICATIONS**

The Centre Plan document will provide direction for proposed amendments to planning documents in the Regional Centre, which will be presented to Regional Council at a later date with additional risk consideration.

#### Timeline Challenges

Planning policy and regulation work has been initiated on several areas within the Regional Centre, this includes updates to planning documents in Downtown Halifax, Downtown Dartmouth as well as adoption of Heritage Conservation Districts in Downtown and South End Halifax. Considering the depth of necessary review for these projects and the limits of resources and processes, it should be understood that the timeline targets stated above will be a significant challenge for this project.

Resources are currently aligned to work on these projects but changes to priorities, staffing, and other unforeseen circumstances could all present timeline risks for this project.

#### Project Overlap

Heritage Conservation District planning and Downtown Plan reviews are currently underway in areas within the Regional Centre. There is a communications risk with respect to these projects as they share geographic areas. In all cases these projects were initiated prior to the public consultation on the Centre Plan.

Staff working on these projects will clearly articulate the fit with the Centre Plan through consultation, communication, and any hearings on these matters.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Centre Plan directly addresses a number of environmental and ecological objectives in the Regional Plan and will establish strategic policy support and implementation actions for addressing multiple environmental issues including water quality management, protection and enhancement of biodiversity, enhancement of ecological connectivity, climate change adaptation, stormwater management and flood mitigation, food security, and energy efficiency.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

The Community Design Advisory Committee (CDAC) could choose to recommend that the Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Authorize the direction in the Centre Plan with adjustments. Substantial adjustments of the principles, core concepts and planning directions contained in Attachment A may require a supplemental report, and may result in an adjustment to the timelines presented in this staff report.
2. Adopt a public participation program that differs from Attachment C, this would require a supplemental staff report.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Centre Plan document  
Attachment B: Legislative Authority  
Attachment C: Centre Plan Engagement Strategy

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/CommunityDesignAdvisoryCommittee.php>, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Jacob Ritchie, Urban Design Program Manager, 902-209-4500

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ATTACHMENT A - CENTRE PLAN  
WITH AMENDMENTS DISTRIBUTED  
ON APRIL 26, 2017 BEGINS ON THIS  
PAGE

## **Attachment B – Legislative Authority**

### **Municipal Planning Strategy Amendments Initiated by Regional Council**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Part VIII, Planning and Development, including:*

#### **Planning documents reasonably consistent**

- 214 (1)** Planning documents adopted after the adoption of a statement of provincial interest that applies within the Municipality must be reasonably consistent with the statement.

#### **Planning advisory committee**

- 215 (1)** The Municipality may, by policy, establish a planning advisory committee and may establish different planning advisory committees for different parts of the Municipality.
- (4)** The purpose of a planning advisory committee or a joint planning advisory committee is to advise respecting the preparation or amendment of planning documents and respecting planning matters generally.

#### **Public participation program**

- 219 (1)** The Council shall adopt, by policy, a public participation program concerning the preparation of planning documents.
- (2)** The Council may adopt different public participation programs for different types of planning documents.
- (3)** The content of a public participation program is at the discretion of the Council, but it must identify opportunities and establish ways and means of seeking the opinions of the public concerning the proposed planning documents.
- 220 (1)** The Council shall adopt, by by-law, planning documents.
- (2)** A by-law adopting planning documents must be read twice.
- (3)** Before planning documents are read for a second time, the Council shall hold a public hearing.
- (4)** The Council shall complete the public participation program before placing the first notice for a public hearing in a newspaper circulating in the Municipality.
- (5)** The notice for the public hearing is sufficient compliance with the requirement to advertise second reading of a by-law.
- (6)** Second reading must not occur until the Council has considered any submissions made or received at the public hearing.
- (7)** Only those Council members present at the public hearing may vote on second reading of the planning documents.
- (8)** The Council shall adopt planning documents, at second reading, by majority vote of the maximum number of members that may be elected to the Council.

#### **Purpose of municipal planning strategy**

- 228** The purpose of a municipal planning strategy is to provide statements of policy to guide the development and management of the Municipality and, to further this purpose, to establish

- (a) policies that address problems and opportunities concerning the development of land and the effects of the development;
- (b) policies to provide a framework for the environmental, social and economic development within the Municipality;
- (c) policies that are reasonably consistent with the intent of statements of provincial interest; and
- (d) specify programs and actions necessary for implementing the municipal planning strategy.

