



## **Vision and Action Strategy**

Community Visioning is a public engagement process adopted by the HRM Regional Council as a way to implement the HRM Regional Plan at the community level. The goal of community visioning is to build consensus among residents and community stakeholders on what the community should look like, feel like and be like 5, 10 and 25 years into the future. Community Visioning engages residents in an open dialogue, builds on the community's strengths and forges support for collective action.

In September 2008, a Penhorn/Woodlawn Community Liaison Group was formed to lead a community engagement process to develop a Vision and Action Plan. As a result of a six-month consultation process the following vision was developed:

The Penhorn/Woodlawn community is composed of several **unique neighbourhoods** connected by a shared history, lakes, parks, streets, local community institutions and commercial areas.

Residents act as stewards of the **natural assets** of the area which are conserved, expanded and enhanced. Parks, lakes, wetlands, trails and forested areas are well-maintained and used for a wide range of community activities.

Penhorn/Woodlawn is a community where residents enjoy access to sustainable, efficient, accessible and safe **transportation options**. Pedestrians, cyclists, baby strollers and wheelchairs can move with ease through and between the communities of Penhorn and Woodlawn.

**Balanced development** provides a pleasant range of residential and commercial uses along with public gathering places. The vibrant commercial centre is built to **human scale** and caters to the daily needs of local residents.

Residents take pride in the **safe, stable, affordable and beautiful neighbourhoods** in which they live. Investment in both new and existing neighbourhoods inspires delight and assures **quality of life and housing options** for all life stages.

Penhorn/Woodlawn is a community built on its **people**. It is a place where neighbours know one another. Community buildings, public art and public spaces exhibit **pride, a sense of place, history and belonging**. Community activities for families, children, youth, seniors and newcomers provide opportunities to connect and celebrate. It is a community that "stands out from the crowd".

## **Background**

The Penhorn/Woodlawn area is designated under the Regional Plan as an Urban Local Centre<sup>1</sup>. The area is somewhat unique in that it includes portions of four municipal districts; District 5, Dartmouth Centre; District 6, East Dartmouth - The Lakes; District 7, Portland - East Woodlawn; and District 8, Woodside - Eastern Passage, and generally encompasses neighbourhoods within 1.5 km walking radius from the Penhorn Transit Terminal (see Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 Vision Boundary Map with the location of CLG members' area of residence.

From the area's hub at the Penhorn Transit Terminal, the spokes of interest extend south to Gaston Road, west to the shores of Maynard Lake, north to the MicMac Parclo and to the eastern extent of Woodlawn Road.

Familiar neighbourhood names include Woodlawn, Penhorn, Manor Park, Commodore Park, Russell Lake West, Graham's Corner, Southdale, Evergreen Village and the Lakefront Apartments. Major commercial activities include retail outlets located in the Penhorn Mall, Staples Plaza Woodlawn, Canada Trust Square, Evergreen Place and merchants on Portland Street, Woodlawn Road and Baker Drive. Several automobile dealerships are located in the area, as well as restaurants, personal service facilities and health providers.

The area is defined by its four lakes: Penhorn, Maynard, Oathill and the northern tip of Russell Lake. Residents enjoy access to a number of parks, educational institutions and churches. The area is well served by transit and provides a wide range of housing options. All areas are fully serviced with municipal sewer, water and emergency response services. Emergency and comprehensive medical care is available at the nearby Dartmouth General Hospital.

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<sup>1</sup> Urban Local Centre Designation calls for mix of medium to high density residential, commercial, institutional and recreational uses and in established neighbourhoods low to medium density residential uses. It also calls for all day transit to connect to other centres and the Regional Centre. It may include shared parking structures or park and ride for transit and commercial uses (RMPS, p. 51).

In addition to the amenities offered, there is room for improvement in this rapidly changing Visioning District. Demographic changes coupled with retail outlets relocating from the Penhorn Mall and Staples Woodlawn Plaza, provide an opportunity to re-imagine this Dartmouth community and position it for a pedestrian friendly and sustainable future.

## **The Visioning Process**

The Penhorn/Woodlawn Community Liaison Group (CLG) was established with membership drawn from residents of the various neighbourhoods that make up the visioning area.

