

HALIFAX


P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 14.1.8
Halifax Regional Council
September 20, 2016

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 

Jane Fraser, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: September 14, 2016

SUBJECT: **Purcell's Cove Backlands - Shaw Group/Nature Conservancy of Canada Proposal**

ORIGIN

1. April 26, 2016 Regional Council motion:
MOVED by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Walker "that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to follow up with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and The Shaw Group to prepare a report and recommendation for the Audit and Finance Standing Committee to assess the proposal and its feasibility regarding the Purcell's Cove Backlands (PID 00052407)." MOTION PUT AND PASSED.
2. April 14, 2015 Regional Council motion:
MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor McCluskey "that any process to consider public acquisition of the lands identified in the March 20, 2014 Regional Council Motion be deferred pending completion of Phase 1 of the Greenbelting & OpenSpace Plan." MOTION PUT AND PASSED.
3. October 21, 2014 Regional Council motion:
MOVED by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Whitman "that Halifax Regional Council request a status update on the May 20, 2014 motion that the property identification numbers (PIDs) provide by Councillor Adams re: Clayton Developments, Bess Developments and Battery Hill Developments be referred to appropriate staff to initiate a public engagement process to examine options and possibilities to bring some or all of the PIDs into public ownership." MOTION PUT AND PASSED.
4. May 20, 2014 Regional Council motion:
MOVED by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Johns "that Halifax Regional Council direct that PID # 41342080, 41342098, 00052407, 41342106 (Clayton Developments) and PID 40060410 and 00269753 (Bess Developments) and PID 00269282 (Battery Hill Developments) (as provided by Councillor Adams) be referred to appropriate staff to initiate a public engagement process to examine options and possibilities to bring some or all of these PIDs into public ownership." MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

...RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (“HRM Charter”), subclause 2(c)(iii) The purpose of this Act is to...(c) recognize that the functions of the Municipality are t... (iii) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

HRM Charter, clause 61 (5) (a); The Municipality may acquire property, including property outside the Municipality, that the Municipality requires for its purposes or for the use of the public.

HRM Charter, clauses 79(1)(k)(x)(ah)(aj), “ The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for

- (k) recreational programs;
- (x) lands and buildings required for a municipal purpose;
- (ah) playgrounds, trails, including trails developed, operated or maintained pursuant to an agreement made under clause 73(c), bicycle paths, swimming pools, ice arenas and other recreational facilities;
- (aj) public grounds, squares, halls, museums, parks, tourist information centres and community centres;

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to:

1. Proceed with negotiations to acquire the lands (PID 00052407) and return to Regional Council for consideration of the key terms and conditions for the 379 acres that address the following:
 - a. Suitable acquisition terms respecting the purchase, lease and payment plan for the lands that represents fair market value or better as supported by appraisal commissioned by HRM;
 - b. Acceptable governance model that considers a community stewardship model for the management of the parkland;
 - c. Suitable concept site and management plan including installation of the proposed infrastructure by The Shaw Group that enables turnkey operation of the property within 2 years;
 - d. Clarification of the obligations of the lessor (NCC) and lessee (HRM) respecting the lands including any restrictions/covenants meet municipal requirements and mitigate future risk to HRM;
 - e. Resolution of the concerns related to the state of the dam on the lands;
 - f. Input from public consultation and discussions with the Province and relevant stakeholders regarding the proposal; and
2. Consider updates to the Regional Plan and related planning documents during the next review cycle to reflect the acquisition(s) and the implications on surrounding lands.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 26 2016, The Shaw Group and Nature Conservancy of Canada (Shaw/NCC) presented a proposal to Regional Council for HRM to acquire lands (subject lands) located in Purcell's Cove for an Urban Wilderness Park. Staff has been completing the necessary analysis on the proposal and discussions with Shaw/NCC. A high level summary of the current proposal include:

- HRM would acquire an interest in 379 acres. 170 acres would be conveyed to HRM by deed and 209 acres would be via a 99 year lease with the NCC.
- The Shaw Group is proposing a final sale with 30% down payment on April 25, 2017, with the balance of the purchase price payable in two 35% installments in April 2018 and April 2019.
- The full 379 acres would be managed as Category 2 protected standards as prescribed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, in perpetuity.
- HRM would be responsible for maintenance and park improvements for the entire 379 acres.

- A long-term management plan would be developed jointly between NCC, HRM and a community stewardship committee to provide overarching programming and park management direction.
- Shaw Group has proposed an endowment fund for NCC programming and infrastructure improvements for the site.

Staff is recommending in this report that Regional Council direct staff to proceed with negotiations to acquire the lands (PID 00052407) as noted in the recommendation.

The rationale for staff's recommendation is as follows:

- Acquisition would be aligned with findings of Halifax Green Network Plan
- Fair market value (or better) for the lands appears to be achievable
- It appears there is widespread public support
- A comparable opportunity may not be available in the future
- Increased interest in passive recreation to improve mental and physical health of residents
- Easily accessible, urban wilderness located close to city core for which public access could be potentially achieved within 2 years
- Unique partnership opportunity between HRM, NCC and community associations
- Opportunity to protect unique ecological landscape
- Lands would provide a "gateway" to other wilderness lands in the area
- Protection of lands for wildlife corridors

BACKGROUND

On April 26 2016, The Shaw Group and Nature Conservancy of Canada (Shaw/NCC) presented a proposal to Regional Council for HRM to acquire lands (subject lands) located in Purcell's Cove for an Urban Wilderness Park (Map 1). The proposal is based on a three-way partnership between Shaw/NCC and HRM whereby The Shaw Group would sell the subject lands to both HRM and the NCC for long-term conservation as a wilderness park. Council has directed staff to follow-up with the NCC and the proponent and report back on the feasibility of the proposal as a municipal land acquisition.

Whereby the current proposal does not require in-year funding, the report is being presented directly to Regional Council as opposed to Audit & Finance Standing Committee as outlined in Regional Council's motion.

Location and Context

The subject lands are located approximately 5 kilometres from the Armdale Roundabout and are comprised of three undeveloped properties that are divided by Colpitt Lake. The lands are approximately 153.4 hectares (379 acres) in size with approximately 380 metres of frontage along Purcell's Cove Road and 1500 metres along Williams Lake.

Surrounding the subject lands are:

- Williams Lake to the north, beyond which there are single detached dwellings and HRM parkland that includes a supervised beach;
- Undeveloped lands to the north-west that are on Williams Lake that are owned by Church of Christ Development Company Limited and that include a brook that flows between Colpitt and Williams Lake;
- HRM park and conservation lands to the south-west that was acquired through the adjacent Governor's Brook subdivision development;
- Undeveloped lands to the south-east that are owned by Bess Developments and Battery Hill Developments that have been the subject of previous Regional Council motions regarding their potential acquisition; and
- Single detached dwellings, and the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron, along Purcell's Cove Road.

Aside from Oceanview Drive and a series of rural streets in Ferguson's Cove that are comprised of single detached dwellings, the area to the south of the lands is largely undeveloped through to Herring Cove. This area is characterized as the 'Purcell's Cove Backlands' (PCBL) and includes:

- private land holdings;
- HRM lands designated as 'Protected Area' under the Regional Plan;
- lands owned by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust surrounding Purcell's Pond; and
- 476 hectares of Nova Scotia crown land.

Regional and Community Planning

Regional Municipal Planning Strategy

The subject lands and other lands south of Williams Lake are within the Urban Reserve Designation of the Regional Plan (Attachment A). This designation applies to seven areas in HRM that are immediately outside the Urban Service designation. The intent of the designation is to reserve the lands for possible future piped water and sewer development based upon future growth needs. Given predicted rates of growth, the areas are not to be considered for possible inclusion in the Urban Settlement designation until at least 2031. Correspondingly, the zoning for such lands (Urban Reserve Zone) is restricted to open space uses and single detached dwelling on existing lots, so as to preclude premature on-site service development. Other lands within the larger PCBL area are within the Open Space and Natural Resource Designation which are primarily owned by government, and the Rural Commuter Designation where new subdivision development is to be with on-site services and considered through a conservation design development process that seeks to retain important ecological, cultural, and open space features.

Mainland South Secondary Plan (Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy)

The subject lands fall within the Mainland South Secondary plan area of the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS). Subsequent to the Regional Plan's Urban Reserve designation, the Mainland South Secondary Planning Strategy contains policies that would need to be considered if the Urban Reserve designation was amended and subdivision development was proposed (post-2031). This includes Environmental Sensitivity Maps that identify areas with:

- tree cover – 40 percent and greater in density;
- exposed bedrock;
- wetlands and streams; and
- slopes – 16 percent and greater.

The subject lands and surrounding area are identified as having a degree of environmentally sensitive features.

Halifax Green Network Plan (HGPN)

HRM's objectives for the protection of an interconnected system of open space were outlined in the Regional Plan. To achieve those objectives, the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGPN) was identified to establish an integrated land-use and public lands planning framework to support ecosystems and community health, critical wildlife habitat, and environmentally and culturally important open space areas for environmental, social, cultural and economic benefit.

Although the HGPN is still underway, considerable public engagement, data collection and open space analysis has been conducted. The work from Phase I of the HGPN has produced the State of the Landscape Report: Issues & Opportunities (SOLR) which provides a baseline of information to assess the open space value of the subject property both from a site and an open space systems perspective.

Recent History

The subject lands have been in the Urban Reserve designation since the adoption of the 2006 Regional Plan. Since then, in addition to the current proposal, there have been requests to change the designation or have HRM consider acquisition, as follows:

- On January 24, 2012, Regional Council initiated a study to consider extending services in the area, including the subject lands, which would have involved amendments to the Regional MPS. The proposal was contentious related to both potential costs to existing property owners and the ensuing subdivision development that would occur. On October 7, 2013, the study was presented to Halifax and West Community Council, which tabled it with no further action.
- During the Regional Plan (RP+5) review in 2014, a request was made to redesignate the subject lands along with abutting lands from Urban Reserve to Rural Commuter, which would have allowed development with on-site services, through a conservation design subdivision development. This request was refused by Regional Council.
- On May 20, 2014, Regional Council directed staff to initiate a public engagement process to examine options and possibilities to bring the subject (and abutting) lands into public ownership. Subsequently, on April 14, 2015, Regional Council deferred any process to consider public acquisition of the lands pending completion of Phase I of the Greenbelting & Public Open Space Priorities Plan (The Halifax Green Network Plan).

The Proposal

The Shaw/NCC proposal (Attachment B) requests that HRM and NCC each purchase portions of the subject lands from The Shaw Group and establish an urban wilderness park for ecological preservation, passive non-motorized recreation, public education, and academic research. Details of the proposal are outlined in the private and confidential staff report but a summary of the proposal is as follows:

- HRM would acquire an interest in 379 acres. 170 acres would be conveyed to HRM by deed and 209 acres would be via a 99 year, renewable lease with the NCC.
- The Shaw Group is proposing a final sale with 30% down payment on April 25, 2017, with the balance of the purchase price payable in two 35% installments in April 2018 and April 2019.
- The proposal is contingent on the final sale of land by April 25, 2017 with additional flexibility to December 2017 if required.
- The full 379 acres would be managed as Category 2 protected standards as prescribed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (Attachment C), in perpetuity.
- HRM would be responsible for maintenance and park improvements for the entire 379 acres.
- Shaw would include a capital contribution for infrastructure improvements (access road, parking lot, signage, etc) and funding toward an endowment fund. The endowment fund would be used by NCC to work with the city to conduct appropriate planning for the site, contribute ecological and conservation perspectives to decision making, fund small improvement or replacements of infrastructure or other assets and facilitate NCC-led programming on the site.
- Shaw would have primary naming rights for the park.
- The NCC would have access rights for conservation programming and events, as well as co-branding rights for the park.
- A long-term management plan would be developed jointly between NCC, HRM and a community stewardship committee to provide overarching programming and park management direction.