### **Statements of policy in planning strategy**

**229 (1)** A municipal planning strategy may include statements of policy with respect to any or all of the following:

- (a) the goals and objectives of the Municipality for its future;
- (b) the physical, economic and social environment of the Municipality;
- (c) the protection, use and development of lands within the Municipality, including the identification, protection, use and development of lands subject to flooding, steep slopes, lands susceptible to subsidence, erosion or other geological hazards, swamps, marshes or other environmentally sensitive areas;
- (d) stormwater management and erosion control;
- (e) in connection with a development, the excavation or filling in of land, the placement of fill or the removal of soil, unless these matters are subject to another enactment of the Province;
- (f) in connection with a development, retention of trees and vegetation for the purposes of landscaping, buffering, sedimentation or erosion control;
- (g) studies to be carried out prior to undertaking specified developments or developments in specified areas;
- (h) the staging of development;
- (i) the provision of municipal services and facilities;
- (j) municipal investment for public and private development and the coordination of public programs relating to the economic, social and physical development of the Municipality;
- (k) non-conforming uses and structures;
- (l) the subdivision of land;
- (m) the use and conservation of energy, including the height and siting of developments;
- (n) measures for informing, or securing, the views of the public regarding contemplated planning policies and actions or bylaws arising from such policies;
- (o) policies governing
  - (i) land-use by-law matters,
  - (ii) amendment of the land-use by-law,
  - (iii) the acceptance and use of cash-in-lieu of required parking,
  - (iv) the use of development agreements,
  - (v) the establishment of comprehensive development districts,
  - (vi) the use of site-plan approval areas, including whether notice must be given to owners and tenants of property that is thirty metres or more from the applicant's property,
  - (vii) the establishment of transportation reserves,
  - (viii) the use of infrastructure charges,
  - (ix) the eligibility criteria for the establishment of a commercial development district including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the percentage increase in the taxable assessed value of the eligible properties, as defined in subsection 92C(1), within the proposed commercial development district and the period over which the increase in the taxable assessed value of the properties occurs;
- (p) the regulation or prohibition of development in areas near airports with a noise exposure forecast or noise exposure projections in excess of thirty, as set out on maps produced by an airport authority, as revised from time to time, and reviewed by the Department of Transport (Canada);
- (q) any other matter relating to the physical, social or economic environment of the Municipality.

- (2) The Council shall include policies in the municipal planning strategy on how it intends to review the municipal planning strategy and land-use by-law.

**Secondary Planning Strategy**

**231 (1)** A municipal planning strategy may provide for the preparation and adoption of a secondary planning strategy that applies, as part of the municipal planning strategy, to a specific area or areas of the Municipality.

- (2) The purpose of a secondary planning strategy is to address issues with respect to a particular part of the planning area, that may not, in the opinion of the Council, be adequately addressed in the municipal planning strategy alone.

**No action inconsistent with planning strategy**

**232 (1)** The Municipality may not act in a manner that is inconsistent with a municipal planning strategy.

**No appeal permitted**

**263** The following are not subject to an appeal:

- (d) an amendment to a land-use by-law that is required to carry out a concurrent amendment to a municipal planning strategy.

# Centre Plan

## Community Engagement Strategy

**Prepared by:**

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Planning & Development

2014-12-05



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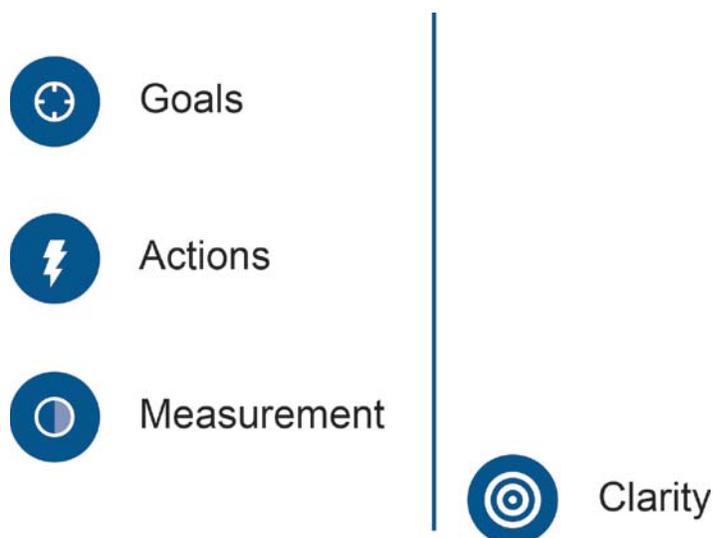
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## About This Document

The Centre Plan Engagement Strategy outlines the ways and means by which staff at the Halifax Regional Municipality will engage with the community through the process of drafting a new Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law for the Regional Centre.

This document will provide the reader with an understanding of what the **goals** of the engagement plan are, what engagement **actions** will take place, and how staff and the community will **measure** with the success of the process.

If there is a singular thread that we be woven through the entirety of this document and the Centre Plan project it is one of **clarity**. This means clarity in communication, clarity in form, and clarity in the intended outcomes of the project.



