

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

FEBRUARY 2017

Item 8.1(b)

HALIFAX-DARTMOUTH
CENTRE PLAN



Prepared by

Halifax Regional Municipality

HALIFAX-DARTMOUTH
CENTRE PLAN

DRAFT PLAN RELEASE ENGAGEMENT

WHAT WE DID

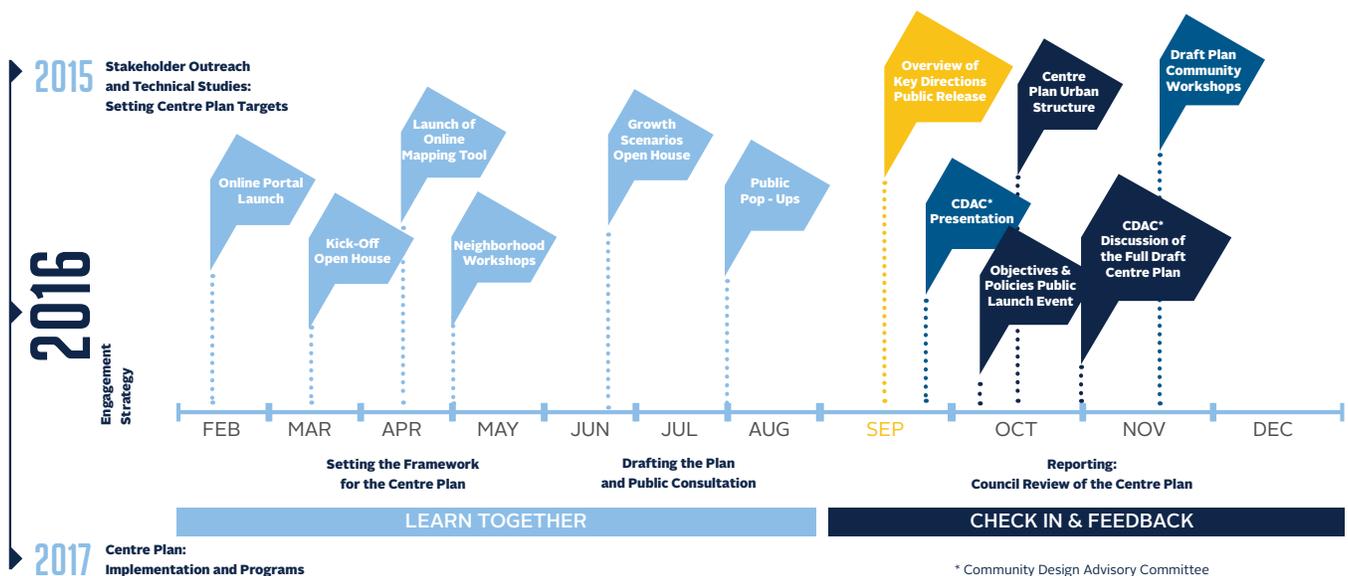
The release of the Draft Centre Plan was an important moment in the planning of the Municipality and was released in installments from late September and throughout the month of October. The installments were coordinated with a series of events and conversations to allow the time for considered review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

The engagement approach for the release of the draft Plan was to educate while informing. A phased release was chosen to give members of the public who are not usually involved with planning work the opportunity to learn about policy and planning, and to give their input into the draft Centre Plan. This goal of bringing new people into our processes was core to the Community Conversations and the other engagement activities throughout the release phase.

Draft Plan Document Release

The draft Centre Plan was released in phases starting on September 21, 2016 with the online release of the theme objectives for the Plan and the release of the Roll-out Plan. This first phase was intended to set the framework for the following month, and to give the public time to review and understand the objectives that would direct the policies to be released in the following weeks.

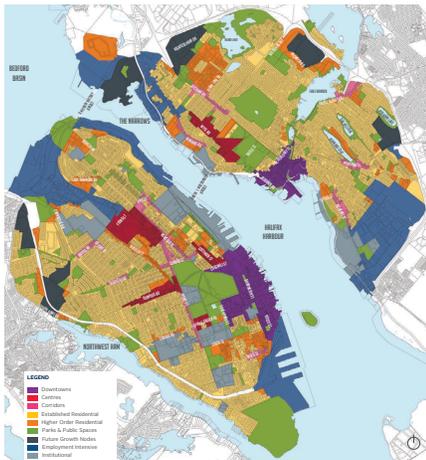
Figure 1 - Timeline from September
Roll-Out Plan Primer



Two open houses were held for the phased release of the draft Centre Plan. The first open house was held in Dartmouth, with the second open house being held in Halifax. This was to give the public living on either side of the Harbour equal access to these events.

