

HALIFAX

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

Item No. 1

Halifax Regional Council
June 14, 2022

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 24, 2022

SUBJECT: Implementation of the Hubbards Streetscape Project Community Plan

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

January 26, 2021, Regional Council motion (Item No. 12.1):

MOVED by Councillor Lovelace, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee

THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report with respect to funding a portion of the Hubbards Streetscape Project Community Plan.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (HRM Charter) Section 79C (1) - The Council shall adopt a policy that requires the Municipality to disclose to the public a list of recipients of grants made by the Municipality and the amounts of those grants.

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (HRM Charter) Section 79A (2) - The Municipality may expend money provided for in an operating budget or capital budget for a purpose other than that set out in the operating budget or capital budget for that fiscal year if the expenditure does not affect the total of the amounts estimated for the operating budget and the capital budget.

BACKGROUND

The community of Hubbards is partly located within the Municipality of the District of Chester (MoDC), and partly within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The community contains 342 year-round and 165 seasonal dwellings.

The Hubbards Streetscape Project (Attachment #1) is a community lead initiative centered largely on improving conditions for pedestrians through the community. The community group has hired Upland Planning & Design to develop a community plan with goals including:

1. Creation of a streetscape plan for Highway #3.
2. To improve accessibility and safety for pedestrians and cyclists.
3. To set a course for how Hubbards wants to grow and develop.

The community received two grants from outside organizations to fund the bulk of the plan (\$50,000) and had been seeking funds to cover the remainder. Staff have confirmed that District Funds have been set aside to cover the remaining cost of plan development. However, the area Councillor has noted that the intent of the Council motion was to explore funding options for plan implementation (not just plan development), as well as funding options for comprehensive rural community planning in general, which staff discuss in this report.

DISCUSSION

HRM Funding

HRM provides grant funding to a variety of initiatives which align with several HRM policy directions. A scan of HRM community grant programs is contained in Attachment #2. Provided an application was made in accordance with the program's requirements, and was approved, an initiative like the Hubbard's Streetscape Project Community Plan could potentially be funded through:

- Councillor District Funds and/or
- Active Transportation Grants Program (if the plan efforts support AT education and promotion).

However, implementation of a project such as the multi-use path would require integration with the Province and other landowners, which is a complex undertaking. As discussed at Council when the Rural AT program was approved on February 8, 2022, it is HRM's responsibility to build these sidewalks, and funding for them will be brought forward through the application of an area rate to the community, as well as possible cost sharing and cooperation from other orders of government.

Community-based planning is typically carried out by municipal staff for growth (land use planning) and infrastructure (as a basis for capital investment). Plans are carried out following direction from Council-approved policy:

- Community growth plans also known as 'secondary plans' (e.g., Centre Plan) are carried out further to policy direction in HRM's Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS or 'Regional Plan').
- Infrastructure plans are guided by "Priorities" plans such as the *Integrated Mobility Plan* or the *Active Transportation Priorities Plan*, or Facility Masterplans.

In 2006, the Regional Plan was adopted and provided the first comprehensive guide for future growth for the entire municipality following amalgamation. It outlines where, when, and how future growth and development should take place up to 2031. Specific rural community centres were identified for growth, based on a variety of criteria (e.g. Hubbards is identified as a Rural Growth Centre). The Regional Plan is presently under review and will identify additional priorities for secondary planning and is likely to give consideration to the development of a Suburban Plan and a Rural Plan, the latter of which would include rural communities such as Hubbards.

As stated above, one of the aims of the Hubbards Streetscape Project is to identify the needed pedestrian improvements for the community. *The Integrated Mobility Plan* and *Active Transportation Priorities Plan* have both identified gaps in municipal policy and infrastructure in the provision of rural sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure.

Stemming from these plans, an HRM project is now underway reviewing the best way to fill those gaps. This program was approved by Council on February 8, 2022, and will focus on three elements:

- Outlining a prioritization and planning approach for sidewalks and multi-use pathways in rural centres, as well as recommendations on an area rate funding mechanism to help pay for construction and maintenance.
- Identifying options to pursue for longer “spine” connections between rural centres if opportunities for project integration arise or specific direction is provided by Council.
- Continuing support for community-led, multi-use pathway construction, operation, and maintenance in rural areas through the municipality’s Active Transportation Grant Program.

A report to approve the Rural AT Area Rate Administrative Order is expected at Council in fall 2022. A second report to amend the Active Transportation Priorities Plan to include the candidate rural communities and spines will follow shortly thereafter. The multi-use pathway proposed by the community in this master plan is related to the first bullet above and will be reviewed under this new program alongside other similar planning efforts for rural main streets.