## Background

### What is the Centre Plan?

The 2014 Regional Plan establishes long-range, region-wide planning policies outlining where, when, and how future growth and development should take place in the Municipality to the year 2031. Between 2006 and 2011, the Halifax Regional Municipality's population grew to over 409,510 (Census, 2011). This growth has not occurred uniformly across the municipality, but has instead been focussed mainly in the suburban communities and rural areas within commuting distance of the Regional Centre.

The 2014 Regional Plan targets at least 75% of all new housing units to be located in the Regional Centre and other urban communities, with at least 25% of all new housing units within the Regional Centre during the period between 2009 and 2031. The Regional Plan identifies the Regional Centre as the focus for economic, cultural and residential development activities in the Region.

To aid in the successful attainment of this goal within the Regional Centre, the Centre Plan project has been established to ensure that the desired population growth is supported while maintaining the success of existing neighbourhoods and remaining true to the Guiding Principles for the Centre Plan developed through the 2014 Regional Plan.

The Centre Plan project will deliver a new **Regional Centre Municipal Planning Strategy** and accompanying **Land Use By-Law**. A new Municipal Planning Strategy for the Regional Centre will replace the current set of three (3) Municipal Planning Strategies in the Centre and their three (3) associated Land Use By-Laws. The project is envisioned as a 24 month project, having started in October 2014.

A Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) provides statements of policy to guide the development and management of the Municipality. The policies will (a) address problems and opportunities concerning the development of land and the effects of the development; (b) provide a framework for the environmental, social and economic development within the Municipality; (c) are reasonably consistent with the intent of statements of provincial interest; and (d) specify programs and actions necessary for implementing the MPS.

A Land Use By-Law (LUB) sets the guidelines and limits for all quantitative aspects of development and how sites can be used, including an array of site specific issues that may arise. The Land Use By-Law regulates development as enabled by the Municipal Planning Strategy in effect in the area.

### **Centre Plan Vision Statement, 2014 Regional Plan**

1. The Regional Centre is the symbolic, historic and functional heart of the Halifax Regional 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.
2. The Regional Centre will build on its distinctions and assets to nurture an urban context that enhances quality of life, enriches urban living and becomes a global destination.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.

## Centre Plan Guiding Principles, 2014 Regional Plan

- I. Sustainable
  - Design, plan and build with respect for economic, environmental, social and cultural sustainability.
  - Create resilient communities that adapt to evolving opportunities and needs.
- II. High Quality
  - New development should be of high quality and compatible with other high quality developments.
  - Promote high quality architecture and urban design that respects great heritage resources, including neighbourhoods.
- III. Heritage and Culture
  - Heritage resources, including heritage districts, buildings, landscapes and cultural heritage, should be recognized, used, protected and enhanced.
  - Ensure lasting legacies (buildings, open spaces and streets) are maintained, and new ones are created.
- IV. Movement
  - Integrate land use planning with transportation planning in such a way that alternatives to driving become an easy choice. Transportation options should be efficient, pleasant and readily available.
  - All streets should present an inviting barrier-free environment that considers the comfort, convenience, safety and visual interest of pedestrians.
  - The Regional Centre, in all ways, should be conducive to, and supportive of, active transportation movement. It should provide people with choices that are viable alternatives to driving.
- V. Complete Neighbourhoods
  - Support safe, mixed-use and diverse neighbourhoods, including: affordable housing and a variety of tenures; residential, commercial, employment uses; and visually and physically accessible amenity space, including schools and parks within walking distance.
  - Ensure the necessary public services and amenities to support quality of life, cohesive communities and creative places.
- VI. Growth and Change
  - Ensure that new developments respond to the natural, cultural, historical, and urban character of their context.
  - Direct change and intensification to areas that will benefit from growth.

- Every new building should contribute to the betterment of the public realm.
- Design should support accessibility, active transportation and transit (i.e. streets, land uses, neighbourhoods, open spaces, circulation systems).

#### VII. Process

- Foster a culture of support for the building / construction of quality urban design.
- Recognize and reward design excellence.
- Involve neighbourhood communities in local planning matters.
- Maintain opportunities for public participation in the implementation of HRM by Design.
- Foster predictable outcomes that have been tested to be achievable and fair.

#### VIII. Connected

- Prominent views to prominent natural and built features should be recognized, protected and enhanced.
- Enhance safe and appealing connections within the Regional Centre including to and from the waterfront, open spaces and neighbourhoods.

## The Need for Engagement

The Centre Plan Project is driven by these Guiding Principles and a Vision that at their core recognize that our Plans have to be built and owned by the citizens that will live, work, and play in the communities the Plan represents. Municipal staff alone cannot move this project forward without a deep understanding of the urban fabric and the strength of community present in these neighbourhoods.

The Regional Centre is an area of over 43 square kilometers, comprising the provincial capital, the bulk of Health Care Services for the Capital and Atlantic Canada, two campuses of the Provincial Community College, four Universities, 20,000 jobs in the Downtown areas of Halifax and Dartmouth, major transportation infrastructure, three container terminals, the Irving Shipbuilding facilities, over 36 schools, and over 90,000 residents.