On the evening of Tuesday, October 11, 2016 from 7 – 9pm, the first open house was held at Alderney Landing in Dartmouth. This first open house released the draft Objectives and General Policies related to the Centre Plan’s seven themes. Boards about the themes and objectives, the core concepts of the Plan, and timeline were displayed around the room, with staff floating to answer questions. The evening started with a 15 minute presentation, which introduced the format of the event, presented an overview of the project and the information being released, and spoke about the project’s next steps. There was approximately 10 minutes of formal Q&A. After the presentation the city-wide themes policy document was handed out. 100 people were in attendance that evening.

Figure 2 - Draft Urban Structure Map



On the evening of Wednesday, October 19, 2016 from 7-9pm, the second open house took place in the Spatz Theatre at Citadel High School in Halifax. This open house released the draft Urban Structure policies and map for the Regional Centre. The boards from the previous open house were again on display, with the addition of boards specific to the Urban Structure map and the individual designations. This evening followed the same format as the first open house, with a 15 minute presentation introducing the evening, the project, the information being released, and the project’s next steps. There was not the opportunity for formal Q&A at this event; however staff were located at boards to answer questions. After the presentation the Urban Structure policy document was handed out. 170 people were in attendance that evening.

Figure 3 - Urban Structure Open House



The full draft document, including the General Theme policies and the Urban Structure policies, as well as the last section – Implementation – was released at the Community Design Advisory Committee on Wednesday, October 26, 2016 at 10am at City Hall in Halifax. This meeting was open to the public and included an initial discussion on the draft Centre Plan.

Community Workshops & Public Feedback

Following the release of the full draft Plan, four Community Conversation workshops were held throughout the Regional Centre. At these workshops small groups around tables made comments on the Urban Structure Map and discussed what they liked and didn’t in regards to different policies. Staff was available to answer any questions. A total of 300 people attended the 4 events across the Regional Centre. These workshops were held in the same communities as the Neighbourhood Conversations workshops, earlier in the Centre Plan process.

- November 9, 2016 – Mic Mac Amateur Aquatic Club, Dartmouth
- November 14, 2016 – Shirley Burnstein Hall, Northwood Centre, Halifax
- November 16, 2016 – Nantucket Room, Dartmouth Sportsplex, Dartmouth
- November 17, 2016 – McInnes Room, Dalhousie Student Union Building, Halifax

Following the full release of the Plan (October 26) the public was given a month, with comment closing on December 2nd, to send the Centre Plan team their thoughts on the draft policies. 180 letter submissions were received in this period. In parallel with this public comment phase, the Centre Plan team was working with internal business units and stakeholders to get feedback on the draft Plan.

Internal Engagement & Design Community Workshops

Ongoing with the community engagement and public feedback period, the Centre Plan team worked with Internal Business Units and the Design Community to collect their feedback on the Centre Plan.

Internal Engagement

The purpose of this internal engagement was to encourage collaboration and foster two-way communication about the Plan, how it will impact projects and services, and how feedback is encouraged so issues can be addressed, as well as to increase awareness and understanding of the draft Plan and the process by which it was created.

Internal Engagement took two forms:

- Planning & Development (P&D) workshops
- Senior Leadership Meetings

The P&D workshops consisted of two, half day workshops with the Planning & Development staff outside of the staff team. This workshop was an opportunity for staff to work through the policies, with a focus on the Urban Structure policies, with the Centre Plan team. The intent was to improve the policies, and to ensure that all policies in the Plan have implementable tools in the Implementation section of the Plan.

The Senior Leadership Meetings were held with an extensive number of Business Units, from primary Business Units such as Parks & Recreation and Transportation & Public Works, who are heavily impacted by the Plan, to secondary Business Units such as Fire & Emergency, who are less impacted by new planning policy. These meetings involved a gathering of

managers, and focused on the content of the Plan that was most relevant to the Business Unit present. This offered the Business Units an opportunity to review the policies with the Centre Plan team, clarify any questions and concerns, and encouraged the executing teams to give crucial implementation feedback to the team.