The CLG hosted public forums to collect residents' memories of the past, descriptions of the present and hopes for the future. A positive framework was adopted for the process which would honour the past and build on existing assets for the benefit of future generations. The community was then surveyed to determine the relative importance of the many items of interest and/or concern. Four community workshops delved more deeply into the themes of Natural Environment and Parks, Transportation, Residential and Commercial Needs, and Public Spaces and Programs with attendance from area residents, municipal staff and other stakeholders. In addition to consulting with the community, the CLG maintained frequent contact with the elected officials and the current owners of Penhorn Mall. The Vision statement that follows was built on input and information collected through this community engagement process.

## **The Natural Environment**

### **The Way We Were...**

In years gone by, Penhorn, Oathill, Maynard and Russell Lakes were used for recreation and leisure by the area's residents. In the latter part of the 19th century, Glendenning, long before piped water was available, developed a method to transport blocks of ice from Maynard Lake across Portland Street to supply Nova Scotia Hospital—and the houses close by—with fresh drinking water.

Area residents recall using these lakes for a variety of leisure activities, but in recent years swimming has become a health risk. In 2003, Kenneth Manual, an area resident, wrote a letter to the Daily News stating that swimming was off limits at Maynard Lake because the lake was dirty. The irony of this, according to Mr. Manual, was that the lake was off limits to him as a child because it was too clean. Mr. Manual expressed concern about the runoff road salt would have on the water quality not only in Maynard, but also of Oathill and Penhorn lakes. In the same year an HRM sub-committee was set up to carry out possible restoration so that the Maynard Lake's beach could be once again be used by area residents and to carry out several educational programs for public stewardship; unfortunately however, the committee was disbanded.

## **The Way We Are...**

The community is defined by its lakes, wetlands, forested areas and numerous parks.

### Lakes

The lakes are used for a range of recreational uses, including fishing and swimming but recent developments have impacted the health of the lakes, particularly Russell Lake. Encroachments on the vegetation buffer by lakeshore property owners have also been documented. In 2004, Maynard Lake had low e-coli counts but these counts may not be sustainable unless citizens do their part in not feeding the ducks. As recently as June 2008, Penhorn Lake was closed due to elevated e-coli bacteria counts; it is worth noting that an HRM By-law has recently been approved making it illegal to feed the ducks at any of HRM's lakes. The Dartmouth Lakes Advisory Committee advises the Halifax Regional Municipality through the Harbour East Community Council on all matters relating to the lakes, natural waterways and their watersheds in the Dartmouth area with the exception of lands within the Lake Major Watershed.

### Wetlands

Wetlands are considered to be some of the most productive ecosystems in the world because they provide a rich natural habitat for wildlife, are home to many endangered plants and filter out pollutants that enter our lakes and watercourses. Wetlands can also reduce erosion and control flooding by retaining water and regulating water flow. It is estimated that 17 per cent of Nova Scotia's fresh water wetlands and 62 per cent of the salt water wetlands have disappeared since European settlement. The Nova Scotia **Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act** aims to establish a policy to prevent net loss of wetlands by 2009<sup>2</sup>.

The Vision area includes two significant wetlands: Eisner Cove wetland (which is bisected by Highway 111), and another on the north side of Russell Lake. Home to a number of white tailed deer, fox, sharp-shinned hawks and other wildlife, the wetlands, although already impacted by surrounding development, are seen as valuable ecological assets to the community that should be protected. An elevated boardwalk in the wetlands, particularly Eisner Cove wetland behind Woodside Industrial Park, could improve community access to these areas while protecting the fragile wetland habitat.

### Parks & Recreation

Municipal recreation facilities include a soccer pitch, basketball and tennis courts at Brownlow Park, supervised summer water activities at Penhorn Lake Beach, tennis courts at Morash Park, softball diamonds behind Staples Woodlawn Plaza, several playgrounds throughout the area and

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<sup>2</sup> Nova Scotia Dept. of Environment and Labour. Water for Life. Towards a water management strategy for Nova Scotia. Accessed June 2009. <http://www.gov.ns.ca/nse/water/docs/WaterStrategy.pdf>

year round recreational fishing in three neighbourhood lakes. There are some parks, notably in the Gaston Road area that would serve the community better with improved public access, better maintenance and more defined play space for children. An audit conducted by community members with assistance from HRM staff of some of the key parks and green areas in the vision district could identify specific opportunities for improving these important community assets.