Not only is the need for engagement great, but it is also acute. The scale of the Regional Centre is not that of a neighbourhood, but our experience of it as residents and citizens is at the neighbourhood or local level.

## Project Governance

The Centre Plan project is being advanced by the Planning & Development Business Unit and is supported by the work of the Community Design Advisory Committee (CDAC). The role of the CDAC is to provide a key communication and link between Regional Council and the community, and to advise on the delivery of a Community Engagement Strategy for the Centre Plan. At the conclusion of the Public Consultation program CDAC will submit a recommendation report to the Regional Council through the Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) Standing Committee.

While the Centre Plan project does fall under the oversight of the CDAC and CPED Standing Committee of Council, as well as the Heritage Advisory Committee, staff will work with the Municipal Clerk to ensure all other Standing Committees of Council, Community Councils, and Community Council Advisory Committees are notified of reports and notices of public engagement.

## Engagement Strategy Goals

Considering the breadth of issues that are manifest in the Regional Centre the project cannot rely on standard practices for Community Engagement alone, and the project recognizes that a unique strategy for this project will help staff address the demands as we progress toward a unified Plan for the Regional Centre.

Drawing from the experience in Regional Planning on past projects we know that a well-defined Strategy will help focus the efforts and provide necessary stability when difficulties arise. To provide direction to the strategy four clear goals have been defined for the Centre Plan Engagement.



### Goals

- 1) Be consistent with and draw on the strength of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy,
- 2) Respect the work done by staff and the public in earlier engagement,
- 3) Build trust that will enable staff and the public to engage in effective city building, and
- 4) Provide clear framework for actions and allow for all bodies to observe measured success.

## Engagement Parameters

The Centre Plan was conceptualized as the third component of the HRMbyDesign planning process in Halifax that was conceptualized in 2007. The Downtown Halifax Plan formed the second phase of HRMbyDesign. In October 2011, Halifax Regional Council initiated the Centre Plan and directed that a new Regional Centre Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law be delivered by 2015. New growth opportunities and challenges led Council to commence "Centre Plan Phase 1" in 2012 for several commercial corridors and opportunity sites in Halifax and Dartmouth. The intent of Phase 1 was to develop new policy to support opportunities for well-designed development while ensuring that the character and scale of neighbourhoods was protected, while. The Halifax, Dartmouth, and Downtown Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use Bylaws were intended to be amended as part of this process.

### Learnings & Constraints

This original engagement with the public through 2012 helped staff understand the challenges that were present in bringing forward new planning policy for areas with incredible diversity of built form, land use, history, and population. The learnings from this original attempt at short term changes forms one set of solid parameters for engagement on this project.

#### Learnings from Centre Plan Phase 1 (2012)

- I. **Understanding of the purpose of engagement is important**
- II. **Understanding of the purpose of engagement will help with public comprehension of the overall project**
- III. **Due to scale of project, notification needs to address diversity of communities**
- IV. **Communication of how we use the feedback is vital to build and maintain trust**
- V. **Adequate time for public to consider information is vital**

The Phase 1 project goal of providing interim measures for commercial corridors reduced the complexity of the Centre Plan project by limiting geographic scope. With the renewed project that complexity will be re-introduced and new parameters for engagement emerge.