The proposal outlines that the NCC and Shaw's vision is dependent on the entire 379 acres being protected and managed as conservation land in perpetuity. The proposal indicates that vision for an urban wilderness park would require a guarantee that the park would correspond to the following understanding of a protected area:

“a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”

In order to achieve the vision, recreational use in the area would be required to be low intensity. Therefore, the NCC proposes that park infrastructure would be minimal including a gravel road access, small parking lot at entranceways and naturalized trail network. The remainder of the lands would be retained in a natural state with largely unimproved trails. The proposal indicates that through the lease agreement, HRM would have responsibility and liability for all park improvements and maintenance at the level needed to effectively operate the wilderness park, over both the proposed HRM and NCC owned lands.

The Shaw/NCC proposal solely relates to the subject lands. However, there are several organizations such as the Purcell's Cove Backlands Coalition that are seeking broader protection of the Purcell's Cove Backlands. Its mission is, “to ensure no loss of wildlife habitat in the Backlands and to preserve them for natural, historical, cultural, conservation, educational, recreational and common use.” Support of this is also a ‘priority’ of the Our HRM Alliance, an advocate for a greenbelt and a complete communities approach that represents 57 community groups and organizations.

DISCUSSION

The subject lands are located on the Chebucto Peninsula, which is approximately 55,500 hectares in size. Approximately 33,000 hectares or appropriately 59% of the area is designated Open Space and Natural Resources within the Regional Plan. Within the Chebucto Peninsula and adjoining area, there are several large government owned large-scale protected areas and parks which provide public access to large open space areas with nature components, including:

- a) Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Protected Wilderness Area;
- b) Five Bridges Wilderness Area;
- c) Western Common Wilderness Common;
- d) Terence Bay Wilderness Area; and
- e) Long Lake Provincial Park.

There are also other government owned (crown) lands that are not designated as protected areas, but that are accessed by the public (Attachment D). From this perspective, the acquisition of the subject lands is viewed as an opportunity rather than a parkland need as there is considerable other protected wilderness lands and other crown land in the immediate and larger contextual area that is readily accessible.

In order for Regional Council to be able to make an informed decision on the proposal, it is necessary to assess the following components of the proposal:

- Lands as Open Space/Park
- Property Valuation
- Regional Plan Impacts
- Governance Models
- Proposal Timing
- Public Input

Lands as Open Space/Park

While there is an abundance of accessible wilderness lands in both the local and larger context area, there is public interest in conserving a greater degree of the Purcell's Cove Backlands, with the subject lands being a major component. As outlined on Map 1, much of the wilderness lands in the PCBL provide a contiguous corridor of open space for wildlife connectivity and biodiversity. The location of the subject lands would enable it to act as a “gateway” to the adjacent wilderness land mass.

Through the Halifax Green Network Plan's most recent public engagement consultation, the protection of the larger Purcell's Cove Backlands (including the subject property) was the most cited open space area of value and/or concern. Information from Shaw/NCC and community organizations highlight the ecological and recreational values of the subject lands and support their conservation along with their provision of opportunities for recreational uses. In addition, initial information from the Halifax Green Network work also identify that the Purcell's Cove Backlands, including the subject lands, possess ecological attributes and are important from a wildlife connectivity perspective.

Proposed Recreation Usage of Lands

A condition of the proposal is that the subject lands be managed as Category 2 protected standards as prescribed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in perpetuity. Attachment C includes excerpts from the Canadian Guidebook for the Application of the IUCN Protected Area Categories as it relates to Category 2. Since this condition would impact the usage of the lands, it is important to understand those impacts.

As a Category 2 designation, the recreational use of the lands would be limited to conservation-based low impact activities. This would permit installation of low impact amenities at the entrances, such as gravel parking lot, groomed trail heads, garbage cans and washrooms. This area would be considered the "front country", with the remainder of the lands being left in a natural state. As a result, while accessing the site by wheelchair or stroller would be possible in the front country areas, much of the lands would only be accessible by hiking single-track trails, over challenging terrain, at times.

A summary of the types of usage permitted under the designation is:

- Nature Focus Activities (bird-watching, orienteering, back country camping, etc)
- Research and educational purposes
- Low Impact recreation (hiking, swimming, walking, photography)
- Person Powered activities (mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking, etc)

By comparison, a summary of the types of usage that would not be permitted is:

- Motorized vehicles and boats
- Designated camping sites
- Off leash dog activities
- Revenue collection through permitting or sale of goods

As noted, with the amount of public access to large open space areas in the surrounding area, opportunities exist for active recreation. The subject lands would permit more opportunities for the benefits of passive recreation. Recent studies have indicated a strong interest in passive recreation and the benefits it provides, in particular significant fitness and mental health benefits. The Shaw/NCC proposal would align with the Regional Council's Healthy Communities Priority Outcome in several ways, including greater opportunities for active living, protection of environmentally sensitive areas and personal health benefits.

Halifax Green Network Plan

The value of the subject property comes not only from the specific elements it contains but from its context and proximity to core wilderness areas. The assessment indicates the following open space values associated with the Purcell's Cove Backlands:

Ecological Values:

- Largely intact near-urban ecosystem with notable patches of Jack Pine/Broom Crowberry. This plant ecosystem is nationally unique and globally rare;
- Largely undisturbed watershed, multiple wetlands and bogs, and shallow groundwater regions;
- Breeding ground for migratory birds including two species at risk and two threatened species;

- Sightings of endangered Mainland Moose on the lands and adjoining open space corridor to the south; and
- Glacially-sculpted granite outcrops and barrens and old process plants and forest.

Cultural values:

- Military Use: possible remnants of a historic fortification
- Viewsheds: views to Halifax and the expanse of the Backlands
- Indigenous Use & Archaeological Significance: potentially Mi'kmaq carvings on site
- Industrial History: eel fishing, ice harvesting and possible spill-over from adjacent quarry activity.

As noted, the subject lands have been reviewed during the work on the HGNP. As noted above, the review indicated that the subject lands achieve several areas of alignment with the HGNP. As result, conservation of the subject lands would preserve the highest ecological values of the property, retain important connectivity with the Chebucto peninsula, assist in maintaining wildlife connectivity flow, ensure that water quality is maintained in the Lakes of the area, enable public use and access into the more remote portions, and provide the municipality with a unique, highly accessible near-urban wilderness park experience.

On private lands that are zoned for development, HRM's longstanding focus is to conserve and connect important natural and cultural features through the land development parkland and conservation land acquisition process. Through the Subdivision By-law and development agreement processes, HRM acquires lands through parkland dedication requirements. It is expected that further lands in the area for additional connectivity purposes would be acquired over time through the subdivision development process. While this might be a viable approach for the subject lands if they were retained in the Urban Reserve Designation and ultimately proposed for development (post-2031), there is merit in considering their full acquisition given their size and importance.

Property Valuation

An appraisal, which is an opinion of market value of the subject property, was conducted by Turner Drake & Partners Ltd. for The Shaw Group. As part of the negotiation process, HRM would conduct an independent appraisal to assist staff in ensuring fair market value is achieved through the property value negotiation.

Details on the proposed purchase price are outlined in the Private and Confidential report. It is recommended that the information outlined in that report not be released until completion of negotiations and execution of a purchase and sale agreement and a separate lease agreement.

Regional Plan Impacts

As noted, the subject lands are currently designated Urban Reserve. The intent of the designation is to reserve the lands for possible future piped water and sewer development based upon future growth needs. Given predicted rates of growth, the areas are not to be considered for possible inclusion in the Urban Settlement designation until at least 2031. Since the initial adoption of the Regional Plan, additional analysis has been completed that supplements the policies within that document. Specifically, respective cost of servicing studies, initial findings of the Halifax Green Network Plan and housing market analysis also aid Regional Council in future decision on the type, location and growth of the municipality.

The Regional Plan states that HRM will seek to support a competitive housing market by maintaining a 15 year supply of serviced land. In 2013, an inventory of potentially developable lands within urban communities, outside the Regional Centre, was undertaken as part of the background for the 2014 Regional Plan. At the time, staff estimated that there was sufficient supply for at least 28 to 35 years based on a growth rate of 1,200 households per year. This estimate excludes potential for redevelopment, infilling or auxiliary dwelling units.

Staff has reviewed the 2013 inventory and note that there have been no significant changes to the

availability of land and that the assumed growth rate of 1,200 units per year is reasonably accurate. In addition, redevelopment and infill developments have been shown to be a major contributor to residential growth, indicating that the 2013 estimate of a 28-35 year supply of land is significantly understated when redevelopment opportunities are considered. Furthermore, the availability of land does not include potential new large scale greenfield developments located in the Urban Settlement Designation, which are identified for potential secondary planning and development within the life of the Regional Plan (before 2031). These areas include Highway 102 West Corridor Lands, Sandy Lake, and Port Wallace, which is currently proceeding through the secondary planning process. Regarding the UR Designation, the review of available lands demonstrates that there is likely an adequate supply of land well past 2031 without considering development of UR Designated areas.

While the proposal to protect the subject lands would remove those lands from the Urban Reserve Designation, open space uses are permitted and establishing the proposed park can proceed without amending planning documents. As well, current analysis indicates that there is sufficient lands within both the Urban Settlement Urban Reserve designations for potential future growth. However, the subject lands are sizable and form part the northern edge of the Purcell's Cove Backlands. Therefore, the potential acquisition of the subject lands could impact the viability of maintaining the surrounding area within the UR Designation, as the remaining lands may become increasingly difficult to service with water and sewer services.

Recognizing this, it is recommended that the implications to the surrounding area as a result of acquiring the subject lands be reviewed as part of the next Regional Plan review. This process would ensure that the remaining parcels located within the UR Designation, as outlined in Regional Council's May 2014 motion, are considered, as directed.

Governance Models

The Shaw/NCC proposal outlines an expectation that HRM would assume responsibility for all maintenance and liability for the entire 379 acres. Based on that assumption, HRM would be responsible for all access, use, and infrastructure and be responsible for managing the property based on a long-term management plan.

Where the proposal outlines the retention of the lands as a conservation/wilderness area, the proposed role of the municipality is not traditional. Protection of wilderness lands and ecological conservation consistently falls under Provincial jurisdiction. As a result, the traditional role of HRM (and other municipalities) has been to support the efforts of land conservation groups and other levels of government that have the primary responsibility in ecological conservation with recreational opportunities. This is typically by funding initiatives, such as the 100 Wild Islands Project, or controlling land uses adjacent to crown lands.

While the Shaw/NCC proposal has requested a leading role by HRM, there is merit to exploring a partnership model that could involve the Province as well as other community partners for the management of the lands. The Shaw/NCC proposal contemplates a management plan developed jointly between NCC, HRM and a community stewardship committee to provide overarching programming and park management direction. The role of the Province and the responsibilities of the municipality along with the other parties would need to be further refined through the negotiation of the management agreement, to mitigate the risk to HRM.

The proposal by Shaw/NCC could be a mechanism to enable HRM and NCC, along with community groups, to achieve their outcomes while supporting the success of the others, through a community stewardship governance model. That model is particularly valuable in a province the size of Nova Scotia as it will build on the strengths of each organization without duplication of services. Through the partnership model, each organization can be expected to be able to achieve successful outcomes beyond that which each would expect individually. This model would also align with HRM's Community Facility Master Plan (CFMP) approved in 2008, which outlines benefits of the provision of recreation programs and services through partnership models.