### **The Way We Wish To Be...**

**The Penhorn & Woodlawn community is one where residents act as stewards of the natural assets of the area which are conserved, expanded and enhanced. Parks, lakes, wetlands, trails and forested areas are well-maintained and used for a wide range of community activities.**

#### **Vision Actions:**

- ◆ Enact an educational program and stricter rules by HRM and the Province of Nova Scotia banning the sale and use of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides to reclaim and protect water quality of the lakes
- ◆ Work through the Dartmouth Lakes Advisory Board to address possible sources of sewage in-flow and other development impacts into the three lakes, as the health of our lakes continues to be a concern for residents
- ◆ Improve the quality and connectivity of walking trails around the lakes, including improved lighting and seating. These improvements would enable residents to continue to utilize the lakes for swimming, fishing, skating and walking
- ◆ Improve access for non-motorized watercraft to the lakes, including accessible parking spaces
- ◆ Protect public access and enforce vegetative buffers around all lakes in the Visioning District
- ◆ Develop a barrier-free boardwalk through the Eisner Cove wetland in appropriate location to allow local residents and school children access to the acres of wilderness safely, without disturbing the sensitive flora and fauna
- ◆ Conduct a community audit with assistance from HRM staff of some of the key parks and green areas in the vision district to identify specific opportunities for linking and improving these important community assets
- ◆ Regularly maintain parks, trails and park equipment to ensure public enjoyment

- ◆ Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles are applied in each of HRM's parks, and around lakes, with improved maintenance of overgrown trees and bushes
- ◆ Develop a local interpretive centre to celebrate local history, ecology and provide opportunities for environmental and outdoor experiential education
- ◆ Explore opportunities for an "outdoor gym" in the area
- ◆ Develop community partnerships with local organizations, such as Clean Nova Scotia, local scout troops and neighbourhood associations, to participate in yearly clean-ups of the lakes
- ◆ Develop partnership with HRM Recreation to assist the community in bringing the fun back in recreating in our lakes.

## **Transportation**

### **The Way We Were...**

The former City of Dartmouth did not have a well-developed public transit system with service provided to a small portion of the city. The service was provided under the corporate banner of Bell Buses Limited until 1957, succeeded by Dartmouth Transit Service Buses Limited who in turn were acquired by the City of Dartmouth in 1978. In 1981 this service became a regional responsibility which is currently provided by Metro Transit. At that time, harbour ferry service was linked to ground transport as a component of the municipal public transportation system.

Before it was cut in two by the Circumferential Highway in mid-1960s, Penhorn Drive ran from Portland Street in the south, past Penhorn School, a soft ice cream stand, a miniature golf course and Penhorn Lake on its way to Prince Albert Road and Graham's Grove. This roadway provided barrier free access to Penhorn Lake for mothers with children in strollers, wheelchair bound residents, seniors with disabilities, cyclists and youngsters, who wished to make use of the natural recreational facility provided by this neighbourhood lake. Along with a supervised swimming area, the playground and trout fishing served as an added attraction. Lakes Banook and Micmac enticed residents to their shores where boaters and swimmers frolicked in the summer sun and skaters performed twizzles on the frozen winter surface. Natural recreation facilities were conveniently available to children unable to drive and adults who chose to leave cars at home.

### **The Way We Are...**

#### **Traffic**

The visioning area is served by a roadway system that provides access to major highways, cross harbour bridges and ferries. At the same time traffic has posed challenges to residents in the

Portland valley for the last half century. The MicMac Parclo (partial cloverleaf) cleared the lakeside bottleneck, and the Highway 111 Portland Street overpass got rid of the traffic lights. Twinning the Circumferential Highway (Highway 111) got traffic flowing smoothly and it continues to do so. Once off the highway and onto Portland Street the picture changes dramatically. Development of neighbouring communities provides an ever increasing number of vehicles to a street that cannot be widened any further. Worst at the morning and afternoon rush hours, there is seldom a lull in the round the clock flow of traffic through the Portland Valley.

