

Keep the Urban Reserve zoning designation in the Backlands

The Urban Reserve (UR) designation came into effect with the introduction of the existing Halifax Regional Planning Strategy in 2006 and is set to be replaced in 2031. There is a 5 year mandatory review with the first one coming into effect in 2014 and the second review currently underway.

The UR designation is “intended to ensure that a supply of land is available for serviced development over a longer term horizon”. (Regional Plan page 43) There are 7 areas in HRM which are designated UR. It is important to note that it is only the UR lands in the Backlands of Purcells Cove and Williams lake (except Kidston Lake in Spryfield) which are being considered for a rezoning. This large swath of land is marked in yellow on the recent map provided by HRM in the ‘What we Heard’ report.

It does make sense to rezone the lands which comprise the Shaw Wilderness Park (SWP) which is 379 acres in the middle of the yellow on the map. However, this does not mean that the rest of the UR lands should be rezoned or need to be rezoned before the end of the life of the plan, ie. 2031.

Long term residents of the area are very familiar with their wants and desires being ignored by the municipal government. It is now 10 years since the Purcells Cove Road Sewer and Water Feasibility study was forced upon us. We fought back and there will be no extension of services down the Purcells Cove Road.

This fact is critical to understanding why it is not necessary to rezone the lands to Rural Commuter. As indicated above, UR is ‘intended to ensure that a supply of land is available for serviced development’. It has been determined that there will not be serviced development so where is the threat to zone the lands rural commuter or else...what is the ‘or else’?

It is important to examine the Generalized Future Land Use Map-3F (GFLUM) for the area. On the map the entire area is marked as the zone Residential Development District (RDD). This zone only applies to land that has or will be serviced so again this does not apply to UR lands in the Backlands. So, again, why the push for a rezoning of the UR lands before the end of the life of the plan?

A review of the rural commuter designation is instructive. It is found in the Regional Plan at page 43;

3.2.3.1 Rural Commuter Designation

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The Rural Commuter Designation shall be established on the Generalized Future Land Use Map (Map 2) to encompass those areas within commuting distance from the Regional Centre that are heavily influenced by low-density residential development. The intent for this designation is to:

- Protect the character of the rural communities and conserve open space and natural resources by focusing growth within a series of centres, as shown on the Settlement and Transportation Map(Map 1)
- Support the delivery of convenience services in the surrounding settlement area
- control the amount and form of development between centres

- protect the natural resource base and preserve the natural features that foster the traditional and community character.

It is very important to note that the Backlands are in no way identified on the Settlement and Transportation map. Why is this designation being forced upon the land when it is not even identified in this map that is fundamental to the Regional Plan?

The residents of the area, members of the Backlands Coalition and many people of HRM want to conserve the land and expand the SWP. Both the Provincial and Federal governments have committed to increasing the percentage of land that is conserved. Why should this opportunity be lost? There are 10 years left to make this happen. There is no 'right to develop'. The property owners are well aware of the UR zoning and have been since 2006. They will be paid a fair price for their land as was done with the acquisition of the SWP.

The intention to bring the lands ultimately under public ownership was alive following the defeat of the servicing extension and the SWP acquisition. Below are two summary points found in an HRM staff report dated September 14, 2016.

1. During the Regional Plan (RP+5) review in 2014, a request was made to re-designate 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.**

2. 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. (Halifax Green Network Plan)

It is very important to understand that HRM Council already rejected the suggestion that the land be zoned Rural Commuter. There was good reason for the direction Council took as the land had already been identified as having many valuable characteristics. Since the creation of the Shaw Wilderness Park, the importance of maintaining the integrity of the land is now essential.

It is very clear that the intention was to engage the public in an exercise to examine options and possibilities of bringing the lands into public ownership. However, this intention was put on hold until Phase 1 of the Halifax Green Network Plan was completed. This was accomplished years ago and the public process was never pursued.

Much has been written on the value of the land. The Backlands Coalition has already submitted two papers in this process in August, 2020 and July, 2021. (See below) Reference to the latter was found in the What We Heard report, but the actual submission was not. Staff is urged to revisit and review these reports. In addition, submissions made by Dr. David Patriquin and Dr. Patricia Manuel provide the professional input to underscore the critical importance of the preservation of the land in its natural state.