With the proposed conservation of the lands, the limited role of HRM in land conservation management and the strong interest of community groups in the area, such as the Purcell's Cove Backlands Coalition and Williams Lake Conservation Company along with the NCC and Nova Scotia Nature Trust, there is strong potential that a community stewardship model would best be able to achieve the desired outcomes of the proposal.

Proposal Timing

During the April 26, 2016 presentation to Regional Council and outlined in the proposal, Shaw/NCC indicated a requirement for a decision from Regional Council by August 31, 2016. The reason provided for the short timeline was to ensure NCC was able to access the funding necessary to facilitate purchase of a portion of the subject lands.

Due to the complexity of the request and necessary analysis required to enable Regional Council to effectively consider the proposal, that timeline was not possible. As a result, during the ensuing discussions with Shaw and NCC, both parties acknowledged that some additional timing was possible but that any delays in a decision could impact the NCC's ability to access funding. Shaw also indicated an interest in a short term decision.

However, it is necessary for additional discussion and negotiation on the proposed terms, conditions, land uses and governance in order to ensure HRM's interests are met and municipal risks mitigated. Therefore, it is recommended that staff be authorized to enter into negotiations with the parties to address these matters. It is expected that the negotiations could be completed in a timeline to meet the needs of both NCC and Shaw. However, if timing cannot be achieved that is acceptable to the parties, the future of the lands would be considered within the next regular review of the Regional Plan.

Public Input

The Shaw Group and NCC along with the Backlands Coalition and Williams Lake Conservation Company have worked to inform the public of the proposal. A summary of that engagement is as follows:

- Provision of input to the Halifax Green network Plan;
- Completion of a Corporate Research Associates poll (Attachment E);
- An open house which attracted 120 residents and included completion of an exit survey;
- A writing campaign by residents and experts in the fields of ecological research and environmental sciences. As of the date of writing this report, HRM has received 85 submissions regarding the proposal, almost all in support;
- Development of a web site to serve as an information repository on the proposal; and
- Attendance at the open house by local MLA (Brendan McGuire) and MP (Andy Fillmore)

While the engagement to date has provided a level of understanding on the importance of the subject lands to the public, the Shaw/NCC proposal outlines specific conditions that would impact the future use of the lands. As a result, public input on the proposal is warranted. In addition, as indicated during the recent debate on the Blue Mountain Birch Cove lands, it is important for Regional Council to have a full understanding of public expectations regarding a potential acquisition.

The potential acquisition of the subject lands could also impact the future development of the area as envisioned and approved by Regional Council in the Regional Plan and may have implications on applicability of the Urban Reserve designation in the area. Therefore, public input would aid in determining the impact of any potential future changes to the Regional Plan.

Proposal Challenges

There are two components of the proposal that may be problematic for HRM and, as a result would need to be addressed through the negotiations. Firstly, the HRM Charter does not support or permit HRM to acquire lands that are not for its purposes or for use of the public. Therefore, the Category 2 designation on the lands as proposed will need to be implemented in a way to ensure public use or municipal purpose

is achieved in order for Regional Council to be able to consider the proposal. Secondly, the proposal outlines a condition that The Shaw Group will have primary naming rights for the lands with NCC having co-branding rights. Administrative Order 56, *the HRM Sale of Naming Rights Administrative Order* outlines the process and requirements through which Regional Council is permitted to sell naming rights for a municipal asset. As a result, Regional Council would not be able to consider that aspect of the proposal, without first changing the Administrative Order or completing the public call for submission for the sale of naming rights. Resolution of the concerns related to these challenges would need to be determined through the negotiation and outlined in the key terms and conditions for Regional Council's consideration.

Summary

Acquisition of the subject lands as outlined in the Shaw/NCC proposal would provide benefit in the conservation of ecologically and culturally important lands as determined through the HGNP and provide citizens with increased opportunities for recreation and active living. Further, the proposal offers a unique opportunity for a partnership between HRM, NCC and community groups and enable each party to collectively achieve their mandate to a great extent. However, the proposal is complex and requires proper due diligence to ensure HRM's needs are met. Therefore, it is recommended that Regional Council direct staff to proceed with negotiations for the land acquisition in accordance with the process detailed in the proposed recommendation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Should Regional Council decide to direct staff to proceed with the acquisition of the subject lands pursuant to the Shaw/NCC proposal, funding for the acquisition would need to be allocated in the subsequent report to Council upon completion of negotiations. The proposal outlines payment for the acquisition beginning in the 2017/18 fiscal year. As such, in-year, unbudgeted funding would not be required, therefore, the recommendation does not need to be considered by Audit & Finance Standing Committee prior to Regional Council at this time.

Funding for parkland acquisitions is allocated from Parkland Development Reserve Q611 which has a current balance of \$5,020,174. Regional Council has directed the acquisition of a number of parcels for parkland and wilderness areas from this reserve as well as potentially allocating funding in 17/18 in the amount of \$1,000,000 from the reserve for the development of the Baker Drive lands. With the proposed three year payment structure, it is unknown at this time whether the balance in the Parkland Reserve would have sufficient funding for the payments as other previous commitments are finalized. Therefore, beyond the reserve, additional funding may need to be considered during the annual budget process to meet all of the commitments.

Based on the Shaw/NCC proposal, HRM would be responsible for all maintenance of the lands. While the lands are intended to remain primarily in a natural state, there would still be costs associated with the management, maintenance and operation of the lands. The proposal also indicates that Shaw would provide a capital contribution for infrastructure improvement and NCC would contribute ongoing cash and in-kind contributions to park improvements and maintenance, on-site programming, and promotion. The details of those commitments along with the impact to HRM operating costs for the ongoing maintenance of the lands would be confirmed through negotiations and outlined in the future report to Council.

Budget Summary, Parkland Development Reserve, Q611

Balance in Reserve, August 1, 2016	\$ 5,020,174
Projected Revenue to March 31, 2017	\$ 191,438
Commitments to March 31, 2017	<u>\$(1,594,979)</u>
Projected available balance, March 31, 2017	\$ 3,616,633

*The Business unit has indicated that they will require \$1,000,000 from the Reserve for Baker Drive Parkland Development (2017/18 capital budget); this amount is not included in the above commitments.

Parkland Development Reserve, Q611

A new reserve business case has been developed. The Audit and Finance Standing Committee approved the business case on September 7, 2016. The business case will now be forwarded to Regional Council for their consideration of approval. This transaction meets the old business case and will be the same intended use of the new business case. There is no negative impact on reserve in 16/17 since funding will be in the 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 budgets.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are risks associated with this report. A general summary of each is outlined below:

Lost Opportunity

The Shaw/NCC proposal included a requirement for a decision from Regional Council in a tight timeline. However, the proposal is complex and HRM must ensure due diligence in assessing it. Therefore, there is a risk that The Shaw Group, NCC or both parties may choose to not proceed with the proposal should the decision not meet their timeline. The recommendation in this report mitigates the risk in that it outlines Regional Council's intention to proceed while providing time to complete the detailed negotiations.

Impact to Future Development

The acquisition of the subject lands may have implications on availability of lands for development and applicability of the Urban Reserve designation in the area. With the urban reserve designation being in place until 2031 and current trends confirming that additional lands are not required, this risk can be mitigated through future reviews of the Regional Plan.

Increased Liability to HRM

The Shaw/NCC proposal outlines an expectation for HRM to be responsible for all 379 acres of the subject lands. The lands also include a dam that has been defined as being in poor condition. Assuming additional liability for lands it would not own would be a risk to HRM. This risk would need to be mitigated through negotiation of suitable terms and conditions in the lease agreement. The risks associated with the dam are proposed to be mitigated through an inspection and subsequent negotiation of a suitable approach to address the concerns.

Expectation for Land Usage

The Shaw/NCC proposal outlines a requirement that the lands be managed as Category 2 protected standards as prescribed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, in perpetuity. This would restrict both the types of usage on the site in the short term and future flexibility for the municipality which may not be in keeping with current or future public expectations. This risk will be mitigated through completion of a public engagement on the proposal as well as exploration of a community stewardship governance model to help manage expectations and inform the lease agreement.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As outlined, Shaw/NCC have undertaken a public engagement process related to their proposal. As well, as of the date of writing this report, HRM has received 85 submissions regarding the proposal. Should Regional Council approve the recommendation, a public engagement process would be undertaken by staff regarding the proposal and potential acquisition.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications beyond those that have already been identified within this report.

ALTERNATIVES

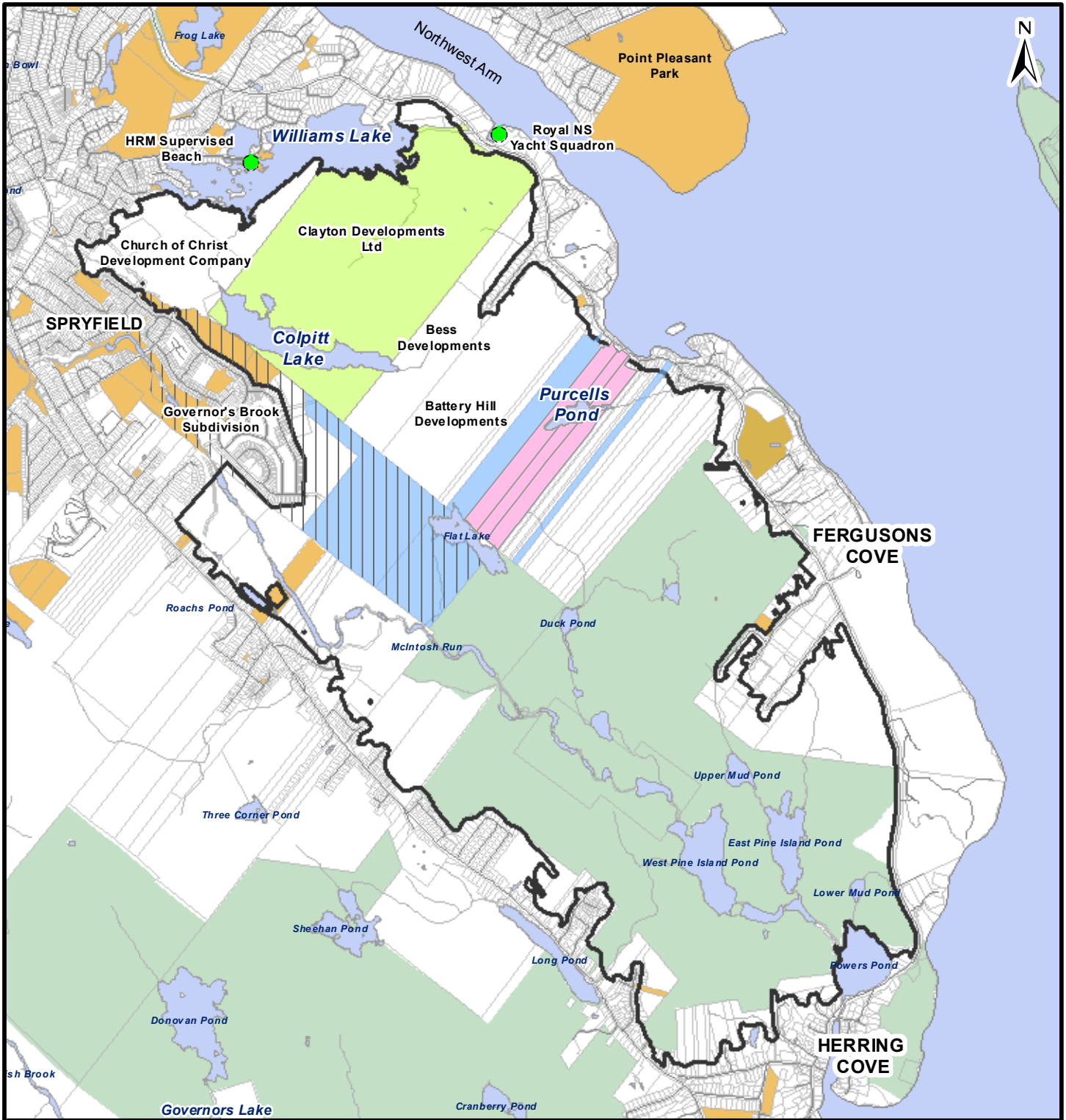
- Alternative 1: Regional Council could choose to decline the Shaw/NCC proposal and consider the lands in the next Regional Plan review process in order to achieve open space connectivity.
- Alternative 2: Regional Council could choose to direct staff to not undertake consultation with the public, Province of Nova Scotia and relevant stakeholders as outlined in this report including consideration of the lands identified in the May 20, 2014 Regional Council motion.
- Alternative 3: Regional Council could choose to direct staff to proceed with the public engagement outlined in the May 20, 2014 motion prior to proceeding with any negotiations on the subject lands.
- Alternative 4: Regional Council could choose to direct staff to initiate the process to consider updates to the Regional Plan and related planning documents to reflect the acquisition(s) and the implications on surrounding lands prior to the next Regional Plan review cycle.
- Alternative 5: Regional Council could choose to direct staff to explore alternate options with Shaw/NCC that achieves conservation of the lands but does not include acquisition by HRM including the involvement of other community and government partners, the use of conservation easements and the transfer of development rights.