As part of the development of Russell Lake West, an alternate traffic route to Highway 111 is anticipated at the Mount Hope Avenue interchange. When this connection to Portland Estates, Portland Hills and Caldwell Road is opened it is likely that the congestion on Portland Street will be eased. Residents have accepted that this is a major thoroughfare, yet the intersection of the street with the highway poses serious difficulty for pedestrians and cyclists alike. Traffic lights, turning restrictions, speed limits and crosswalks were also identified as concerns during public consultations.

### Public Transit

Public Transit is readily available to residents of the visioning district with no less than 10 routes converging on the Penhorn Transit terminal, including the MetroLink to downtown Halifax. In addition to those, other routes wend their way through the district enroute to MicMac Mall and beyond by way of the Tacoma Drive Terminal. Low floor service is available along with Access-A-Bus and the recently introduced Need-A-Lift on demand transit service. Cross harbour ferry service has expanded over the years with the Woodside park and cruise facility augmenting the Alderney Landing terminal. Both ferry terminals are linked to the vision district by way of direct transit services.

A public transit park and ride facility within the Penhorn / Woodlawn vision district is however viewed as being in conflict with efforts to reduce traffic congestion in the Portland Valley corridor. By maintaining and/or expanding the existing no fee parking lot adjacent to the Penhorn transit terminal motorists are being encouraged to park for personal convenience only. In no way, does this facility reduce traffic congestion or cut down on carbon emissions. Therefore, it is recommended that existing park and ride facilities associated with the Penhorn transit terminal be abandoned as its replacement takes shape, and consideration be given to bike parking instead.

### Pedestrian & Active Transportation

While the area is well served by transit, movement for pedestrians and those using alternative modes of transportation is more challenging. The pedestrian path to lake access was lost to Woodlawn residents as the Circumferential Highway split the community in two. Neither the Oakwood Drive pedestrian highway overpass, nor the Portland Street/Highway 111 interchange has returned barrier free access to these community recreational resources. The cross-section of

Portland Street and Highway 111 provides significant challenges for pedestrian traffic, including a lack of continuous sidewalk in this urban centre.

The stairway of the overpass renders it unusable by anyone other than able-bodied pedestrians. Even for those who are able to climb the stairs, dissatisfaction with the location remains. The overpass is located on the fringe of the residential district, serving more as a route to and from Tacoma Drive commercial outlets than as a convenient way for residents to get to the lakes. The chain link fencing at the point where the former Penhorn Drive led to Penhorn Lake is frequently cut. Residents challenge heavy highway traffic to get to their favourite fishing and swimming hole. Repeated repairs to the fence are offset by repeated cuts by residents whose plea for a safer crossing remain ignored. HRM's active transportation routes skirt the Penhorn and Woodlawn neighbourhoods denying non-motorized access to the many trail systems on the East-side of Halifax Harbour.

Within the neighbourhoods, barriers prevent passage of persons with disabilities, cyclists, baby strollers and other non-motorized forms of transportation. These barriers are not readily recognizable by pedestrians without physical limitations, but are clearly evident to those with the most minor disabilities. A chain blocking a pathway into a park is not a problem to many but it forms an insurmountable barrier to a mother pushing a baby stroller. Pathways buried in a winter's worth of ice and snow cannot be used because of the lack of winter maintenance of municipal walkways. These and other barriers should not be allowed to remain in a caring and inclusive neighbourhood such as Penhorn/Woodlawn. Improving non-motorized access in the Penhorn/Woodlawn Visioning District is the highest priority of the Transportation section with immediate, no or low cost, action required for some and long term, budgeted, corrections for others.