Design Community Workshops

Two Design Community workshops consisting of two-half day workshops with the professional design community in HRM were held as part of the draft Centre Plan feedback engagement. The purpose of the workshops was to obtain feedback on the proposed design related policies released through the Centre Plan process and to discuss the proposed approach to regulations and guidelines for built form and design in mixed-use and residential areas. The project team hosted the following two workshops:

- **Focus:** Moderate to large scale development in Centres, Corridors, and Higher Order Residential areas
- **Focus:** Residential development in Established Residential Areas such as townhouses, infill housing, and gentle density

Workshop attendees were grouped around tables and provided with draft design policies and table top worksheets depicting the approach to regulations. Following a short presentation by HRM's Centre Plan team, participants were engaged in round table discussions and encouraged to summarize their feedback in writing and by using sketches directly on the worksheets. In addition to taking notes, this technique allowed workshop facilitators to walk away from the workshops with a solid volume of information that HRM's Centre Plan team can analyze and integrate as policies and regulations are further articulated. A full summary of this workshop can be found at <http://shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/centre-plan/> document titled **Summary, Community Design Workshop**)

Innovative Practices

In line with the intention of educating while informing, the Centre Plan team worked with other groups to build new, more inclusive, ways to engage with the planning process. These new engagement tools included

- Community walks, which were led by Walk n'Roll with support from the Centre Plan team, and took place throughout the Regional Centre,
- Pop-ups, which built on the pop-up engagement work done over the summer by the Centre Plan team, and
- A Rapid Health Impact Assessment, which was completed by Capital Health with cooperation with the Centre Plan team.

These tools allowed us to communicate and garner feedback from a wider array of people, with different levels of detailed feedback.

Community Walks

Community walks led by advocacy group Walk n'Roll and supported by the Centre Plan team were held through November 2016. In total there were 20 walks throughout the Regional Centre, with a total of 131 unique participants. These walks were lead and participated by members of business commissions, general public, local politicians, and advocacy groups among others. The goal of the walks were to talk about the impacts of the Centre Plan policies with members of the community, on the streets, to help them visualize and understand the changes that would be possible under the Centre Plan. A plain language guide, which included planning and design terminology with definitions and diagrams as well as example building designs, was provided for each walk leader, as well as a copy of the draft Centre Plan. The full list of walks can be found at http://shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/centre-plan/key_dates.

Figure 4 - Community Walks



Pop-ups

In addition to the events organized specifically related to the release of the draft Centre Plan, the Centre Plan team also popped up at other planning meetings. These meetings offered the team a chance to introduce the project to members of the public who had not previously been involved with other Centre Plan engagement events.

- **Integrated Mobility Plan Meetings** - Two Centre Plan team members attended each Integrated Mobility Plan event that occurred during the Centre Plan draft role out. The intention at the attendance of these meetings was to discuss the connections between transportation planning and land-use planning. These meetings occurred twice a day, one in the afternoon and one in the evening, on September 21 at Cole Harbour Place, September 22 at Sunnyside Mall in Bedford, September 28 at Exhibition Centre in Goodwood, and September 29 at Alderney Landing in Dartmouth.
- **Planning Application Requests for New Planning Policy in the Regional Centre** – The Centre Plan team attended the development proposal open house which presented an opportunity for residents to learn about 18 development proposals in the Regional Centre. The meeting took place on December 7, 2016 at the Atlantica Hotel. The proposals presented include a request for new planning policy and each was received by the municipality after the Centre Plan was initiated. The Open House provided citizens a chance to learn about these applications early on in the process and to learn about the proposed Centre Plan.

Rapid Health Impact Assessment

A Rapid Health Impact Assessment was completed by Public Health – Central Zone with the support of the Centre Plan team as a new format for feedback on planning policy work. Submitted and presented to the Centre Plan team during the public submission period, and presented to CDAC in January 2017, this document gave detailed responses to the Centre Plan policies and suggestions for improvements from a health impact lens. This report (the full report can be found at <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/170126cdac-agenda.php>) assessed the policies of the Centre Plan for their impacts on the health and wellbeing of the population, specifically focusing on its ability to help reduce chronic diseases, support mental wellness, and increase overall quality of life for residents. Due to time constraints and staff limitations, the document focused its analysis on four key topics that were felt to be of utmost importance to the Regional Centre – mobility, sustainability, food systems and housing.