ATTACHMENTS

- Map 1 Reference Map
- Attachment A Regional Plan Designations
- Attachment B Nature Conservancy of Canada Proposal
- Attachment C Excerpts from the Canadian Guidebook for the Application of the IUCN Protected Area Categories (Category 2)
- Attachment D Major Open Spaces and Natural Areas
- Attachment E Halifax Urban Report Results

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.










Report Prepared by: Richard Harvey, Manager of Policy and Planning, Parks and Recreation, 902.476.5822
 Holly Richardson, Policy Coordinator, Parks and Recreation, 902.490.6889
 Denise Schofield, Manager of Program Support Services, Parks and Recreation, 902.490-6252



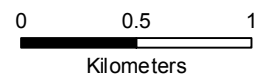
Map 1 - Reference Map

Regional Council Report - Purcell's Cove, Shaw Group / NCC Proposal

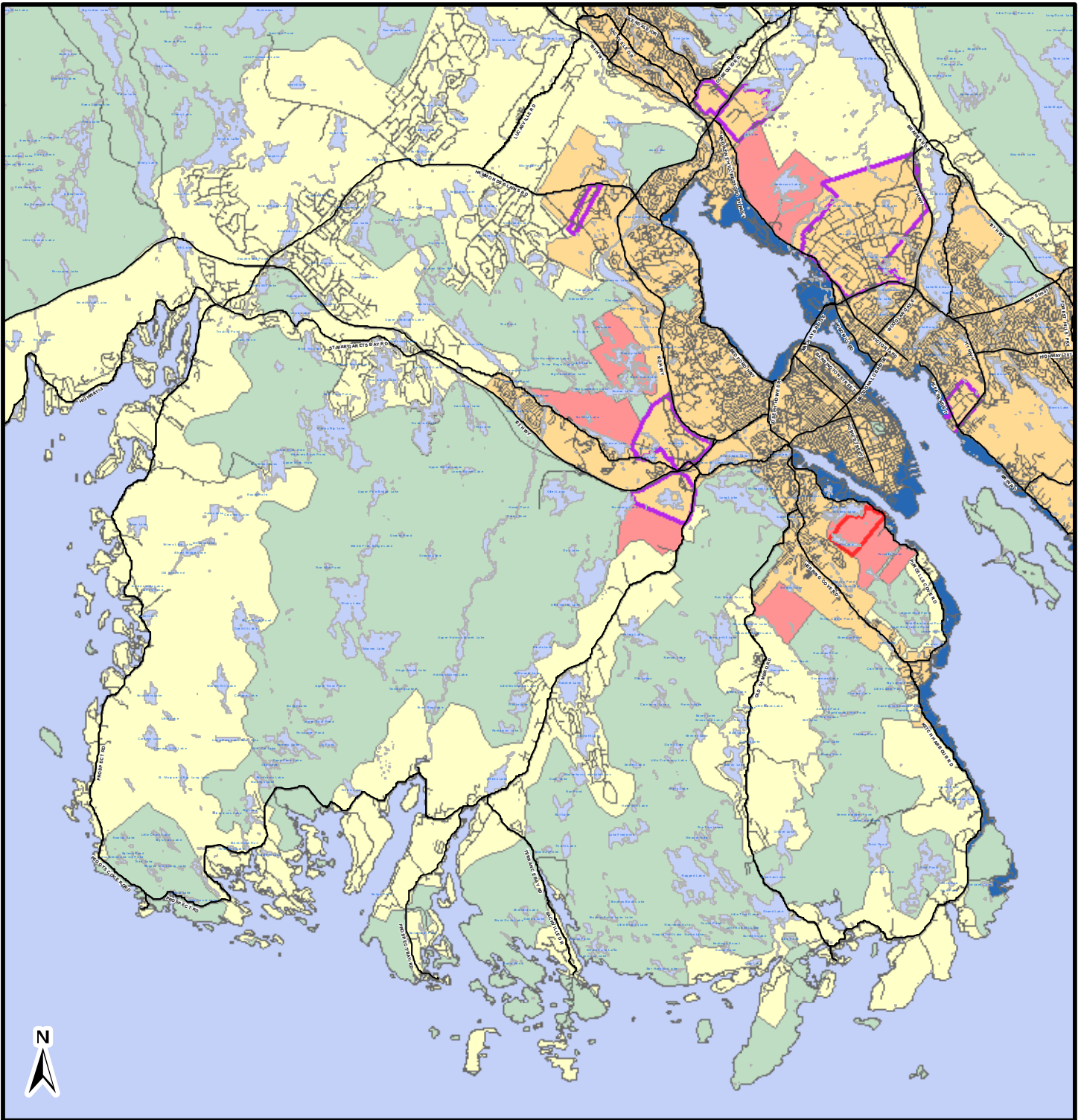
Produced by Parks and Recreation Policy and Planning

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Subject Property |  Purcell's Cove Backlands Area |
|  HRM Lands Zoned Protected Area |  Nova Scotia Nature Trust Lands |
|  HRM Parkland |  Crown Lands |
|  HRM Lands Acquired from Governor's Brook Subdivision |  Streams |
| |  Parcels |

HALIFAX



The accuracy of any representation on this plan is not guaranteed.



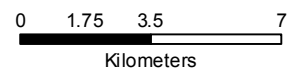
Attachment A - Regional Plan Designations

Regional Council Report - Purcell's Cove, Shaw Group / NCC Proposal

Produced by Parks and Recreation
Policy and Planning

HALIFAX

- Subject Property
- Urban Reserve
- Halifax Harbour
- Industrial Parks
- Open Space and Natural Resource
- Rural Commuter
- Urban Settlement



The accuracy of any representation on this plan is not guaranteed.

Attachment B: Nature Conservancy of Canada Proposal

Why is NCC Interested?

The lands are in good natural condition and contain a diversity of ecosystems – riparian lakeshore and wetlands, aquatic systems and a diversity of forest types as well as granite barrens. The site supports a significant complement of 41 confirmed breeding birds encompassing the breadth of provincial breeding bird groups. Notable breeders include Common Nighthawk (provincially and nationally Threatened), Eastern Bluebird (S3) and Boreal Chickadee (S3). There are historical breeding records (Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas) of an additional 20 species on the property including Rusty Blackbird (provincially Endangered, nationally Species of Special Concern) and Canada Warbler (provincially Endangered, nationally Threatened).

The barrens habitat supports a fire dependent Jack Pine-Broom Crowberry community that is nationally unique to Nova Scotia, globally rare and of high conservation significance. In the northeastern U.S., this community transitions to the fire-dependent Pitch Pine/Broom Crowberry community which is well recognized as of high conservation value. The occurrence of this community type is limited to a relatively small portion of the Atlantic coast (Aspotogan to Canso). This barren habitat covers a significant portion of the property and supports populations of three tracked plant species, the Greenland Stichwort (aka Mountain Sandwort) (S3), Pinebarren Golden Heather (S2) and Lesser Brown Sedge (S2/S3).

Forest/vegetation types on the property include White Pine -Red Pine - Red Oak mixed forest, Red Oak-Red Maple-Witch-hazel hardwood forest and wetland types include a high density of vernal pools, fens, and both treed and shrub swamps.

With today's complex modern society that is drawing more Nova Scotians and Canadians into cities, and the significant public health issues associated with reduced physical activity and time in nature that result from city living - access to natural spaces with intact ecology within close proximity of city dwellers is becoming an potential remedy for a wide variety of physical and mental illnesses. A site like the Williams Lake property provides an opportunity to achieve conservation outcomes while providing for significant potential benefit for the hundreds of thousands of Haligonians who live within a short walk, bike, bus ride or drive of this site.

What is NCC Proposing?

NCC is proposing a partnership to create an Urban Wilderness Park. In order to satisfy funders and internal procedural requirements, the proposed partnership would involve acquisition of 209 acres (80 ha) of the site by NCC. In a separate transaction, the city of Halifax would acquire the additional 180 acres (72 ha) from Shaw. NCC could then grant a 99 year renewable lease to the city over the NCC acquired lands if the City agreed to permanent management agreement to be registered on title.

In order for NCC to be involved, the City must first commit to the definition of a 'protected area' as articulated by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) : "A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values (Dudley, 2008).

Further, the City must agree that a mutually developed management framework would meet the objectives and definition criteria of IUCN Protected Areas Category II (from Dudley, 2008).

Primary objective

- To protect natural biodiversity along with its underlying ecological structure and supporting environmental processes, and to promote education and recreation.³

Other objectives:

- To manage the area in order to perpetuate, in as natural a state as possible, representative examples of physiographic regions, biotic communities, genetic resources and unimpaired natural processes;
- To maintain viable and ecologically functional populations and assemblages of native species at densities sufficient to conserve ecosystem integrity and resilience in the long term;
- To contribute in particular to conservation of wide-ranging species, regional ecological processes and migration routes;
- To manage visitor use for inspirational, educational, cultural and recreational purposes at a level which will not cause significant biological or ecological degradation to the natural resources;
- To take into account the needs of indigenous people and local communities, including subsistence resource use, in so far as these will not adversely affect the primary management objective;
- To contribute to local economies through tourism.

Long Term Management Structure

A joint management agreement would articulate the vision and management structure for the long term care of the site. NCC would require that the City agree to take on all liability associated with the urban wilderness park and as well as responsibility for maintenance and operations. As a non-profit organization, NCC cannot be responsible for day to day maintenance and enforcement related issues, nor for infrastructure maintenance but would contribute to long term management by providing scientific advice and expertise into planning and decision-making, contributing proceeds of a stewardship endowment to monitoring and maintenance and by facilitating educational and interpretive programming on the site. Local organizations (Williams Lake Conservation Company and others members of the 'Backlands Coalition') and volunteers would play a significant role in the management framework as well.