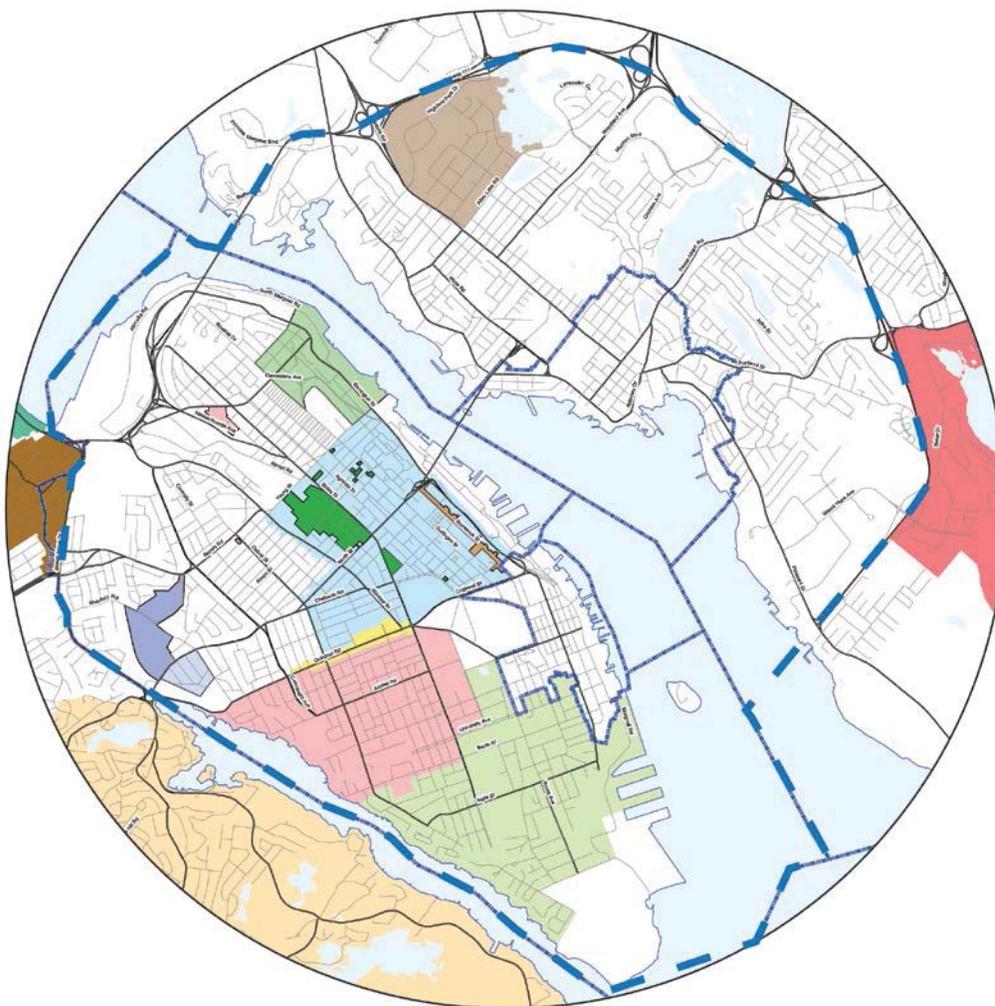
## Further Centre Plan Engagement Parameters

- 1. Reach all residents, in their communities**
- 2. Reach all workers, through their employers**
- 3. Reach all institutions, through their organizations**
- 4. Reach all community groups, through their interests**
- 5. Ensure cohesion with other municipal planning efforts and policy**
- 6. Ensure that all communities find a place within the project**
- 7. Prepare communities to contribute to the project**
- 8. Embrace collaboration**
- 9. Inspire best practices in city building**

## Geography

The Regional Centre encompasses a wide variety of land uses and many distinct communities. While the idea of creating new neighbourhood plans will be raised it will be important to ensure that the Centre Plan is able to maintain its regional significance while establishing the framework for new local plans in the future.

By identifying local areas within the Regional Centre we propose to frame the engagement to assist in communicating the impact of the Regional level policies on local areas. The definition of these plan areas will be done through spatial analysis and will be vetted with the communities throughout the engagement.



**Figure 1 - The Regional Centre and Existing Plans**

Plan Areas within current policy define local geographies for policy and, in some cases, have been in place for some time. These boundaries have helped to define the character of areas and where appropriate these will be maintained for consideration of character and scale. The Centre Plan will consider the unique qualities of all neighbourhoods within the Regional Centre and provide Planning Strategies and By-Laws that will protect and enhance these qualities into the future. Notwithstanding the aforementioned understanding of scale, the Centre Plan is not a Neighbourhood Planning exercise.

## Comprehensive Nature

The Centre Plan will be a comprehensive plan, not only in name, but also in composition and scope. The creation of the Centre Plan will allow for a conversation with the public about how our planning policies have been designed to work together to support the best future for our communities. No plan is static, and to engage in comprehensive planning is to engage in the dynamic life of other plans and projects. The Engagement Strategy will help ensure that this engagement happens throughout the Centre Plan project.

The figure below shows a complete constellation of the Plans enabled by the Regional MPS that frame the Centre Plan project.