Community Design Advisory Committee

The Community Design Advisory Committee (CDAC) was established to advise the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee of Regional Council on the development and implementation of two initiatives of regional significance:

- The Regional Plan 5 Year Review
- The Centre Plan project

The CDAC is a body with a two-part mandate. It reports Project progress to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee of Regional Council at key milestones, and it makes ongoing recommendations to staff regarding areas of strategic importance to the development and implementation of the Centre Plan project. The CDAC provides a key communication and working link between Regional Council and the community, and advises on the delivery of the public participation program for the Centre Plan. For this goal, the Centre Plan team reports monthly to CDAC with project updates on planning work and community engagement outcomes.

In addition to the ongoing reporting and feedback, on January 10, 2017, the Centre Plan team received the CDAC's formal submission to the Centre Plan (the submission can be found at <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/170126cdac-agenda.php>). This submission contained concerns and suggestions for the Centre Plan to consider while amending the draft Plan. These comments were directed to be taken as suggestions; it was highlighted that these suggestions did not mandate changes nor were they comments that reflected consensus from the group.

WHO WAS INVOLVED

Over the course of October and November there were over 880 interactions involved in feedback on the draft Plan. This included:

- 270 people total at the two October open houses
- 300 people total at the four workshops
- 131 unique people total for the community walks
- 180 email submissions on the draft Plan

A contingent of interested public and private entities participated, including representation from: HRM's Community Design Advisory Committee, City Councillors, development, real estate and planning firms, community organizations, local businesses, university students, municipal employees, and the general public.

DISCUSSION

The strength of a diversity of community engagement events and outreach is that the feedback collected is reflective, becoming more diverse and inclusive of a larger percentage of HRM. Different forms of engagement are attractive and comfortable to different people, a diversity in events encourages new members of the public to participate, and changes how people give feedback. We found that through the different engagement types, what was emphasized in the feedback changed.

Draft Release

Through the engagement work completed with the Draft Release the Centre Plan team was able to communicate and collect feedback on the core elements of the draft such as the Theme Objectives and Core Concepts. Through the phased release, with the Core Concepts and Theme Objectives & Policies being released prior to the Urban Structure Map, the Centre Plan team was able to garner feedback from the public on these Regional Centre wide policies without getting lost in the specific Urban Structure Policies. Through the discussions at the first open house, the Centre Plan team was able to clarify any questions the public had about the Regional Centre wide policies, and ensure that the public was supportive of these policies and the Core Concepts as the base of the Centre Plan.

After ensuring support of the Core Concepts and Theme Objectives & Policies, the Open House for the release of the Urban Structure Map & Policies consisted of conversations specific to certain areas. The Open House structure allowed members of the public and stakeholders to ask

the Centre Plan team questions, and discuss their thoughts with other members of the public. This format collected a baseline of data for the Centre Team to build on, with the opinions of those willing to talk to staff heard, but with the knowledge that this was not a comprehensive understanding of the public's thoughts.

Community Workshops & Public Feedback

The Community Workshops built on the conversations that were had at the two open houses, but created the opportunity for more in-depth conversations, with the Centre Plan team, as well as between members of the public. The format of the workshops encouraged idea sharing and learning from those who lived in neighbourhoods that differed from theirs. The workshops were structured with enough time for the public to get into detailed conversations on the policies and the Urban Structure. The workshop format allowed the public to document their suggestions and thoughts in a more detailed manner than was possible at the open houses.

The four different locations of the workshops brought a diverse group of people to the workshops who may not have been able to attend had they been held at one central location. Of specific relevance is the workshop held at the Northwood Centre in Halifax. This location allowed residents of the care facility to participate in the planning process, to learn about the Centre Plan, and to talk to the Centre Plan team and surrounding public of their experiences living in the Regional Centre.