At such time that functional planning for active transportation improvements is initiated, streetscaping elements can be integrated into this process to improve placemaking and community vibrancy. Maintenance needs for these elements must also be considered to ensure longevity of any investments.

Community-Based Planning

There is merit in grass roots, community lead initiatives such as the Hubbards Streetscape Project as these activities can inform municipal planning efforts and help align the community towards a singular vision for their community. However, there is also potential for such projects to misalign with municipal initiatives, and cause confusion within communities about how various planning efforts relate to one another and which ones are ‘approved’. Any community-based plan completed for Hubbards could be seen to inform future Secondary Planning for Hubbards or other Rural Growth Centres.

Having a completed community plan, is a worthwhile exercise to facilitate new infrastructure in a community because it implies that residents are engaged, have aligned their vision for the community's future, and are ready to participate in a municipally led planning process. This would allow a community to score higher in the prioritization criteria for the Rural AT Program.

Lastly, Halifax’s Inclusive Economic Strategy for 2022-27 has been endorsed by Council and includes some rural actions, most notably a commitment to create dedicated staff to work on rural economic development and tourism. Such staff resources would be well suited to further support communities in community-led planning.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications at this time.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Staff reached out to the community group to understand the quantity of funding they were seeking from HRM and for what purpose; staff also engaged with the area Councillor.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1	Hubbards Streetscape Project
Attachment #2	Scan of HRM Based Community Funding

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Hanita Koblents, Principal Planner, Transportation Planning, 902.292.2680
Elora Wilkinson, Acting Principal Planner, Transportation Planning, 902.719.5029

From <https://www.onehubbards.org/about-hubbards-streetscape-project>

Our mission is to advocate for, plan, and deliver on a safer community in Hubbards. Our focus is on integrating sidewalks, crosswalks, and/or widening of roadway shoulders so that our friends, family, and vacationers of all ages can enjoy our area as an active living community.

Goals

The committee has identified four necessary pillars supporting the safety, security, health, and well-being of community residents:

1. The re-designation of the provincial highway through Hubbards as a Main Street.
2. The creation of pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks within the community of Hubbards.
3. A community design that encourages active living, for the mental and physical health of all residents, and to connect local businesses with community members.
4. Street beautification to unlock Hubbards' potential as a tourist destination and to foster economic growth.

Hubbards Community Plan

Upland Planning + Design is working with the Hubbards Streetscape Committee on a Community Plan. Our Community Engagement pages are a place for Hubbards residents and stakeholders to learn more about the plan and progress.



WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PLAN?

Community plans are policy documents that help shape the growth and development of a place. They provide guidance on a variety of different topics, like land use, urban design, transportation and public spaces, to name a few.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE PROJECT?

Some of the top goals for the project are to create a streetscape plan for the main road through the community (Highway 3) to improve accessibility and safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and to set a course for how Hubbards wants to grow and develop.

WHAT DOES A STREETScape PROJECT LOOK LIKE?

A streetscape is made up of the natural and built features of a roadway - think of it as the landscape along the street. It affects the way we feel when using the street and impacts the behaviours of everyone using it. Streetscaping projects aim to improve the look, feel and user experience of a given street for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists alike.

Attachment #2

Scan of HRM Based Community Funding

Active Transportation and Recreational Trails Grants Program

[Grants](#) support the work of community associations who play a significant role in operating and maintaining recreational and active transportation trails to support healthy living and recreation. Grants are also available to support AT education and promotion.

Rural Transit Funding Program

This [program](#) allows rural transit operators to apply for funding to subsidize the cost of operating their service in the municipality.

Culture & Events Grants

These [programs](#) are intended to support events that foster good community relations, supports culture, develops the local economy and tourism industry, and enriches the quality of life of all residents and visitors.

Tax Relief for Non-Profit Organizations

This [program](#) helps some non-profit organizations reduce their property tax payments

Community Museums Grants Program

The purpose of this [program](#) is to provide interim financial assistance to eligible community museums located within the geographic boundary of the Halifax Regional Municipality to support core museum operations and build organizational capacity.

Heritage Property Grants

The [Heritage Incentives Program](#) provides matching grants of up to \$15,000 for residential properties and \$25,000 for commercial properties to complete exterior conservation work on a heritage property.

District Funds

[District Funds](#) enable each Councillor to provide financial support to non-profit organizations in the community through discretionary grants

Business Improvement District Grants

This [program](#) provides grants to eligible districts located within the geographic boundary of the Municipality. It aims to promote and improve the economic vitality and attractiveness of the district; and leverages private sector, philanthropic, or government investment, to contribute to revitalization and growth of the district.