

# What we heard: Shore Road Building with Nature Project

Date: Thursday, February 8, 2024

Time: 6 to 8 p.m.

Location: Fisherman's Cove, Clyde T. Henneberry room (in person)

## Project outline:

In alignment with the municipality's climate plan, HalifACT, and Green Network Plan, the Shore Road: Building with Nature project involves the construction of 480 m of a nature-based erosion mitigation option consisting of a slope revetment, native vegetation, a cobble beach, and a submerged breakwater to dissipate wave energy.

Shore Road is a vital part of the community as a bus route, community access corridor, and emergency evacuation route, and plays a critical role in ensuring the safety and well-being of the community of Eastern Passage. The road section between Norman's Lane and Oceanlea Drive is experiencing repeated damage due to climate change through more frequent and intense storms combined with sea level rise. The site is also experiencing more wave overtopping and rocks being tossed onto the road during extreme storm events, causing road closures.

Restoration and protection efforts in this area have historically used traditional hard infrastructure like rock walls or barricades to address wave overtopping and erosion risks. However, this has led to increased erosion along the shoreline. This not only poses a safety risk but also harms natural habitat and green spaces crucial for community well-being and ecosystem health. Because of additional climate hazards such as sea level rise, there is a need for a sustainable management approach that reduces wave overtopping risks, supports natural shoreline processes, enhances infrastructure resilience to climate change, and improves community livability.

To implement a sustainable approach, the municipality is reinstating previously eroded shoreline by removing existing armour stone and replacing it with a new slope of native vegetation, a cobble beach and installing a submerged breakwater/sill to dissipate wave energy. This will protect the road and mitigate erosion by restoring natural coastal processes.

The Government of Canada is investing \$3 million in the project through the Natural Infrastructure Fund (NIF) and the Halifax Regional Municipality is contributing \$2 million. A joint funding federal / municipal announcement occurred in May 2023 at Fisherman's Cove. Regional Council approved the signing of a Contribution Agreement with Infrastructure Canada (INFC) in June 2023, enabling the municipality to formally accept the federal funding. Regional Council

previously approved the Shore Road Green Shores project, as well as the municipality's portion of the funding contribution.

## Engagement Approach

The project team developed a communication and engagement plan with the support of staff from Internal Communications and Collective Impact. The plan consisted in the following components:

- **Identifying Impacted Key Partners:** The engagement process began by identifying that residents are directly impacted by the project. Separate consultation efforts are ongoing with other key partners including First Nations and the provincial government.
- **Public Outreach:** To ensure engagement, the public outreach strategy included the following:
  - Mailing out approximately 4,000 invitations to area residents
  - Deploying a social media campaign to reach residents online and generate interest.
  - Publishing a summary of the project and invitation to the meeting in The Beacon, a local news publication.
  - Inviting residents through radio announcements, reaching those who may not be reached through other channels.
  - Publishing the invite in Councillor Becky Kent's newsletter to inform and engage residents who follow local government news.
  - Updating the project website with information about the time and place of the information session.
- **Information Session Design:** Understanding that the environmental setting and coastal processes are the main drivers of the erosion mitigation approach for the site, the project team designed the engagement process with the following objectives:
  - Providing information about the project and raising the level of understanding about coastal processes in the area, impacts of climate change, benefits of nature-based solutions and disadvantages of traditional approaches for coastal protection.
  - Facilitating public input and dialogue about aspects where residents could impact the design such as the landscaping features.

To accomplish the goals of the meeting, the project team presented a deck of slides describing impacts of climate change, coastal processes in the area, proposed design, background of the consultant selected for the project and timeline for completion. The facilitator included three check-in sessions throughout the presentation to provide attendees with opportunities to provide comments or ask questions.

In addition, HRM staff distributed a survey on paper to attendees to request their input about landscaping features of the project. These surveys were to be returned during the session.

## Attendance

65 local residents attended the information session.

## Common themes from residents' questions and comments

Input from residents is summarized as follows:

- Generally, attendees were supportive of the project, with some residents expressing concerns about the effectiveness of nature-based design. Staff addressed these concerns explaining the role of the submerged breakwater in dissipating strong waves before they reach the proposed cobble beach.
- Most comments expressed concerns about the shoreline along Shore Road in general. Participants pointed at different locations where erosion is severe and may threaten the structural integrity of the road. These comments are also consistent with comments received through email.
- Multiple attendees requested clarification about the process for selecting the project site as a priority location to address erosion. Staff clarified that the terms of the Natural Infrastructure funding provided an opportunity to address erosion at the site using a nature-based approach. This, in combination with HRM's ownership of the project site, provided an opportunity to start addressing erosion along Shore Road in the short term. Staff also informed attendees that there are current initiatives to assess wave runup and damage risks along the coast of the municipality.
- Some participants expressed concerns about traffic disruptions associated with the construction of the project specially if this coincides with planned construction at Hartlen Point, being undertaken by DND. HRM informed the public that the project team is in communication with DND and will liaise with their project team to avoid combined traffic disruption. The project team also clarified that HRM will seek to minimize disruptions to traffic during construction.

## Survey Results

The figure below shows the survey that HRM staff distributed to attendees. A total of 8 people submitted responses to the survey. Initially, staff planned to dedicate part of the information session to reviewing the survey and the presented options with the public. However, the Q&A segment of the session extended beyond the scheduled time, taking up the allocated meeting duration. It is possible that for this reason the number of survey responses received appears small when compared to the meeting attendance.



**What would you like to see on the lookoff?**

<b>Benches</b>	<b>Stairs to beach</b>	<b>Plants</b>	<b>Surface Cover</b>	<b>Other comments:</b> _____ _____ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> bushes	Asphalt	
<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> trees	<input type="checkbox"/> Full <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> None	
<b>Parking</b>	<b>Lights</b>		Gravel	
<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes		<input type="checkbox"/> Full <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> None	
<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> no		Grass	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Full <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> None	



The received responses are summarized as follows:

- All respondents expressed preference for benches in the area.
- Seven people expressed preference for stairs providing access to the beach.
- Most respondents (5 out of 8) preferred a site with no spots for parking.
- There was an even split in preferring the installation of lights.
- All the respondents were in favor of vegetated cover in the area with a mix of bushes and trees.
- Most respondents were not in favor of asphalt covers with slight preference of gravel cover over grass. In this case, grass is understood as mowed cover that requires regular maintenance as opposed to cover with native vegetation.

**Next Steps:**

- HRM has communicated input associated with landscaping of the site to the consultant and suggestions received will be considered in the design.
- HRM will host another information session to present the detailed design. This is expected to take place in Fall 2024.