While the workshops allowed for more detailed responses and conversations about the Plan than the open houses, the public feedback and comment period allowed for the most detailed and varied responses. When a planning process is at this level of detail, public feedback on the specifics of the Plan is extremely important but hard to get in a format other than written submissions. This format gives the public the most time to read the Plan and respond line-by-line, however is often overwhelming and participated in by those actively engaged in the planning process due to the amount of planning knowledge and time required. Comments received varied from high-level resident comments on their specific street, to detailed policy edits on a word-by-word level for the entire document. Both have been extremely helpful to the Centre Plan team in understanding the public's thoughts around the Centre Plan.

Internal Engagement & Design Community Workshops

Internal Engagement

Conversations that occur through internal engagement are extremely different than public engagement. The focus of discussions and feedback is around delivery of projects and policies within the Centre Plan rather

than on the direction and vision of the Plan. Working with the Business Units who will be responsible for implementing and delivering the policies in the Plan requires detailed discussions surrounding day-to-day operations, budgets, resourcing and priorities. Having these conversations prior to adoption of the Plan helps to ensure that the other Business Units will work with the direction of the Plan when building future budgets, and have a strong understanding of the direction and how the different elements of the Plan work together. The work done through internal engagement ensures we have a Plan that is not only strong in Vision, but is also implementable.

Design Workshops

The two design community workshops held in November 2016 presented a valuable opportunity to advance the dialogue between the design community and HRM's Planning & Development department. The new Centre Plan is a unique chance for everyone involved in developing the city's core to play a proactive role in shaping future oriented policies and regulations rather than just reacting and adapting to outmoded rules from the past. The experience the design community has working with the existing plans and by-laws is valuable to pull on when writing a new plan to ensure that we learn from past plans, and to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and constraints of design and construction.

While the excitement about new planning rules was palpable, many of the attendees voiced caution about not throwing away this opportunity, to get things right and to draft built form regulations and guidelines that match the ambitious policy direction the Plan sets out for the Regional Centre. There was hope that the two workshops were only the beginning of a new dialogue between designers and HRM.

Innovative Practices

Community Walks

The community walks led by Walk n'Roll attracted a new diversity of public participation. The walks made planning policy understandable by talking about the implications of policies on a specific area or street. Armed with the draft Centre Plan, the Plain Language Guide, and on-the-street built examples, the walk leaders and the Centre Plan team were able to help the public better understand the implications of the Plan. This stronger understanding allowed the public to give more informed feedback on the Plan. Every walk leader collected notes on what was discussed on their walk which was then sent to the Centre Plan team to be included in the analysis for Plan changes. Comments on the walks were often extremely specific to the street that the walk was being held on, though occasionally a comment that had specific implications for a

certain street was expanded to discuss the impacts at a larger Plan level. The detailed neighbourhood level comments from a group are helpful for the Centre Plan team in distilling the appropriateness of different policies in diverse areas.

Pop-ups

The pop-ups were similar to the Open Houses in the level of detail they collected. The intent of the pop-ups was to educate a larger group of people that the Centre Plan was under work, and to talk to new people about their thoughts on the Regional Centre and specific areas within it. The conversations were often high-level, and consisted primarily of question and answers.

Rapid Health Impact Assessment

The Rapid Health Impact Assessment gave the Centre Plan team very specific feedback in an easily digestible format, categorized by their four key topics – Mobility, Sustainability, Food Systems, and Housing.

Within the Mobility section, they highlighted support for the policies related to enabling mobility in all ages and abilities, making active transportation convenient and safe, and encouraging the use of public transit, linking these policies to positive impacts on the health of the population and increased equity. Missed opportunities highlighted included a lack of reference to reductions in speed limits, no clear equity analysis in decision making, and the need to update design standards in order to achieve complete streets. These topics have been discussed by the Centre Plan team, and are referenced generally in the Plan, but are felt to be of larger scope than the Regional Centre boundary, and are being addressed through the work completed by the Integrated Mobility team for all of HRM. The importance of these missing pieces will be highlighted in the staff report with the report that will outline future and ongoing work outside of the Centre Plan. A discussion around the inclusion of an equity lens policy in this level of document is ongoing.