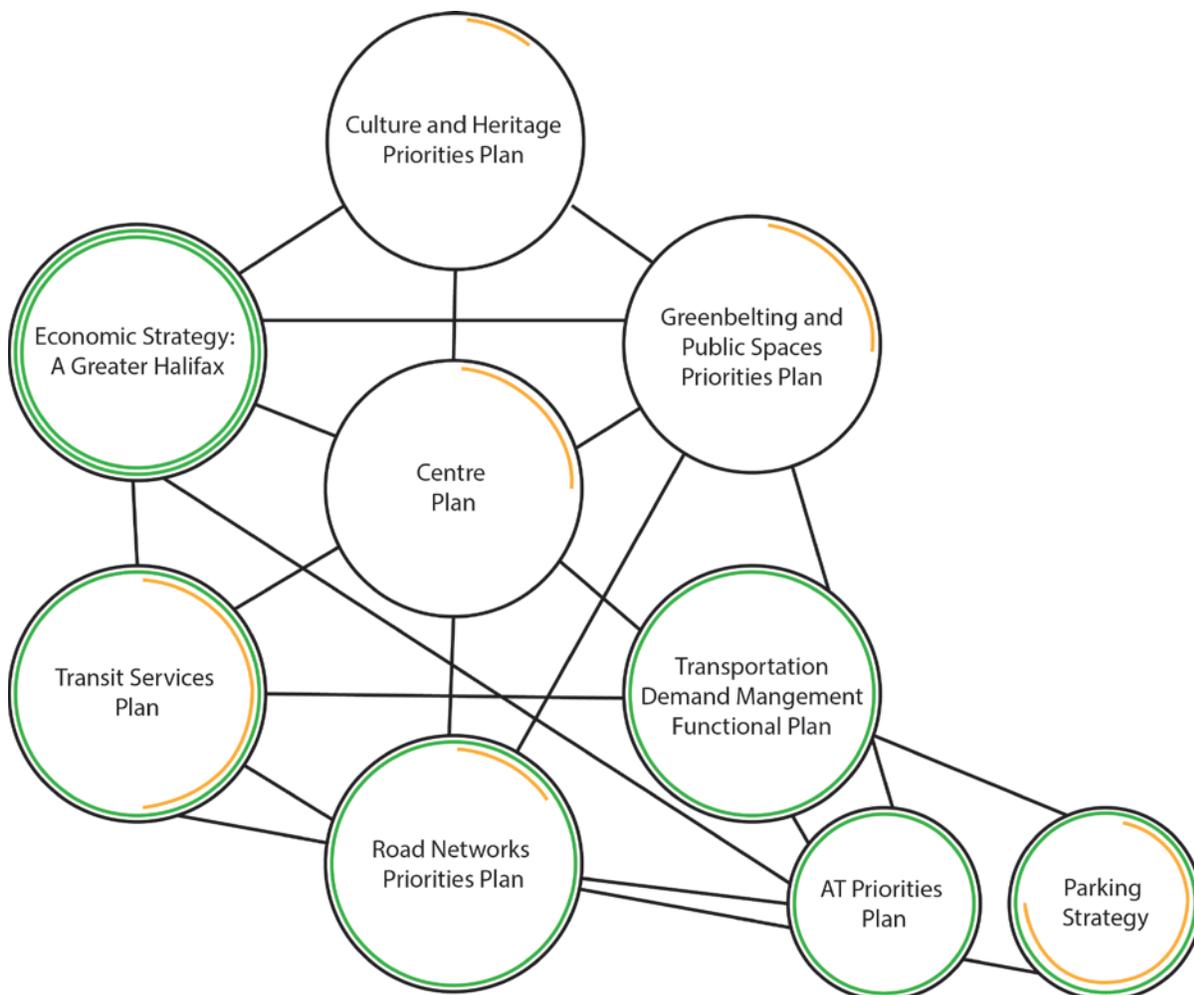


Figure 2 - Regional Planning Initiatives

The progress ring in the diagram above shows the current status of the project, each additional ring indicates an ongoing (or complete) review cycle for the same plan.

## Stakeholders

The Engagement Strategy includes mechanisms to reach out to a wide range of stakeholders whom we know are interested in or affected by the Centre Plan Project. Audiences for engagement in the Center Plan include:

- Community Design Advisory Committee
- Regional Council
- General Public (both within the Regional Centre and beyond)
- Engaged non-government stakeholders, including:
  - Environmental Groups (e.g., Ecology Action Centre)
  - Business Improvement Districts (e.g., Spring Garden Road, Quinpool Road, Downtown Dartmouth, Downtown Halifax)
  - Community Groups (e.g., North End Community Circle, Wyse Road Society for Sensible Urban Design)
  - Land use and social planning groups (e.g., Planning & Design Centre, FUSION Halifax)
  - Business Associations (e.g., Halifax Chamber of Commerce, Development Industry)
  - Transportation Advocacy Groups (e.g., Halifax Cycling Coalition, It's More Than Buses)
  - Large Industrial & Commercial Employers
- Governmental Stakeholders, including:
  - Planning Applications Staff (Internal), Transportation & Public Works Staff (Internal), Parks & Recreation Staff (Internal), Operations Support Staff (Internal)
  - Greater Halifax Partnership
  - Educational & Health Institutions (e.g., NSCC, Dalhousie, Saint Mary's, NSCAD, CDHA, IWK)
  - Provincial Department of Municipal Affairs (NS Government)
  - Waterfront Development Corporation Limited (NS Government)
  - Regional and area Councillors

The Centre Plan will employ an open approach to engagement. The stakeholders may change as we progress through the steps of the planning process, with CDAC we will ensure that stakeholders are engaged at the appropriate point in the process. The categorization of stakeholders provided herein covers many facets of planning in the Region, but is also open to change as we learn more about the process with the community.