### **The Way We Wish to Be...**

**Penhorn/Woodlawn is a community where residents enjoy access to sustainable, efficient, accessible and safe transportation options. Pedestrians, cyclists, baby strollers and wheelchairs can move with ease through and between the communities of Penhorn and Woodlawn.**

#### **Vision Actions:**

- ◆ To correct access problems created by building a limited access highway through the heart of a residential community, HRM and the province of Nova Scotia work to address the following barriers to non-motorized traffic across and within the vicinity of Highway 111:
- ◆ Improve pedestrian crossing at Portland Street & Highway 111
- ◆ Complete the sidewalk on the south side of Portland Street, and when the opportunity arises, widen existing sidewalks



- ◆ Provide for a barrier free crossing of Highway 111 in the vicinity of the former and current Penhorn Drives, and link to existing active transportation corridors
- ◆ Re-design the existing elevated pedestrian crossing to allow for barrier-free access
- ◆ Provide for a barrier-free crossing of Highway 111 in the vicinity of Gaston Road and link to existing active transportation corridors
- ◆ Improve pedestrian crossing at Oakwood Drive, Evergreen Village and Woodlawn Plaza to Eisener Boulevard
- ◆ Implement the recommended on and off active transportation routes as envisioned by the HRM Active Transportation Plan, particularly those linked to Metro Transit services, including ferry terminals
- ◆ Existing park and ride facilities associated with the Penhorn Transit Terminal be abandoned to encourage transit use and reduce traffic on Portland Street
- ◆ Work with cycling groups, seniors advocates and others who support pedestrians with disabilities, to identify improvements to neighbourhood walking and cycling route trail links
- ◆ Improve local public transit connections
- ◆ Improve bus shelters by adding art and electronic schedule displays
- ◆ Upgrade the Penhorn Transit Terminal to a modern climate controlled facility
- ◆ Reduce traffic congestion on Portland Street by considering reversing lanes
- ◆ Completion of the Mount Hope Avenue and Highway 111 full-diamond interchange to divert traffic from Portland Street
- ◆ Provide dual lane access ramps on Portland Street and Highway 111 interchange
- ◆ Reduce residential speed limits to 40 km/hr
- ◆ Improve snow and ice removal service.

## **Commercial Development**

### **The Way We Were...**

During the 1970s, two malls-Woodlawn and Penhorn-were built at the eastern and western intersection of Highway 7 and Highway 111. Woodlawn Mall, initially a small strip mall, grew to include a number of stand alone buildings housing 42 businesses. Penhorn Mall, a 442,000 square foot complex of over 90 stores, came onto the scene in 1974, with a major expansion in 1982 and renovations in 1989. The Canada Trust Square, Evergreen Place and merchants on Portland Street are more recent additions to the area.

### **The Way We Are...**

Thirty years later Penhorn Mall and Woodlawn Staples Plaza are seeing storefront after storefront vacated as businesses close or move to some of the new larger commercial centres being built in Dartmouth. With recent announcements that the Woodlawn Library will be moving to Portland Street Market and the medical centre and drugstore will be moving to Tacoma Drive, area residents are concerned about the future of commercial services in their community.

At the top of most residents' minds is the future redevelopment of Penhorn and Woodlawn malls and how the visioning process fits in with existing land use regulations and how much say the local community will have in the process.

### **Penhorn Mall Re-development**

The community visioning process for the Penhorn/Woodlawn Urban Local Centre is mandated by the Regional Plan and will therefore lead to revisions to the Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and zoning regulations. The current regulations provide property owners with certain "as-of-right" development rights related to what can be built on their property. With "as-of-right" development, there is no legal requirement for the property owner to consult with the public on a proposal. Public consultation is required however, if the MPS needs to be changed or if a development agreement is required for a project to proceed.

On May 13, 2008 Empire Company Limited (ECL) announced plans to redevelop a portion of the existing Penhorn Mall site in Dartmouth. The first phase of this project, which includes a new Sobeys grocery store, opened in February 2009. During the first week of May 2009, site preparations commenced for a new retail strip mall to be located overlooking Highway 111. The strip mall is permitted "as-of-right", which means it does not require public consultation due to the commercial zoning on the property.

The next phase of development has not yet been determined. Any future residential development on the Penhorn mall property would have to go through a municipal plan amendment process

and must include public consultation. At the time of writing no application has been made for residential development on the Penhorn Mall site.