The Sustainability section focused primarily on improving the mental wellbeing of our population through policies that encourage the preservation and connection of open spaces and environmental sensitive areas, increased opportunities to access and engage with the natural environment, that reduce urban air pollution, mitigate urban heat island effect, and that reduce climate-change extreme weather event related impacts. Many of the related policies were also demonstrated to have positive impacts on improving respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Within the missed opportunities section, the need for a strategy to retrofit current structures to improve energy efficiency was highlighted, as well as the need for an equity lens when prioritizing park investment, the need for a buffer from highway impacts through design and landscaping, and the

need for a funding mechanism to support community groups animating public spaces. All four of these highlighted opportunities have impacted a change in policy, either the addition of a new policy or the rewording of a policy to be more inclusive. Again, the inclusion of an equity lens as discussed in the Mobility section is being considered for its appropriateness at this scale, as it is most appropriate for the entire Region throughout all of HRM's work.

The Food Systems section highlights support for the policies related to increased permissiveness for urban agriculture, community gardens and food production throughout the Regional Centre, as well as policies that increase access to healthy food through improved mobility, housing affordability, and community services, such as community ovens and recreational programming. These policies are all linked to improved healthy eating and an overall improvement in health. Improvements to the Jobs & Economic policies to include references to the importance of healthy food related businesses were suggested, as were improvements to policies to streamline and encourage healthy food while minimizing food deserts and food swamps.

The final section of the Health Impact Assessment was the Housing section which analyzed how the policies surrounding improvement in access to, and quality of, affordable housing was crucial to improving health impacts on some of our most vulnerable populations. Improvements suggested included policy ensuring repaired affordable housing stays affordable, being more explicit in what must be included in a complete community (e.g. grocery stores), requiring a buffer from highways, working with the Province to ensure smoke-free units are truly smoke free, working with the Solar City program to contribute to affordability, and highlighting ways that the municipality can encourage accessible units and houses. The changes that are possible within the scope of Centre Plan, buffer requirements, partnerships with the Province around affordable housing, and the wording around complete communities have been made. The suggestions that are outside of the capabilities of Centre Plan are being included in the staff report that highlights future work.

Community Design Advisory Committee

Similar to the Health Impact Assessment completed by Capital Health, CDAC's submission to the Centre Plan was formatted in such a way as to be easily digestible. The following is a summary of the changes which are being incorporated following CDAC's submission.

Following questions from both the public, stakeholders and CDAC the Centre Plan team is reviewing and reworking the structure of the Introduction, specifically how the Vision, Objectives and Guiding

Principles from the Regional Plan, and the Core Concepts and Guiding Themes of the Centre Plan, create a cohesive story and work together to clearly articulate the goals of the Centre Plan. Policies are being reviewed to ensure alignment with other documents, such as the Recreational Facilities Master Plan and the Economic Strategy, and ensuring the consideration of future unknowns is being adequately built into the plan.

The Urban Structure Map and policies are being holistically reviewed taking into consideration all comments received over the past months. Heights and design flexibility are included in this review process.

A prominent concern from both the public and CDAC is the scope of change that the Centre Plan can realistically influence. What is possible to influence in the Plan will be addressed, while issues that are larger in size and geographical impact than the scope of the Centre Plan, such as housing affordability and heritage preservation, will have the related comments passed along to the group working on them, and these will be addressed in a report brought forward with the Staff Report.

The Implementation section of the report is being strengthened through work being completed with other Business Units. This includes bringing the Implementation - Monitoring section in line with the Economic Strategy Index, and building in the implications of a Pedestrian First core concept.

The Centre Plan team acknowledges not all suggestions have been incorporated as changes to the Plan. Suggestions involving cost analysis of implementing the plan are out of scope. However it is recognized that the Centre Plan is one of the key strategies for reducing red tape outlined by the Province, and the Plan is following the recommendations of the Red Tape Reduction Charter. Additionally, impacts on development and detailed business unit budget impacts are not appropriate to be housed in a Plan; however these implications will be discussed in the Staff Report that comes forward with the Centre Plan. The by-law, which will include details both CDAC and the public are anxious to see, will be brought forward in coming months.

RESULTS

Through the variety of engagement formats that took place over the month of November prominent topics arose, with over 1300 written comments received and analyzed. Each individual comment received was coded based on the themes of the draft Plan, which allowed us to qualify the prominence of specific comments and concerns. These reoccurring topics have been grouped into their related themes and discussed below. Some comments fell under more than one theme.