Development Concept

In keeping with the intent of the definition of an IUCN protected area, the site would receive a modest level of infrastructure development. The preliminary concept involves an access road from Purcell's Road, a parking lot, trailhead kiosk, small amount of accessible pathway and interpretive signage. This development would occupy a small portion of the site (i.e. less than 10 acres). The remainder of the site would remain undeveloped, save for rough backcountry trails and very minor associated infrastructure such as foot bridges, wayfinding signage etc. The urban wilderness would support only self-propelled, non-consumptive recreational and nature appreciation activities such as: walking, wheelchair and stroller use, picnicking, photography, hiking, trail running, swimming, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, stand up paddleboarding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, skating, guided interpretive walks, educational programs, birding, botanizing

Attachment C: Category II Protected Areas, IUCN Guidebook

4.3.3 Category II: Protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation

Definition

Natural area of land and/or sea, designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.

Objectives of Management

- To protect natural and scenic areas of national and international significance for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational or tourist purposes;
- To perpetuate, in as natural a state as possible, representative examples of physiographic regions, biotic communities, genetic resources, and species, to provide ecological stability and diversity;
- To manage visitor use for inspirational, educational, cultural and recreational purposes at a level which will maintain the area in a natural or near natural state; and
- To eliminate and thereafter prevent exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation;
- To maintain respect for the ecological, geomorphologic, sacred or aesthetic attributes which warranted designation;
- To take into account the needs of indigenous people, including subsistence resource use, in so far as these will not adversely affect the other objectives of management.

Guidance for Selection

- The area should contain a representative sample of major natural regions, features or scenery, where plant and animal species, habitats and geomorphologic sites are of special spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational, and tourist significance.
- The area should be large enough to contain one or more entire ecosystems not materially altered by current human occupation or exploitation.

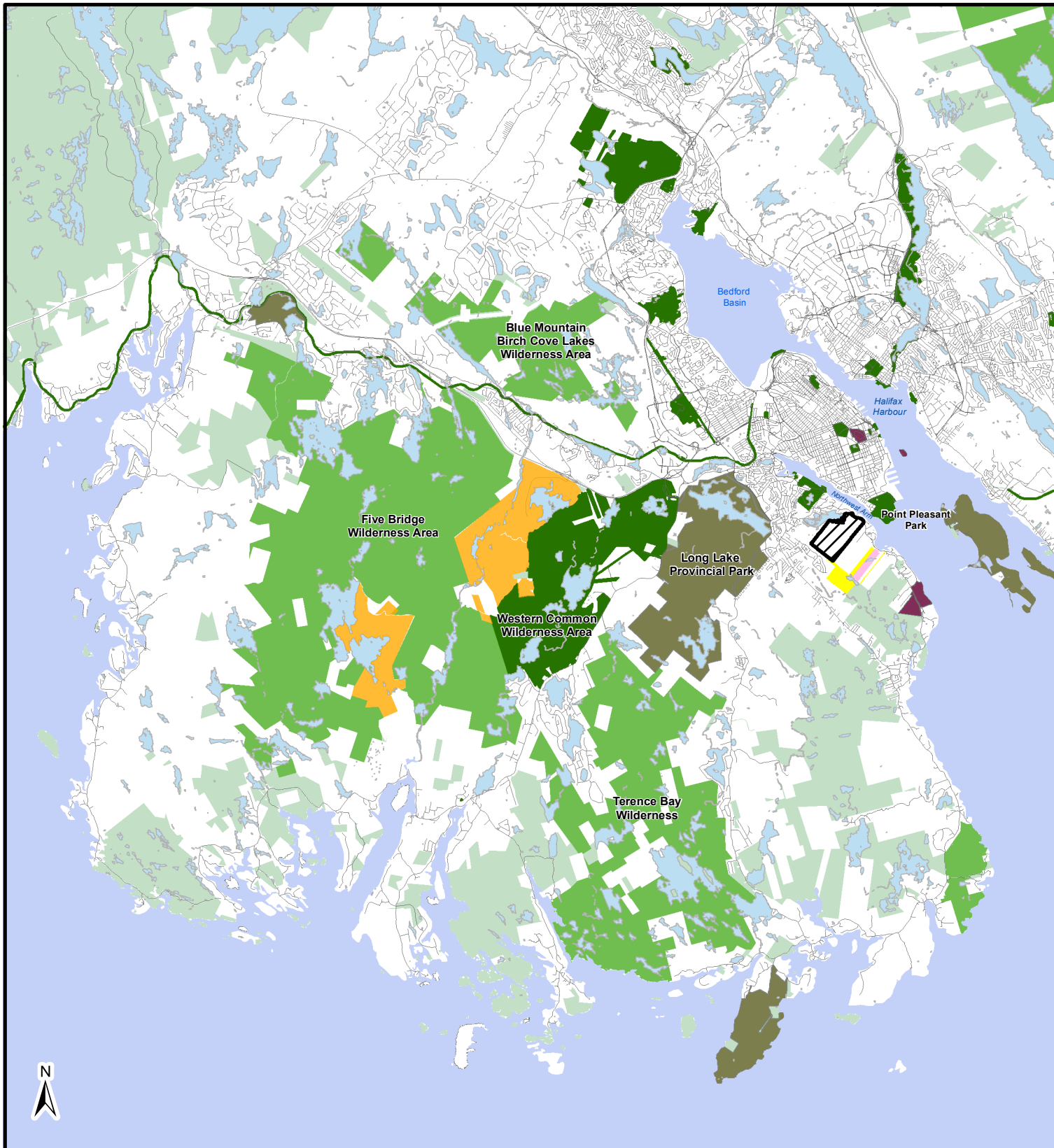
Canadian Interpretation

1. Category II areas should be large enough to represent ecosystems of the region and maintain ecological integrity while allowing for acceptable recreational uses.
2. Maintenance of ecological integrity should be a prerequisite to use.
3. Commercial extraction of any kind⁵ and energy development is not acceptable in Category II. (In some cases, these activities may be grandfathered until pre-existing plans or agreements expire. Historical water control structures that have created modified natural habitats may also be grandfathered.) Any other commercial activity that may alter the habitat or ecological integrity of the protected area, including commercial harvesting at a level or in a manner that may compromise the objectives of management of the protected area, is not acceptable in Category II.

Canadian Examples (see section 6.0 for descriptions)

SK/AB	Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park
QC	Parc National des Pingualuit
AB/NT	Wood Buffalo National Park








⁵ The phrase "commercial extraction" as used here does not include the fishing, hunting or trapping of animals. The phrase "of any kind" avoids specifying the full list of activities. It is important to note that this document provides guidance from a scientific point of view.

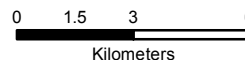


Attachment D - Major Open Spaces and Natural Areas

Regional Council Report - Purcell's Cove, Shaw Group / NCC Proposal

Produced by Parks and Recreation Policy and Planning

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Subject Property |  Large Areas of HRM Open Space |
|  HRM Regional Parks |  Provincial Crown Land |
|  HRM Protected Area |  Nova Scotia Nature Trust |
|  Provincial Protected Areas | |
|  Provincial Park | |
|  Federal Parks | |



The accuracy of any representation on this plan is not guaranteed.

Halifax Urban Report Results

Q3 (August) 2016



Methodology

- ✓ Corporate Research Associates (CRA) was commissioned to include questions on the CRA Halifax Urban Report© survey.
- ✓ Results for third quarter 2016 were collected by telephone between July 26 to August 6, 2016.
- ✓ The survey was completed with a randomly selected representative sample of residents within Halifax Regional Municipality aged 18 years or older. A total of 400 interviews were completed and overall results are accurate to within +/- 4.9 percentage points in 95 out of 100 samples.
- ✓ Final data was weighted by age, region, and gender to ensure data was representative of the population.

Highlights

- **There is widespread support for HRM working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Shaw Group to purchase land off Purcells Cove Road.** This land pictured below, is currently owned by the Shaw Group and encompasses 379 wilderness acres. It runs from Purcells Cove Road to near Herring Cove Road and includes Williams Lake shoreline and Colpitt Lake. The intent is that HRM would buy the land and make it available for future public use, recreation, and programming.



Highlights

- Public support is primarily driven by a perceived **need for more parks and recreation space in the city**, and the belief that **preservation of this land will benefit the environment and preservation of nature**.
- **Among the small number of residents who oppose this agreement, the belief that public money should be spent elsewhere is a primary reason, as is lack of trust.** There is also a belief that HRM purchasing the land will destroy the environment which suggests there is some public confusion in terms of the outcomes of the agreement. Communication regarding the details of the agreement, including the fact the land will be preserved, may further increase or consolidate support.
- Although still a strong majority, support for the **agreement declines slightly when residents are told the Shaw Group may seek to develop the land if an agreement cannot be reached.** This is particularly the case among those living in more rural areas of HRM suggesting that residents would be open to private development of the city core, rather than use public funds for purchase.

Highlights

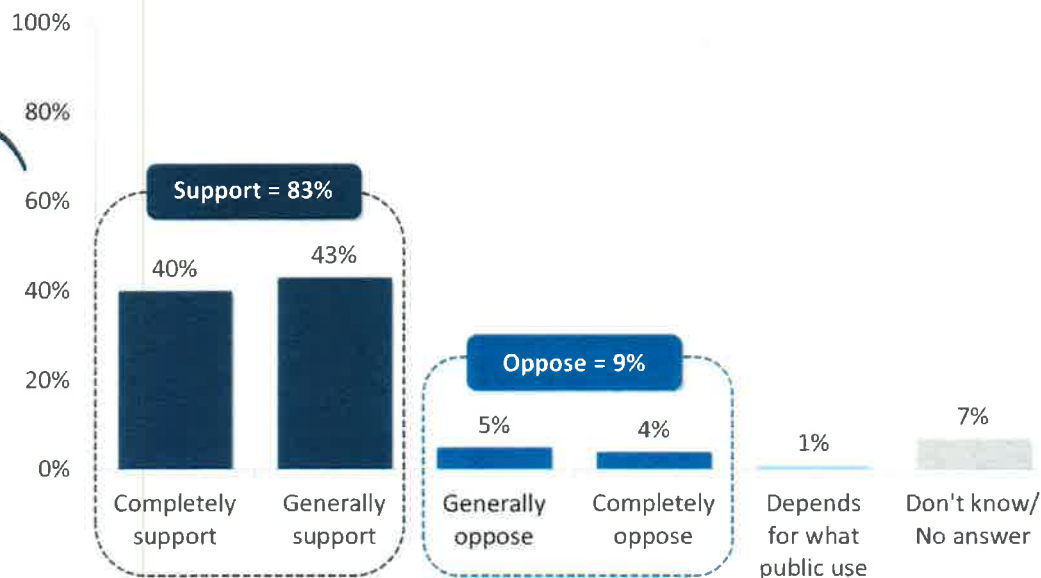
- **Transparency and land preservation are key factors that would augment or enhance the public's support of this agreement. The cost to purchase the land is also a consideration.** This is particularly the case among younger Halifax residents.
- **Finally, a majority of residents believe that the Shaw Group should receive fair market price for the land off Purcells Cove Road.** That being said, a sizable minority (30%) do not agree the Shaw Group should receive fair market value for the sale of this land. As mentioned, communicating the outcomes of the agreement, including details of what will become of the land in the future, will be crucial in swaying public sentiment. The appetite for land preservation and increasing the amount of public land in Halifax is evident and thus an agreement such as this will likely be well-received if communicated effectively.