### Portland Street

Central to future redevelopment of the area is the image of Portland Street. The street carries thousands of commuters daily as well as a large amount of foot traffic. As a main thoroughfare since this area was settled in the 1750's, this street has been an integral route for Dartmouthians and those who live outside its boundaries. The section from Chestnut Lane to Portland Estates is filled with garbage, overgrown weeds, graffiti and signs. Portland Street can follow the lead of the Main Street Streetscape Plan in initiating a beautification of the area. By "starting with petunias", we can make the trip along Portland Street more appealing to those who use it regularly and to those who visit from away.

### **The Way We Wish To Be...**

**Balanced development provides a pleasant range of residential and commercial uses along with public gathering places. The vibrant commercial centre is built to human scale and caters to the daily needs of local residents.**

### Vision Actions:

- ◆ The community envisions the Penhorn Mall property being redeveloped with well designed and integrated "urban village" combining residential, commercial and institutional areas such as a childcare centre, a bank, a garden centre and recreational facilities where people from all stages of life can enjoy time with family, friends and neighbours.
- ◆ Woodlawn Mall undergoes revitalization with improved pedestrian connections to the surrounding community, improved storefronts and possible site of an outdoor market, a butcher, a baker, a fish monger and a fruit vendor.
- ◆ Planning regulations are revised to enable opportunities for living and working in this redeveloped urban centre.
- ◆ Residents see a barrier-free link over Highway 111 between Penhorn and Woodlawn shopping districts (see Transportation section).
- ◆ Pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users enjoy safe and pleasant access between the Penhorn Transit Terminal and the shopping district.
- ◆ A town square within the commercial centre provides an opportunity for residents to interact with their neighbours and build upon relationships, past present and future.

- ◆ Tree lined streets and colourful green spaces allow residents the opportunity for leisurely walks and meeting their neighbours within the local neighbourhoods of Penhorn/Woodlawn.
- ◆ With guidance and assistance from HRM, a Middle Portland Street Business Association is formed. This Association, working in collaboration with area residents and HRM, will work towards creating a Portland Streetscape Design Project would address concerns about traffic volumes and safety, street aesthetics, marketing; built form and innovative initiatives such as solar powered traffic lights, street lights and awning lights will be realized.
- ◆ Local artists are commissioned to cover traffic boxes and empty walls with community murals. Original pieces of both permanent and temporary public art are integrated in functional areas such as benches, bus shelters and bike racks and to adorn gathering public areas.
- ◆ Downtown there are a few designated areas for graffiti art which can be remarkable in its beauty. We have several areas inside our focus that with the property owners' permission, this could be introduced here as well.

## **Residential Development**

### **The Way We Were...**

Dartmouth, as a whole, is steeped in a history that is matched by only a few established communities in Canada. We would be remiss if we did not mention the 200 or more Mi'kmaq who currently live in the identified CLG area, whose ancestors originally populated the area prior to the arrival of Europeans. . Our European history begins with the arrival of the Alderney in 1750. Since that time Penhorn and Woodlawn have grown to include nearly 10,000 people housed in 3,500 dwelling units. Whether Southdale—which can trace its roots back to the 1870—Manor Park, Graham's Corner, the Lakefront Apartments or Woodlawn, memories of days gone by are easily rekindled in the minds of long-time residents, and new memories are being built by those new to the community.

### **The Way We Are...**

#### **Housing Choice**

The Penhorn/Woodlawn visioning area includes a number of unique neighbourhoods which share a common interest in the local lakes, parks, trails, schools, churches, streets, community services and social organizations. Residents value the range of housing choices available to them, access to amenities and a sense of community.

The area provides a range of diverse housing options with Woodlawn and Commodore Park primarily comprised of owner occupied single family bungalows while Lakefront is exclusively rental apartments. Housing is found in a broad ranging spectrum which is reflective of the demographic and income mix of the area, including social housing, high-end rentals, tiered care senior accommodations, condominiums, row housing and group homes.

### Stable Neighbourhoods

Notable, though, is the state of transition that many of the longer established neighbourhoods are experiencing. The long time residents of these homes are aging, seeking respite from home maintenance chores and are increasingly turning to low maintenance apartment or condominium dwellings. Their homes are being occupied in turn purchased by younger families with children. This, the Committee believes, is the wave of the future which will reinvigorate youth activities that have faltered as family nests were emptied.