Land Use & Design and Urban Structure

Unsurprisingly, as the first priority of a comprehensive planning strategy is land-use, followed by the impacts of land-use, the Land-use & Design theme received the most discussion and public comments. Urban Structure comments were grouped under the theme of Land-Use and Design. There were a total of 567 written comments related to Land Use & Design and Urban Structure. The following are the most prominent topics.

Protection of residential neighbourhoods & complete communities

Prominently discussed was the protection of residential neighbourhoods while ensuring that these neighbourhoods supported Complete Communities. Comments ranged greatly in this category, some felt that the Centre Plan appropriately protected what was important to established neighbourhoods, others were less sure that established neighbourhoods were properly protected. This comment was also articulated through concerns regarding balancing increased density with the character of the area of consideration.

Scale & transition

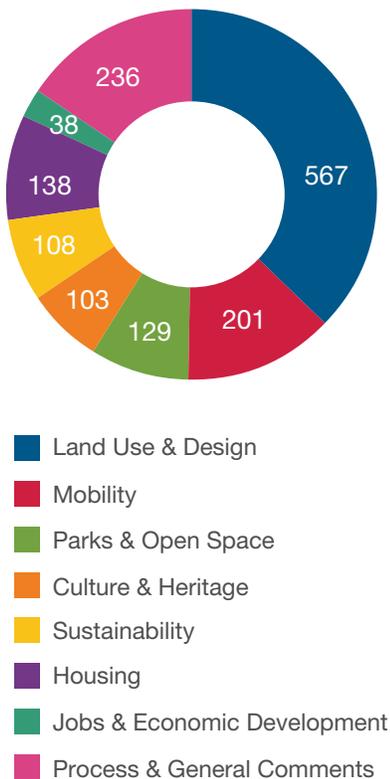
Many comments were given regarding the inclusion of Centres and Corridors throughout the Regional Centre. The heights proposed for both Centres and Corridors was discussed again with support for, and opposition too. Concern over the protection of established residential areas through appropriate transitions was frequently mentioned, and questions arose around how these transitions would be controlled appropriately and ensured.

The connection between the protection of established residential areas, and the need to account for population growth in different forms was discussed in June, and the discussion continued with comments surrounding the members of the public differing preferences between smaller areas of towers, or more areas of mid-rise.

Concern over shadow and wind from taller buildings

The fear of shadow and wind on the public realm and neighbouring properties was often cited as a reason for not supporting taller buildings or increased heights along the corridors. There are both those who feel that these factors cannot be mitigated satisfactorily and so the heights should not be permitted, while others have suggestions and questions on how the wind and shadow impacts are mitigated through the regulations.

Figure 1 - Breakdown of comments received on the draft Centre Plan



Urban Structure Map

Most comments supported the Urban Structure map but some had concerns over specific parcels of land or larger areas. Concerns related to the boundaries of Centres and Corridors were the most prevalent, with the proposed heights related to these areas also being deliberated.

Urban Design

A general concern that was frequently discussed was the need to ensure a high quality aesthetic. There are many different opinions on what that means, including but not limited to, the preservation of heritage, the treatment of the streetwall, emphasis on the pedestrian realm, the design criteria for taller buildings, etc., but the overarching comment was the desire for an aesthetically pleasing Regional Centre and having the necessary controls in place to ensure this.

Mobility

There were a total of 201 written comments related to Mobility. The following is the most prominent topic. Many of the comments were more appropriate in scope for the Integrated Mobility Plan; however they have been taken into consideration, and will be passed along to the Integrated Mobility Plan team.

Support for Pedestrian's First

There was overwhelming support and excitement surrounding the Core Concept "Pedestrian's First". Many submissions discussed this concept as something long overdue for the Regional Centre and an important step forward for HRM.

Parks & Open Space

There were a total of 129 written comments related to Parks & Open Space. The following is the most prominent topic.

Access to parks

Parks, and access to, is something the public was very mindful of. Improved park access and facilities related to increased density is viewed as extremely important. Additionally an equality lens is wanted for municipal amenities such as parks and sidewalks, noting that there are currently areas in the Regional Centre that are served unequally.