## Engagement Tools & Techniques

The HRM Community Engagement Strategy provides some guidance when planning for consultation, but the complexity of the Centre Plan compels us to cast a wider net at this stage to find opportunities for best practice in consultation and engagement. This strategy also is directed inward, looking to other groups within the Municipality to build a method by which the Centre Plan becomes a document with all users in mind.

Tool / Technique	Reference Cases
<p><b>1. On-line Portal</b> A municipally created and administered participatory platform where citizens contribute to the planning process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shape Your City (Halifax)</li> <li>▪ Speak Up (Austin, TX)</li> <li>▪ Indy 2020 (Indianapolis, IN)</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Plain Language Guides</b> Technical work and language can obscure the planning process and goals, guides help avoid this without losing technical rigour in the plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Edmonton Evolving Infill</li> <li>▪ Saskatoon City Centre Plan</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Planning Workshops</b> Engaging with the community at key points to share progress and gather input.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Halifax Public Library</li> <li>▪ North Park Roundabouts</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Remote / Open Work Spaces</b> Getting away from desktops and meeting rooms, staff can work through a platform of publicly accessible planning activities to engage a wider group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Planners in Public (Toronto)</li> <li>▪ We Own The City (CITIES)</li> <li>▪ Pop Up City Hall (Vancouver)</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Community Narratives</b> Through the online portal to assist framing policy direction stories from the community will help ground the process in the reality of the Regional Centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cultural Plan (Moncton, NB)</li> <li>▪ Streetfilms (Hoboken, NJ)</li> </ul>

<p><b>6. Citizen Survey</b> Enabling third party interaction with citizens to ensure that communication is effective throughout the process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Halifax Citizen Survey</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Planning Workbooks / Local Event Planning Toolkit</b> Throughout the process there will be a need for the input and knowledge of the community. Workbooks allow the collection of this in a meaningful and comprehensive manner where plans are communicated using plain language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provincial Budget (NS)</li> <li>▪ Plan SJ (Saint John, NB)</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Educational Engagement</b> Working with local schools to engage students in the planning process as it relates to their academic curriculum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aviation High School</li> <li>▪ Henry Ford Academy</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. Stakeholder Outreach</b> Talking to industry, commercial sectors, institutional sectors, and others throughout the process to ensure we understand the varied needs of a broad cross section of the community and that they understand the project at all phases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RP+5 (Halifax)</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees</b> Understanding the depth of knowledge within the municipality and ensuring collaboration will be key to creating an implementable plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 5 Year Transit Review (Halifax)</li> </ul>

The suite of tools and resources outlined herein provides a mix of tried methods and innovative new forms of engagement that fit within the spirit of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy. From recent experience through the HRM branding strategy and the RP+5 processes there is a recognized appetite for new methods of involving the public in the planning process.

## Action Plan

### Step 1 – Engage and Define

Beginning in early 2015, the Centre Plan project will open a conversation with the public explaining the goals and scope of the project and how it fits with the other Plan strategies that have been (or are being) developed. This step will include significant public education and the feedback on fit with local knowledge / realities will guide the detailed development of future programming and policy.



### Actions

Tools & Techniques	2015			
	Step 1			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
1. Online Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Plain Language Guides				
3. Planning Workshops		<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. Remote / Open Work Spaces				
5. Community Narratives			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Citizen Survey				
7. Planning Workbooks / Local Event Toolkit				
8. Educational Engagement				
9. Stakeholder Outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Step 2 – Learn Together

With the project defined for all stakeholders and the community we can begin to talk about how the new Planning Strategy can ensure that the Vision for the Regional Centre and Guiding Principles are achieved and enshrined in policy.



### Actions

Tools & Techniques	2015						
	Step 2						
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
1. Online Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>						
2. Plain Language Guides							
3. Planning Workshops	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. Remote / Open Work Spaces		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. Community Narratives						<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Citizen Survey							
7. Planning Workbooks / Local Event Toolkit					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Educational Engagement						<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Stakeholder Outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees	<input type="checkbox"/>						

### Step 3 – Check In and Feedback

With the input from the public we will have the confidence required to do the necessary work building a new Municipal Planning Strategy and subsequently, a new Land Use By-Law. With this work advanced to a final draft stage we will be able to hold a series of additional engagement activities to ensure that the community understands and supports the proposed policies.



#### Actions

Tools & Techniques	2016			
	Step 3			
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
1. Online Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Plain Language Guides	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Planning Workshops		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Remote / Open Work Spaces				
5. Community Narratives				
6. Citizen Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
7. Planning Workbooks / Local Event Toolkit				
8. Educational Engagement				
9. Stakeholder Outreach		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Cmtes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Step 4 – Approvals Processes

When the documents have been vetted with the public they will be advanced to Committees of Council and ultimately Regional Council for adoption. The work of the Centre Plan team will continue throughout this stage. By working with the broad-based stakeholder group we can provide a high level of clarity to elected officials and the community to help ensure that policy represents the achievement of the Centre Plan Vision and Guiding Principles.