With the imminent redevelopment of Penhorn mall and demographic shift afoot in the local neighbourhoods, there are opportunities to build on existing strengths and address some of the area's challenges such as unsightly utility wires, littered and poorly maintained public areas, and concerns over neighbourhood safety and lack of activities for children and youth. During public consultations residents repeatedly expressed their willingness to take ownership of the area to rebuild a sense of community connection and community safety.

### **The Way We Wish To Be...**

**Residents take pride in the safe, stable, affordable and beautiful neighbourhoods in which they live. Investment in both new and existing neighbourhoods inspires delight and assures quality of life and housing options for all life stages.**

### Vision Actions:

- ◆ HRM should enable and encourage a mixed use, transit and pedestrian oriented redevelopment of Penhorn Mall including medium to high density residential uses that provide opportunities for work/live/play lifestyles.
- ◆ New housing at Penhorn mall caters to the needs of residents of all life stages, including senior citizens.
- ◆ The Halifax School Board renovates Alderney School to accommodate the increasing number of children in the area.
- ◆ The new Junior High and Elementary School replacing Prince Arthur and Southdale-North Woodside includes a multi-purpose community centre for a wide range of community activities.

- ◆ As roads are repaired, or natural gas is brought into neighbourhoods, power poles are removed and utility lines are placed underground.
- ◆ Stronger police presence, including bike patrols improve a sense of safety in local neighbourhoods. HRM enforces its litter and unsightly premises by-laws to increase a pride of place.
- ◆ Local residents get organized to hold block parties so that neighbours, once again, get to know each other.

## **Community Space & Services**

### **The Way We Were...**

The old City of Dartmouth's motto, "Through Friendship We Grow", is apparent in the number of existing community organizations and churches active in the area. For example, the Woodlawn Methodist Church (renamed Woodlawn United Church) dates back to 1884. Dartmouth has been the site of many important events, including the hockey tournament on Oathill Lake in 1867 between the Citadel Garrison and Naval Fleet Officers, the first Dartmouth Natal Day in 1895 and the 1986 World Junior Curling Championships. Lake Banook has been the site of the 1989 World Junior Canoe Championships, the 1997 World Senior Canoe Championships, the 2000 World Marathon Canoe Championships, and in 2009 it will host the ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships.

### **The Way We Are...**

#### **Community Organizations**

In the Penhorn/Woodlawn area, there are many community and private organizations that offer their space for programs and services to the community. We proudly have Guiding and Scouting groups and men's and women's organizations that meet at local churches. Our area has several schools where community space is available for use after hours. The Nova Scotia Community College Akerley campus is located at the eastern edge of our area and the Mawio'mi Waterfront Campus is just outside the southern boundary.

Social support services are available through some of the area's churches. For example, the Woodlawn United Church runs a used clothing program known as the Dun-Gen that services approximately 141 families in our area. Several local churches offer either seasonal or monthly Food Bank services.

#### **Transition of Amenities**

Seniors can be seen throughout our community gathering at Tim Horton's, Robin's Donuts and McDonald's for their morning or afternoon coffee meetings. Young families are able to take part in programs offered at the Woodlawn Library and individuals interested in Job Search Services

or internet use can also utilize the library's services and programs. With the scheduled move of Woodlawn Medical Clinic in 2010 to the periphery of our focus area, we are going to again experience a loss of services similar to the loss of BoM, CIBC, WalMart, Canadian Tire and Home Depot in the last 5 years.

### Woodlawn Library Relocation

The Woodlawn branch library presently serves the community from the Staples Plaza and will continue to do so from its new location on Eisener Boulevard where it will relocate in the fall of 2009. The new and expanded Woodlawn Library will offer opportunities for all ages, and residents in the Portland Estates, Russell Lake West and Portland Hills will benefit from being in close proximity to this new location. The new location will, however pose accessibility issues for some of the area's residents. To ensure that residents of the entire Visioning District continue to enjoy access to the library, improved pedestrian and transit access should become a priority.

Penhorn/Woodlawn remains predominantly a single family residential area, but the needs of residents are changing. Our population is aging and as they move into more manageable housing, there will be an influx of younger couples and families.