Results

A large majority of Halifax residents support HRM working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada to purchase land off Purcells Cove Road, land that is currently owned by the Shaw Group.

Opinion of HRM Working with NCC and the Shaw Group to Buy Land Off Purcells Cove Road for Future Public Use

Support is consistent across community and other demographic segments.

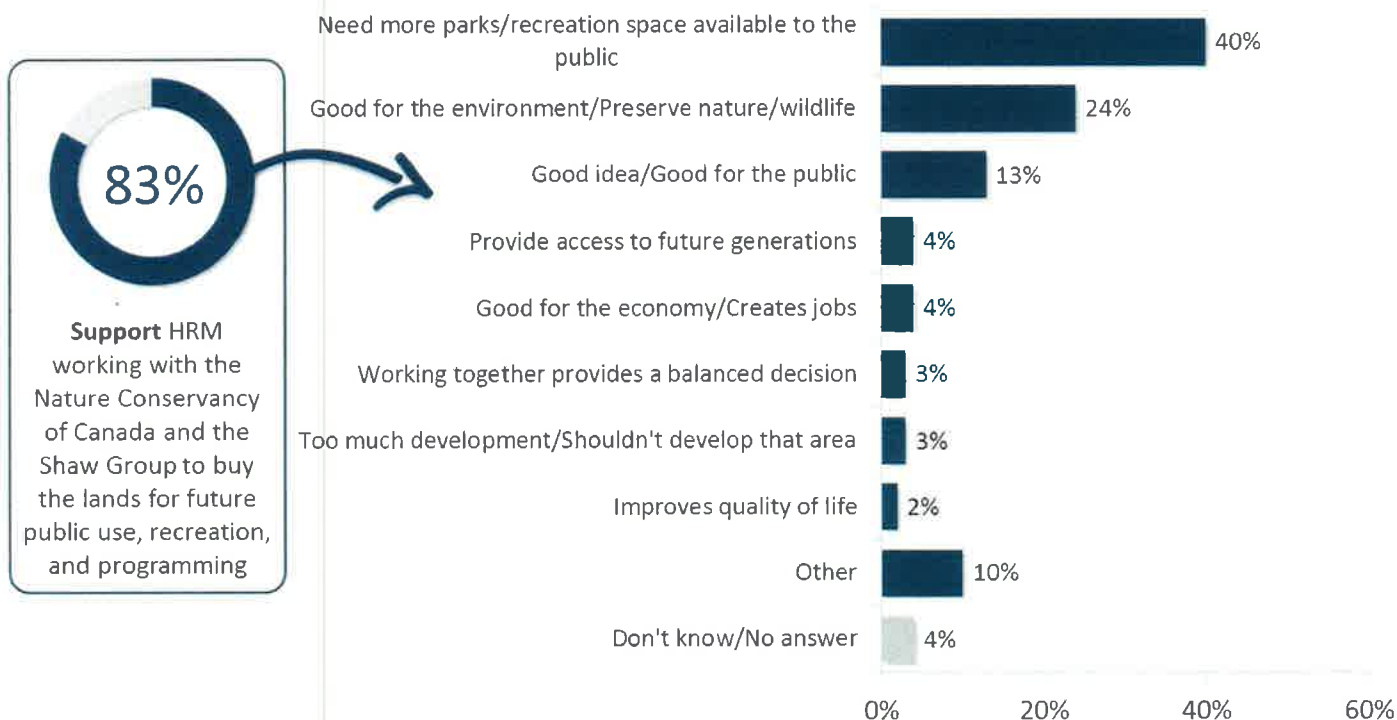


Q.N3: As you may or may not know, 379 wilderness acres off of Purcells Cove Road in a growing area of the city were purchased in 2011 by a developer, the Shaw Group. The land runs from Purcells Cove Road to near Herring Cove Road, and includes Williams Lake shoreline and Colpitt Lake. Currently the developer along with the Nature Conservancy of Canada is discussing with Halifax Regional Municipality, HRM, whereby the Nature Conservancy and HRM would buy the lands to be available for future public use, recreation, and programming. In general, do you completely support, generally support, generally oppose, or completely oppose HRM working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Shaw Group to buy the lands for future public use, recreation, and programming? (n=400)

Halifax residents support HRM working with the NCC and the Shaw Group to purchase the Purcells Cove land primarily because of the perceived need for more parks and recreation space in the region, and the belief that preservation of this land will benefit the environment and preservation of nature.

Reasons for Supporting Purchase of the Lands

Total Unaided Mentions, Among Those Who Support

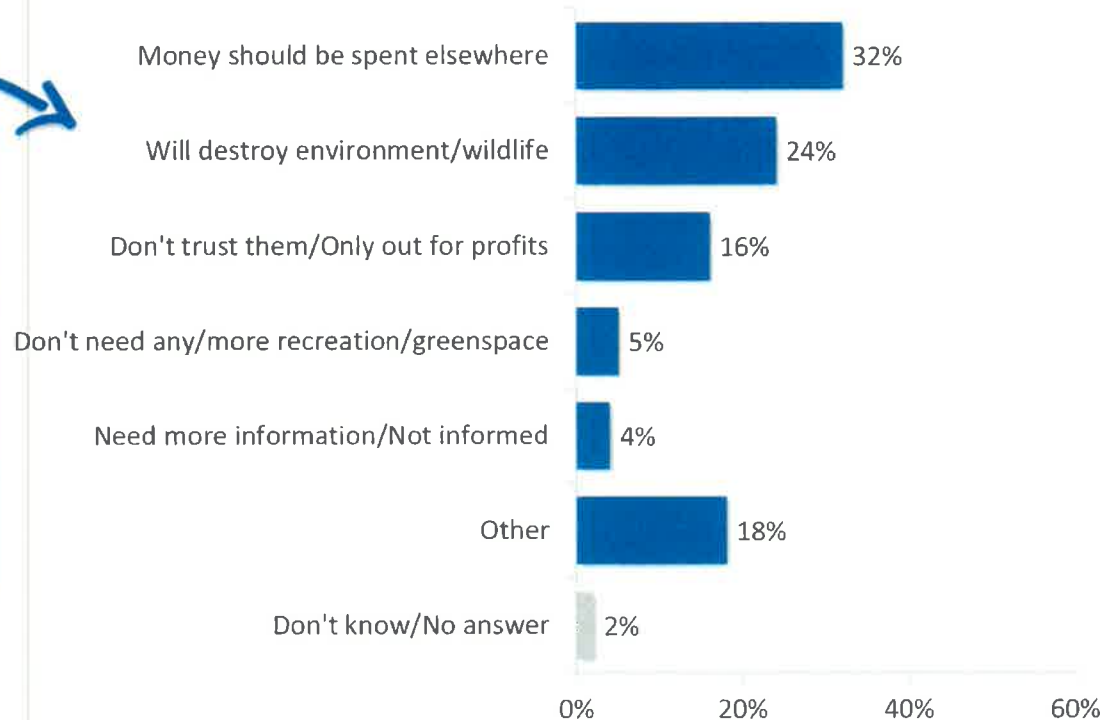


Q.N4: [AMONG THOSE WHO 'SUPPORT' IN Q.N3] What is the single most important reason why you support HRM working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Shaw Group to buy the lands for future public use, recreation, and programming? Anything else? (n=331)

Many in the small public segment that oppose this agreement say that public money should be spent elsewhere. Lack of trust is also evident. There is also a belief that HRM purchasing the land will destroy the environment which suggests there may be public confusion in terms of the outcomes of the agreement.

Reasons for Opposing Purchase of the Lands

Total Unaided Mentions, Among Those Who Oppose

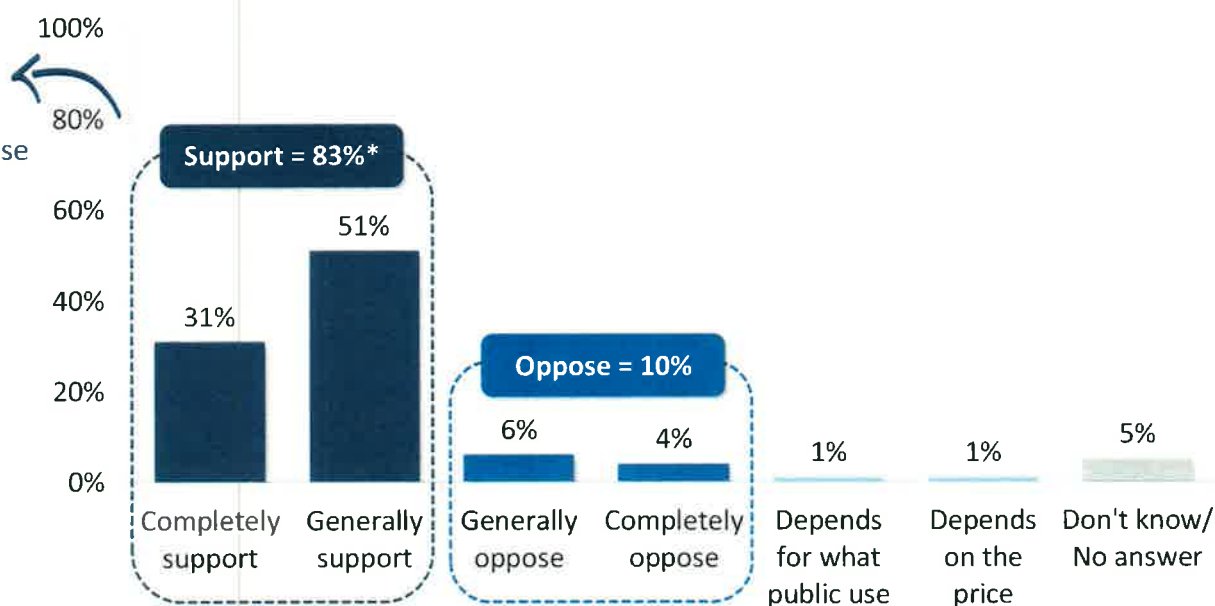


Q.N4: [AMONG THOSE WHO 'OPPOSE' IN Q.N3] What is the single most important reason why you oppose HRM working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Shaw Group to buy the lands for future public use, recreation, and programming? Anything else? n=37*) **Caution: Small sample size.*

A strong majority of Halifax residents continue to support HRM working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada to purchase land off Purcells Cove Road when provided additional arguments both for and against the purchase.

Opinion of HRM Working with NCC and the Shaw Group to Buy the Land for Future Public Use

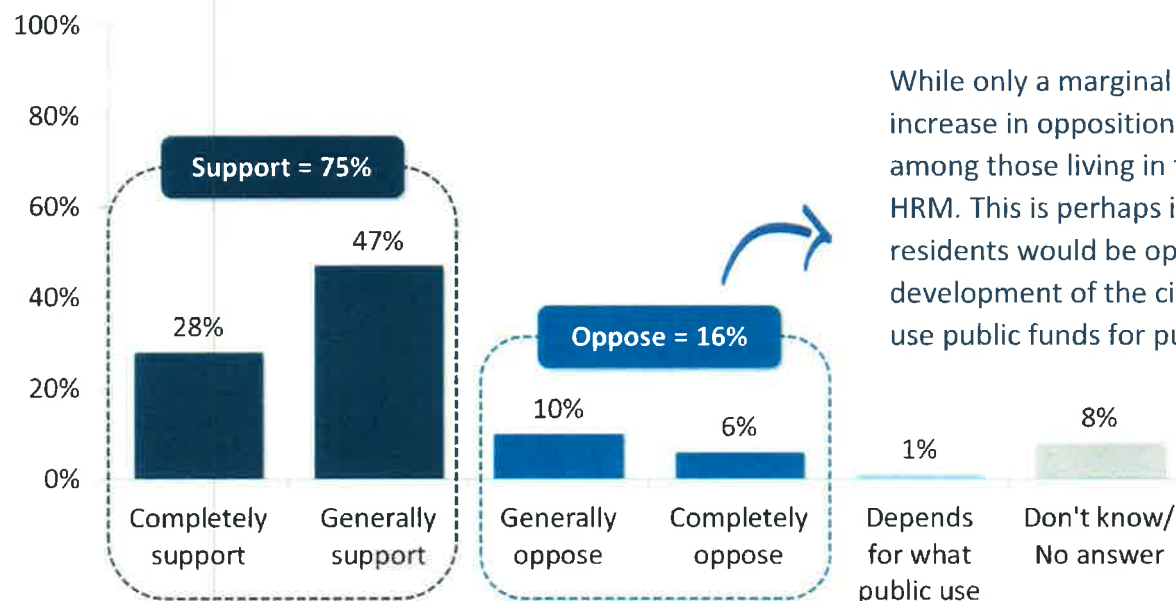
Support is slightly elevated among Halifax residents compared with those outside of Halifax.