Culture & Heritage

There were a total of 103 written comments related to Culture & Heritage.

The following are the most prominent topics.

Protection of Heritage Resources

There were many concerns over the potential loss of heritage resources. Many discussions were had regarding the best ways to protect heritage while still accommodating for growth in the Regional Centre.

Excitement over Cultural Landscapes

As Cultural Landscapes are a relatively new tool for HRM, there was much excitement seeing them integrated into a plan. Feedback received involved tweaking boundaries of proposed Cultural Landscapes, as well as research and suggestions for additional Cultural Landscapes.

Sustainability

There were a total of 108 written comments related Sustainability. The following is the most prominent topic.

Support for renewable energy and green infrastructure integration

There were many positive comments received regarding the inclusion of LID (low-impact development) technologies and other green and sustainable infrastructure in the Centre Plan. While most comments were overall positive, they often called for stronger stances on our policies for sustainability, and the requirements for new development. Many feel the municipality can play a larger role in encouraging and requiring renewable energy and green infrastructure integration.

Housing

There were a total of 138 written comments related to Housing. The following is the most prominent topic.

Need for Affordable Housing

One of the biggest concerns overall was the inclusion and consideration of affordable housing in the Centre Plan. There was lots of positivity around the inclusion of affordable housing in density bonusing, however many are concerned that it is not enough. There were many comments related to inclusionary zoning and other programs that can address segments of the population being priced out of their homes.

Jobs & Economic Development

There were a total of 38 written comments related to Jobs & Economic Development. The following is the most prominent topic.

Protection of jobs and businesses

Comments related to jobs and economics focused primarily around the preservation of jobs in the Regional Centre as we intensify the number of people living in the core. Comments emphasized the importance of preserving the Industrial and Institutional drivers in our core. There were also many comments regarding the encouragement of local business, and the importance of design considerations in servicing, loading, among others, as we move forward with a pedestrian first model. The affordability of new commercial space for local businesses was questioned, with the concern being that many existing and future local businesses may be forced out of these core areas as the Centres and Corridors redevelop.

Process of Planning

There were a total of 236 comments related to the Centre Plan planning process, including comments that were more general in nature. The following are the most prominent topics.

A desire for clarity around population projections

Over the course of this engagement period there was question around the Centre Plan's proposed populations, both those who disagreed with the projections and those who sought more clarity. This was a reoccurring topic of discussion for many.

People feel engaged

The feedback received surrounding engagement was extremely positive. The overarching message was that the public felt that there had been many opportunities for engagement throughout the planning process, and they were pleased to see that changes had been made based on received feedback.

General outcome

Most of the more general comments were offering support and excitement over the new draft Centre Plan and the direction the Regional Centre is heading.

Implementation

There was a desire for stronger language throughout the Plan to ensure that the policies stated were effectively implemented as new development occurred, and that there were no loop holes. However, it was often acknowledged that a plan needs to have flexibility to allow for unforeseen circumstances. The balance between flexibility and a strong Plan was

discussed. There was general consensus that the implementation section of the Plan needed to be strengthened to allow for this flexibility to than be built in.

IMPLICATIONS

This feedback and engagement period helped to illustrate what the public valued most in the Plan. The topics of concern and positivity that were reoccurring helped prioritize policies and build on the implementation strategies.

Many detailed responses and discussions were had over the months since September, which proved extremely helpful in improving the Plan through specific suggestions for new policies, wording changes, and policies that needed to be more detailed. The Centre Plan team is now working on incorporating the necessary changes into the draft Plan. This is taking place as line-by-line changes based on feedback from the public, CDAC, and stakeholder consultations. These changes will be brought forward by the end of March for public review.

As well, it is clear that the majority of the public that partook in this engagement phase continue to be supportive of the Centre Plan project, and want to stay involved as the process continues past the draft Plan. Moving forward with Plan adoption and regulation drafting, the public will be consulted as we draft the regulations that will implement the Centre Plan policies.

Thank you to all who took attended the open houses and workshops, who lead and partook in community walks, and who took the time and effort to read the 154 page Centre Plan document and send us your thoughts and feedback.

HALIFAX-DARTMOUTH
CENTRE PLAN