### Actions

Tools & Techniques	2016									
	Step 4									
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
1. Online Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>									
2. Plain Language Guides	<input type="checkbox"/>									
3. Planning Workshops										
4. Remote / Open Work Spaces										
5. Community Narratives										
6. Citizen Survey										
7. Planning Workbooks / Event Toolkit										
8. Educational Engagement										
9. Stakeholder Outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>									
10. Staff Working Groups / Tech Cmtes										

## Measures of Success

Throughout the Centre Plan we will report on the success of engagement at each step along the way. It is important to monitor and assess the quality of engagement, as well as the progress toward the end goal. With early success, the project can gain the confidence of stakeholders and staff, and as a corollary, early missed opportunity will identify the need for change while being a signifier of an open planning process intended for the benefit of all stakeholders.

### Step 1 – Engage and Define

The primary goal of Step 1 is opening the conversation and defining the parameters for developing a unified plan for the Regional Centre that embodies the Vision and Guiding Principles developed with the community in the 2014 Regional Plan. The opening of the on-line portal represents a significant milestone in the early stages of the project. Monitoring initial take-up of the portal and how the portal is used will be an important early input into developing further processes.



### Measurement

Tools & Techniques	Objective	Measures
1. On-line Portal	- Launch portal (via Shape Your City)	- Website live - # of hits
2. Planning Workshops	- Engage a broad group of citizens in education - Provide clarity with respect to scope	- # of events - # of attendees - participant scoring
5. Community Narratives	- Provide a forum for local narrative	- # of stories - # of posts / shares of stories
9. Stakeholder Outreach	- Share engagement plan - Build the stakeholder network	- # of stakeholder events held - # of stakeholders
10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees	- Working Group Definitions / Resource	- Creation of working groups

## Step 2 – Learn Together

The success of the second step of the engagement process depends greatly on the success of the first, with clear communication as to the goals of the project and the parameters that define the engagement staff, the community, and stakeholders can work together to craft the Plan policy.



### Measurement

Tools & Techniques	Objective	Measures
1. On-line Portal	- Drive interest and traffic to the portal	- Website live - # of hits
3. Planning Workshops	- Engage a broad group of citizens in meaningful workshops.	- # of events - # of attendees - participant scoring
4. Remote / Open Workspaces	- Introduce planning staff in an accessible space to the public to facilitate communication	- # of drop ins - # of hours in public spaces
5. Community Narratives	- Provide a forum for local narrative	- # of stories - # of posts / shares of stories
7. Planning Workbooks / Local Event Toolkit	- Create a means for stakeholders to lead community work	- # of stakeholder events held - # of workbooks received back
8. Educational Engagement	- Use the Centre Plan to help educate local students (G3-9)	- Program launch - # of children in program
9. Stakeholder Outreach	- Share engagement plan - Build the stakeholder network	- # of stakeholder events held - # of stakeholder actions
10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees	- Working Group Definitions and Resourcing	- Creation of working groups - # of meetings held

### Step 3 – Check In and Feedback

Having developed draft policies, the purpose and goals for Step 3 focus on verifying with the public that the proposal reflects earlier consultation and allowing for further refinement of the proposed policy.



#### Measurement

Tools & Techniques	Objective	Measures
1. On-line Portal	- Drive interest and traffic to the portal	- Website live - # of hits
3. Planning Workshops	- Verify understanding and agreement with drafts	- # of events - # of attendees - participant scoring
5. Citizen Survey	- Reach those who may not traditionally attend public meetings.	- survey results
9. Stakeholder Outreach	- Verify understanding and agreement with drafts	- # of stakeholder events held - stakeholder scoring
10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees	- Working Group Definitions and Resourcing	- creation of working groups - # of meetings held
2. Plain Language Guides	- Clearly articulate the changes to policy with plain language and illustration	- guides developed - # of guides distributed / downloaded

### Step 4 – Approvals Process

Engagement continues throughout the approvals process but new tools and processes will not be developed at this stage. The materials created to this point will continue to be used and the networks will be engaged to ensure understanding through the approvals process. No measures will be applied at this step.

## Call to Clarity

There is a need for consistency in the communication of the Centre Plan project progress. In response to this need, and to help set the tone for the project, results of the Centre Plan Engagement Strategy will be tabled in a report drafted at the end of each step in the process.

These reports will assist the Community Design Advisory Committee in reporting to Regional Council and will provide a window into the Centre Plan process that is more accessible than the technical details.

Through this reporting structure, we hope that greater clarity and understanding of the planning process is gained by citizens, stakeholders, Committee members, Council, and Staff.