Q.N5: On the one hand, some oppose HRM participating in the purchase of urban green space for public ownership from a land developer. On the other hand, some support the current proposal, saying access to green space and urban lakes is a valuable investment for the city. Knowing this, do you completely support, generally support, generally oppose, or completely oppose HRM and the Nature Conservancy of Canada working with the Shaw Group to buy the lands for future public use, recreation, and programming? (n=400) **Due to rounding.*

Although still a strong majority, support for the agreement declines slightly when residents are told the Shaw Group may seek to develop the land if an agreement cannot be reached.

Opinion of HRM and NCC Buying Land for Public Use Rather Than Private Shaw Group Development



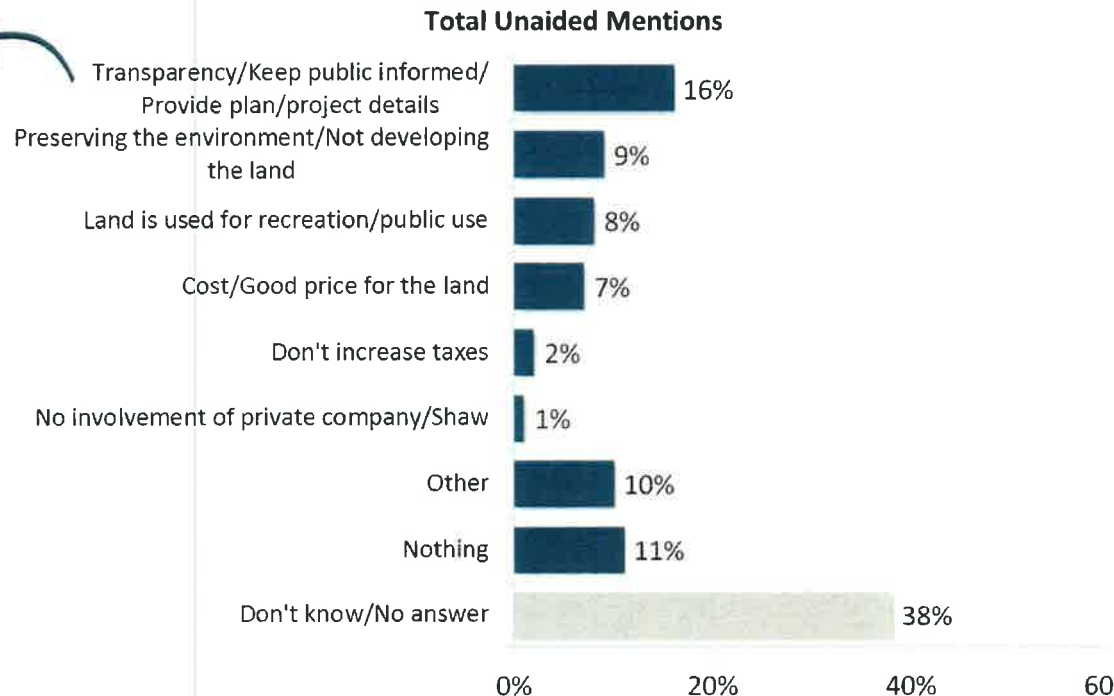
While only a marginal change, the increase in opposition is primarily evident among those living in the outskirts of HRM. This is perhaps indicating that residents would be open to private development of the city core, rather than use public funds for purchase.

Q.N6: The current proposal is for this land off of Purcells Cove Road to be sold to HRM and the Nature Conservancy of Canada for public ownership, recreation, and programming. If an agreement cannot be reached among these groups, the Shaw Group would continue to explore opportunities to develop this land. Knowing this, would you completely support, generally support, generally oppose, or completely oppose HRM and the Nature Conservancy of Canada working with the Shaw Group to buy the lands for future public use, recreation, and programming? (n=400)

Transparency and land preservation are key factors that would augment the public's support of this agreement. The cost to purchase the land is also a consideration.

What Would Increase Support to Buy the Lands for Future Public Use

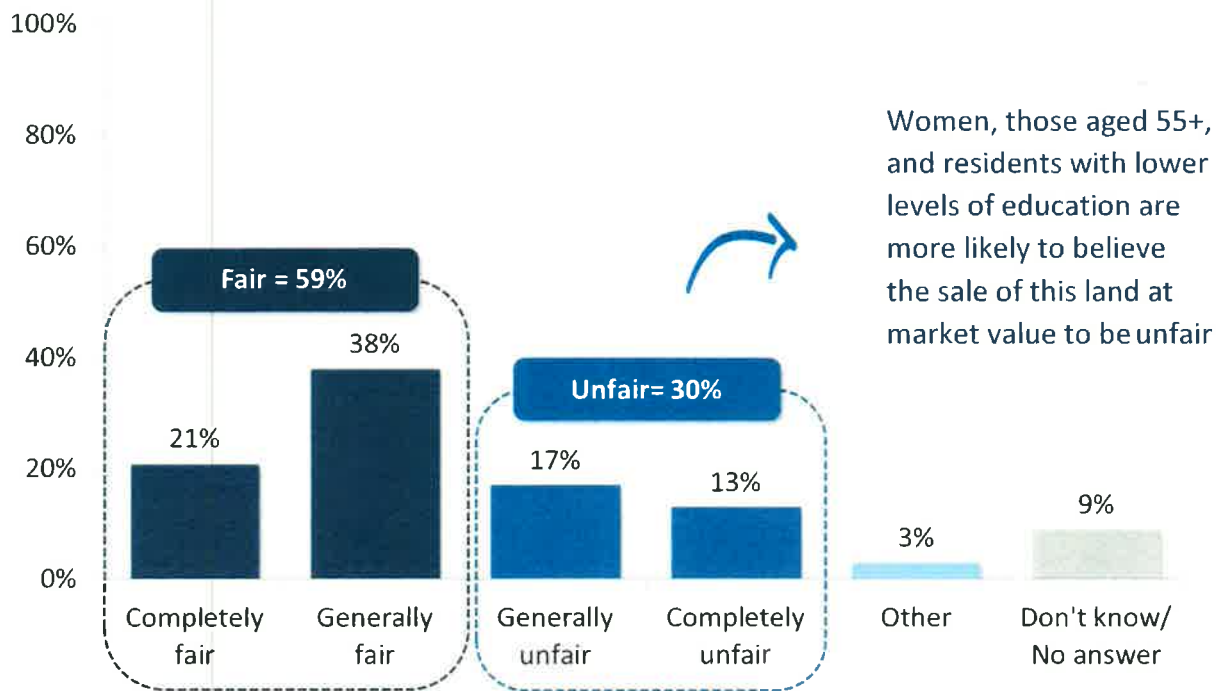
Transparency and being kept informed of project details is particularly important for younger residents



Q.N7: What, if anything, would increase your level of support for HRM and the Nature Conservancy of Canada working with the Shaw Group to buy the lands for future public use, recreation, and programming? Anything else? (n=400)

Six in ten Halifax residents believe that it is fair that the Shaw Group receive market value for the sale of the land off Purcells Cover Road, a figure twice the size of the group who do not believe this is fair. That said, there is a strong minority of residents (30%), that believe this to be unfair.

Opinion of the Developer Receiving Fair Market Value



Q.N2: All things considered, in your opinion is it completely fair, generally fair, generally unfair, or completely unfair for the developer in this case to receive what would be considered market value for the sale of this land, which may be more than the original purchase price? (n=282) *Note: Question added during field.*

**Backlands Coalition (in association with NCC and the Shaw Group)
Open House – August 30, 2016
Survey results**

Urban Wilderness Park Open House Results

Total Surveys Completed: 76

Background:

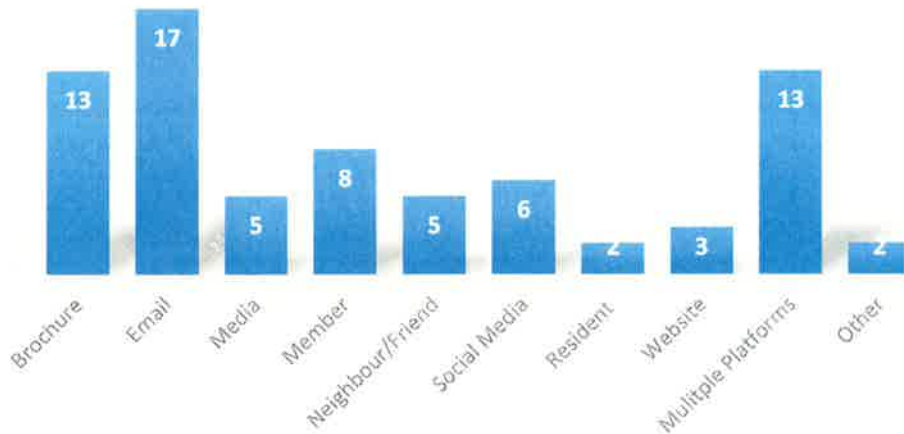
The Backlands Coalition, in association with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Shaw Group held an Information Session / Open House on August 30, 2016. The intent of the evening was to share information about a proposed Urban Wilderness Park on lands currently held privately by Clayton Developments – a subsidiary of the Shaw Group. Attendees were encouraged to become more familiar with the proponents and learn about the proposal before the City of Halifax that would see 379 acres of pristine, centrally located wilderness acquired in public ownership for future use, programming and preservation. Attendees were provided a survey (survey sample appended) at the event to complete voluntarily.

Approximately 130 people were in attendance and of those, 75 people filled out the exit survey. The following is a summary of those responses.



Question 1

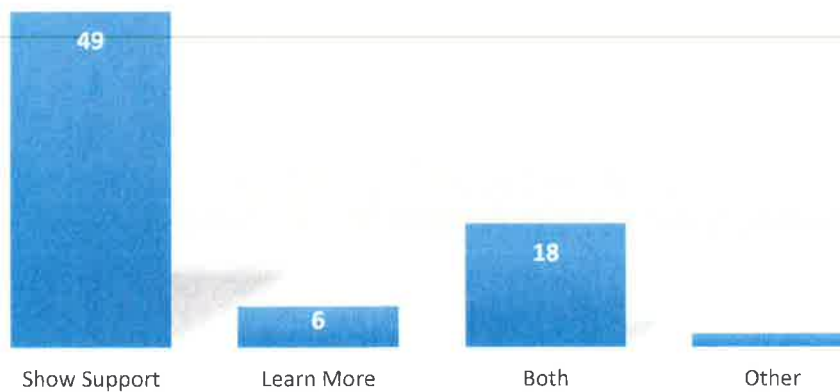
How did you hear about this event?