### Community Facilities

On the outskirts of our visioning area, the new East Dartmouth, Findlay and North Woodside Community Centres offer opportunities for youth, seniors, families and individuals. This does not however, address the need for high quality community space in the centre of the Penhorn/Woodlawn Community Visioning District. As the area continues to grow and develop, a central gathering community space designed with all ages in mind would be able to provide services to seniors, youth, families with children and individuals. An infrastructure of community services such as affordable housing and daycare, and recreation opportunities, support a culture of volunteerism, civic engagement and help maintain a safe and welcoming community.

### Youth & Recreation

The youth are the future of any community. When the Penhorn Elementary School was closed in the 1980s Dartmouth Parks and Recreation converted it into a drop-in center for youth and young adults which provided a valuable function in the community for a decade. Currently, there are no informal programs for this age group in our area. There was a day when children of all ages would leave home in the morning and run off to adventures throughout the day only to come home when it became too dark. The younger populations' interests have changed somewhat with the advent of video games, and many parents aren't comfortable allowing their children to wander about without a specific activity in mind.

The Findlay Community Center offers a youth drop-in night and Cole Harbour Place has a monthly dance for youth. The Pavilion is a very popular venue for many youth on the Halifax

side of the harbour. It would be worthwhile for opportunities such as these to be made closer to home for our many young residents.

Skateboarding has emerged as a popular activity for many of our youth but they are constantly in the search for places to “skate in peace”. Many residents and business owners do not feel comfortable having skating activities on or near their properties, yet youth consulted through the visioning process clearly expressed a desire for a skateboard park in the area.

Dartmouth can proudly boast that one of the first ever hockey tournaments was held on Oathill Lake in 1867. Our many lakes and ponds are well used for winter ice skating but there is a lack of seating and areas for skaters to get laced up or for interested observers to watch and cheer them on. Temporary ice hockey nets could be set up in designated areas around our many waterways during the winter months.

Our lakes are the true gems of the community but with the exception of Penhorn beach, none are supervised for swimming in the summer. There is an opportunity to develop our lakes as “places to be” with the assistance and support of HRM Recreation and interested business/property owners we can make both of these ideas a reality.

### Community Festivals

There was a time that Dartmouth was a destination of choice for people living within its boundaries and beyond. In 1895, Dartmouth held its’ first Natal Day and for 200 years was known as the place to be the first weekend in August for the fireworks, parade, talent show and the big fair down at Lake Banook.

For many years, the Penhorn Flea Market was also a destination of choice with outdoor tables in the summer and the June fair in the Wool-Co parking lot. With the change in the mall over the years, and the start of Sunday shopping, that once vibrant space has been lost.

Within HRM are many festivals and outdoor events that bring crowds of people from other parts of the province, but also from within the region itself. A public space for outdoor events such as a market or some unique festival could make Penhorn/Woodlawn the “place to be”. Not only could it be used for special events but it could serve as a meeting place for residents to “stop and smell the roses”. An antique car night, musical or theatrical events could attract a lot of people, including shoppers for local businesses into our area and provide it with renewed vitality.

### **The Way We Wish To Be...**

**Penhorn/Woodlawn is a community built on its people. It is a place where neighbours know one another. Community buildings, public art and public spaces exhibit pride, a sense of place, history and belonging. Community activities for families, children, youth, seniors and newcomers provide opportunities to connect and celebrate. It is a community that “stands out from the crowd”.**



## **Vision Actions:**

- ◆ Develop a central “community hub” with community meeting spaces and multiple services including recreation, health programs, social support programs and welcoming newcomers to our community.
- ◆ Community uses should be considered for the underutilized spaces in Penhorn and Woodlawn malls.
- ◆ Develop a skate park with the support of youth, residents, businesses and local organizations in an accessible and visible location.
- ◆ Develop programming for lakefront areas, including skating on lakes and ponds.
- ◆ Provide informal programs for youth.
- ◆ Develop community events and festivals to celebrate the local community and bring in visitors.
- ◆ Provide more opportunities for voluntary organizations to connect and take action on local issues.