- Although the various communication platforms were well distributed, the most successful form was email, bringing in 17 percent of those surveyed to the event.
- Outreach was most effective across two main platforms – Email and Brochure. Although difficult to quantify, ‘multiple platforms’ could point to social media as an amplifier of many channels.

Question 2

Primary reason for attending Open House



- Half of the attendees were there to support the proposal.

Backlands Coalition (in association with NCC and the Shaw Group)

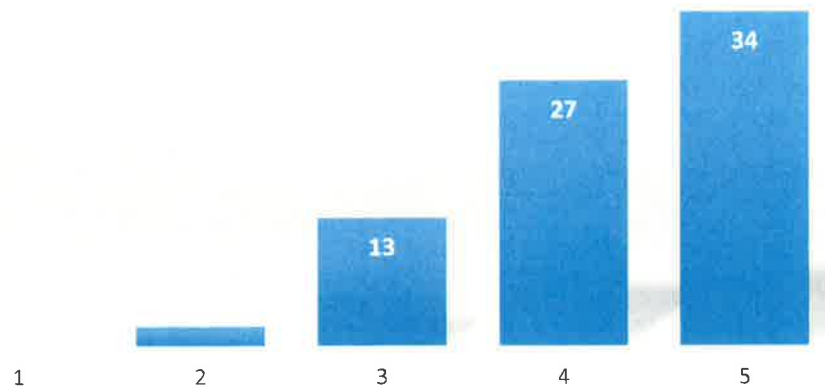
Open House – August 30, 2016

Survey results

- 1/4 of participants answered they attended to show support as well as to learn more about the proposal
- Results suggest that over 2/3 of attendees coming to only show support were well-informed or felt well-informed about the project before attending the open house.

Question 3

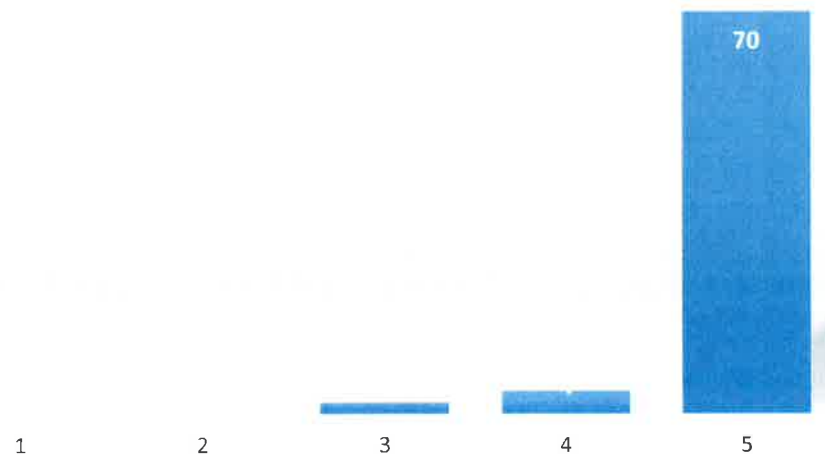
How helpful was the information you received?



- On a scale where 5 is 'very helpful' and 1 is 'not at all helpful', the overall average response for this question was a 4.22/5
- 45% of participants rated the information at 'very helpful' or 5/5.

Question 4

What is your level of support?



Backlands Coalition (in association with NCC and the Shaw Group)

Open House – August 30, 2016

Survey results

- 92% of respondents stated they “completely support” the proposal.
- The average response for this question was 4.89/5 (1 being no support, 5 being completely support).
- When asked about level of support for the proposal),

Question 5: General feedback

When prompted for additional feedback respondents were very supportive and expressed a sense of urgency to ‘get this done’.

Some respondents sought more details regarding what they can be doing to help support the project, as well as more information on next steps and how the process works.

Additional comments worth noting as items of interest were:

- A few questions about price and value of the land
- A call for more Councillor support
- The need to keep residents informed.

Backlands Coalition (in association with NCC and the Shaw Group)

Open House – August 30, 2016

Survey results

SURVEY SAMPLE

Urban Wilderness Park Open House

Hosted by: Backlands Coalition

Aug. 30, 2016

Please take a moment to provide some information and feedback regarding this evening's Open House. All responses are **anonymous** and will assist us with future engagement events.

- 1) How did you hear about this event? (For example: Neighbour; media story; direct invitation; social media; other)

- 2) What was your primary reason for attending the Open House? (For example: Show support; learn more; other)

- 3) How helpful was the information you received? Please indicate by circling a number below.

(Not at all helpful) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very helpful)

- 4) Based on what you know about the project to date including what you learned this evening, what is your level of support?

(Not supportive) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very supportive)

- 5) Please provide any other comments or feedback.

**Backlands Coalition (in association with NCC and the Shaw Group)
Open House – August 30, 2016
Survey results**

**Backlands Coalition in association with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Shaw Group
Open House – August 30, 2016**



**Backlands Coalition (in association with NCC and the Shaw Group)
Open House – August 30, 2016
Survey results**



**Backlands Coalition (in association with NCC and the Shaw Group)
Open House – August 30, 2016
Survey results**



The Urban Wilderness Park: A once in a lifetime opportunity

As of today, there is a once in a lifetime opportunity on the table to create an urban wilderness park in the Purcells Cove Backlands. Thanks to a perfect combination of opportunity, timing, and desire, the potential exists to acquire a truly beautiful part of the world in public ownership for use in perpetuity. But in order to ensure this vision becomes a reality, we must act now. And fast, before the window of opportunity closes.

A large portion of the Purcells Cove Backlands has been highlighted in Halifax's Green Network Plan as one of the top three areas for urban and near-urban protection. The significance of having a private land owner working with the leading national conservation organization along with the active cooperation and support of many community and special interest groups including the Williams Lake Conservation Company and the Backlands Coalition, should not be overlooked. With a little planning, we can make this vision a reality—an opportunity perfect for a vibrant, bold new Halifax.

Halifax is growing quickly. But it needs to grow with intent and vision to stake its claim as a vibrant, healthy, 21st century city. With a projected increase of 33,000 people in the urban core over the next 15 years, the need to secure—and indeed promote—easy access to nature and green spaces is increasingly critical to maintaining and building a high quality standard of life. As famed urban studies theorist Richard Florida asserts, public lands and green spaces are integral to the new knowledge economy in obvious and not-so-obvious ways. As corporate recruiters have discovered, skilled professionals demand outdoor recreational experiences close to home.¹

Park land use – past, present and future

The proposed Urban Wilderness Park lands have long been enjoyed by outdoor enthusiasts through a number of activities, including, but not limited to: hiking, trail running, swimming, fishing, kayaking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, skating, guided interpretive walks, and educational programs. Enthusiasts have accessed these lands for years through unmarked trails and access points along Purcells Cove Road and off of Herring Cove Road. Many have relied on local knowledge or the guidance of others to gain access to enjoy the land.

Together we can, and should, broaden access and share this wild and historic outdoor gem widely with as many citizens of the region as possible. In a rare time of consensus, all interested partners are in agreement—long-time users and owners of these lands are not 'protecting' their selfish interests. These individuals are the ones leading the charge to share the magic by creating an Urban Wilderness Park.

We are duty bound to unlock the potential and immense benefits of this land for a broad and varied visitor mix and use.

¹ <http://www.parksandrecreation.org/2012/May/Richard-Florida/>

Securing a critical connection to the past, present and our future

These lands tell a rich story about our city and how far we've come. The Purcells Cove Backlands are the site of the quarries that provided the source material for Halifax's historic buildings. The lands are also the site of waterways that served to power an industrial corridor that supported a flour mill, a nail mill, a brewery, and other commercial endeavours including an ice house to store ice harvested from Williams Lake to be exported to southern destinations in the US and the Caribbean. These lands are part of the living fabric of our city's history and these are stories that need to be shared.

The Purcells Cover Backlands are an unparalleled outdoor classroom. Nature and wildlife enthusiasts, biologists and geologists marvel at the unique and sensitive ecosystem in this location. In a province that boasts the most post-secondary institutions per capita in the country, we are rich with subject matter experts who can share the ecological values of these lands with bright young minds—from universities and colleges as well as the many high schools in the area. In fact, J.L. Ilsley High School classes are already walking the short distance to learn about the unique ecosystem as well as how to preserve it.

But we need more of this. Whether it's monitoring a jackpine and crowberry plant community that is virtually non-existent anywhere else in North America; studying the threatened Common Nighthawk; or examining exposures of granite in remarkable glacial landforms, this can be a training ground for many of our future thought leaders.

These lands are also an active lifeline for our future. The health benefits opportunity the creation of this Urban Wilderness Park represents for Halifax cannot be overstated. We know many people already access these lands year round to hike, skate, ski, snowshoe, paint, take photos, mountain bike, bird watch, etc. The list is long, but it doesn't tell the whole story. Facilitated, programmed, and promoted access to these lands can further support healthy lifestyles that bring proven physical and mental health benefits. Never has this been more important to Halifax and Nova Scotia as we face an aging population and our provincial health scores are amongst the lowest in the country².

Connecting the dots – Connecting the Vision

The current proposal is structured to put the investment, conservation expertise, and programming capabilities in place to not only welcome visitors to a newly established Urban Wilderness Park, but to *invite* one and all to an inclusive experience.

Despite being less than 5km from central Halifax and currently very easily accessible by foot, bus, bike or car, the proposal outlines a dedicated and maintained access road from Purcells Cove Road and parking lot that can accommodate vehicles of all sizes.

² <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/health.aspx>

In time, visitors may have the opportunity to explore an interpretive centre built on a portion of land that is set aside for that option to be exercised. Among other things, the centre could introduce the historic, ecological, and recreational values, opportunities, and experiences that await visitors beyond a well-marked trailhead kiosk. The centre may also have the capability to host guest talks and lectures or be the starting point for interpretive excursions.

Accessible pathways from the parking area would welcome everyone from the most seasoned mountain biker, to a new parent with a stroller, or someone in a wheelchair. The accessible pathways lead visitors into the initial frontcountry part of the park before the more energetic choose their own adventure and take off for the backcountry rugged experience. Visitors can enjoy a leisurely stroll down to the lake, or explore the pristine wilderness in search of one of the 40+ species of breeding birds in the area—the opportunities for enjoyment are numerous.

Along the way, visitors would encounter modest wayfinding signage to help identify areas, trails or places of significant interest along with interpretive signage where appropriate (i.e. historical site description/jackpine and crowberry plant community and significance, etc.).

In short, the vision is quite simple: Secure this land in public ownership for future use. Make the experience welcoming. Make it easy to access. Make it a destination of choice for many visitors to enjoy.

It's the right thing to do

For all the reasons stated above we fundamentally believe the acquisition of these lands in public ownership for future use is the right thing to do. The preservation of ecological values AND activation of the potential and benefit for Halifax residents is a legacy waiting for the right decision.

We know through recently commissioned public opinion research that a large majority, 83 percent, of citizens across the Municipality support the idea of Halifax working with Nature Conservancy Canada to purchase the lands from the Shaw Group for future public use. The top reasons include the need for more parks and recreation space available to the public now and for generations to come, and that this is not only for public good, but also for the environment and for preserving nature and wildlife.

As clearly stated at the April 26, 2016 Council meeting when The Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Shaw Group presented this concept to Council, the opportunity to act on this is limited.

The time is now.