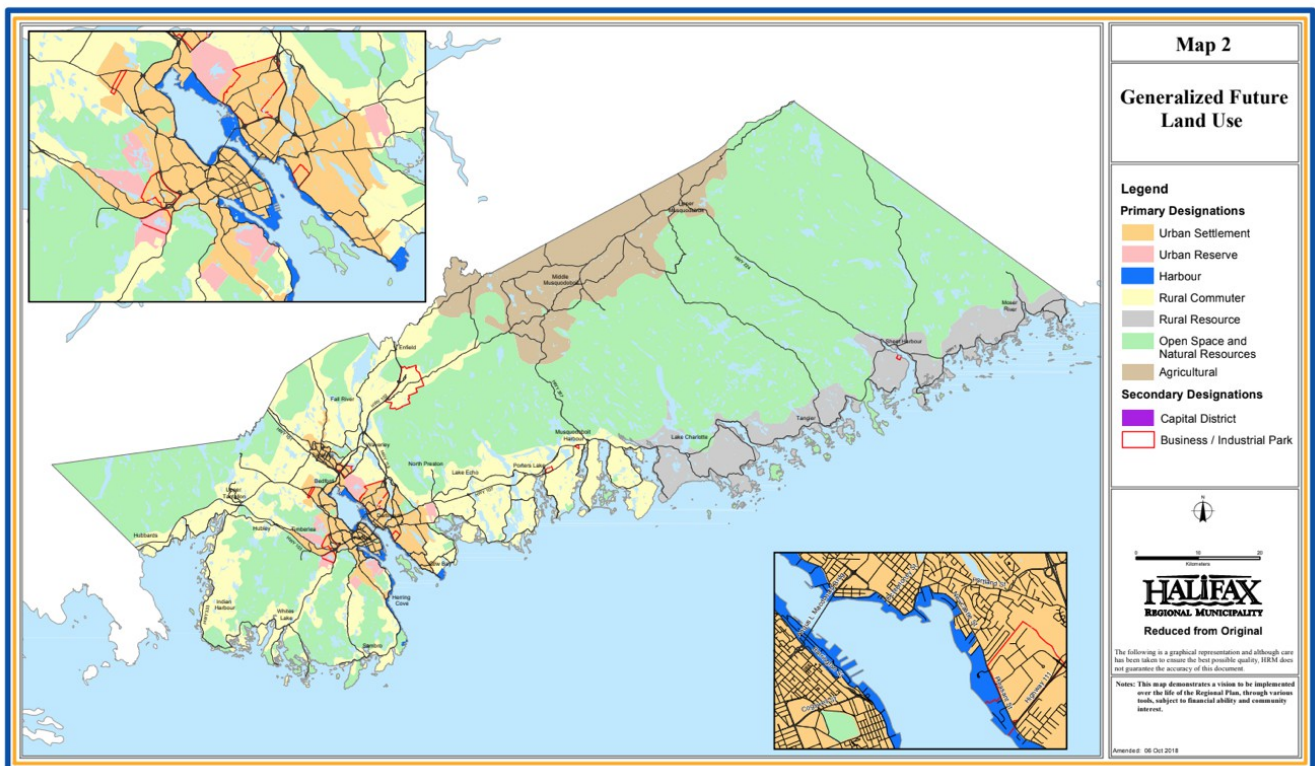
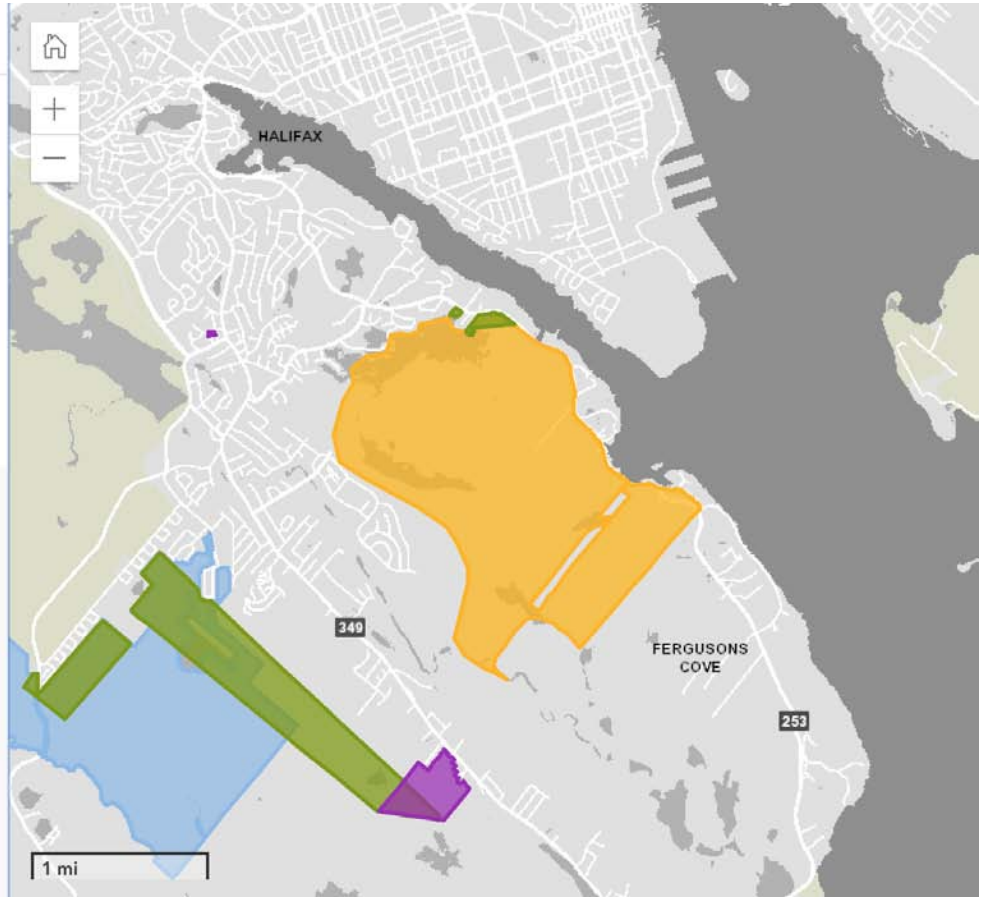
Now that the HGNP has been adopted by Council, it is time for it to be put into play. This is a perfect opportunity to act on the protection of this highly valued green space. This land is very special to all the citizens of Halifax and those who visit our beautiful city.

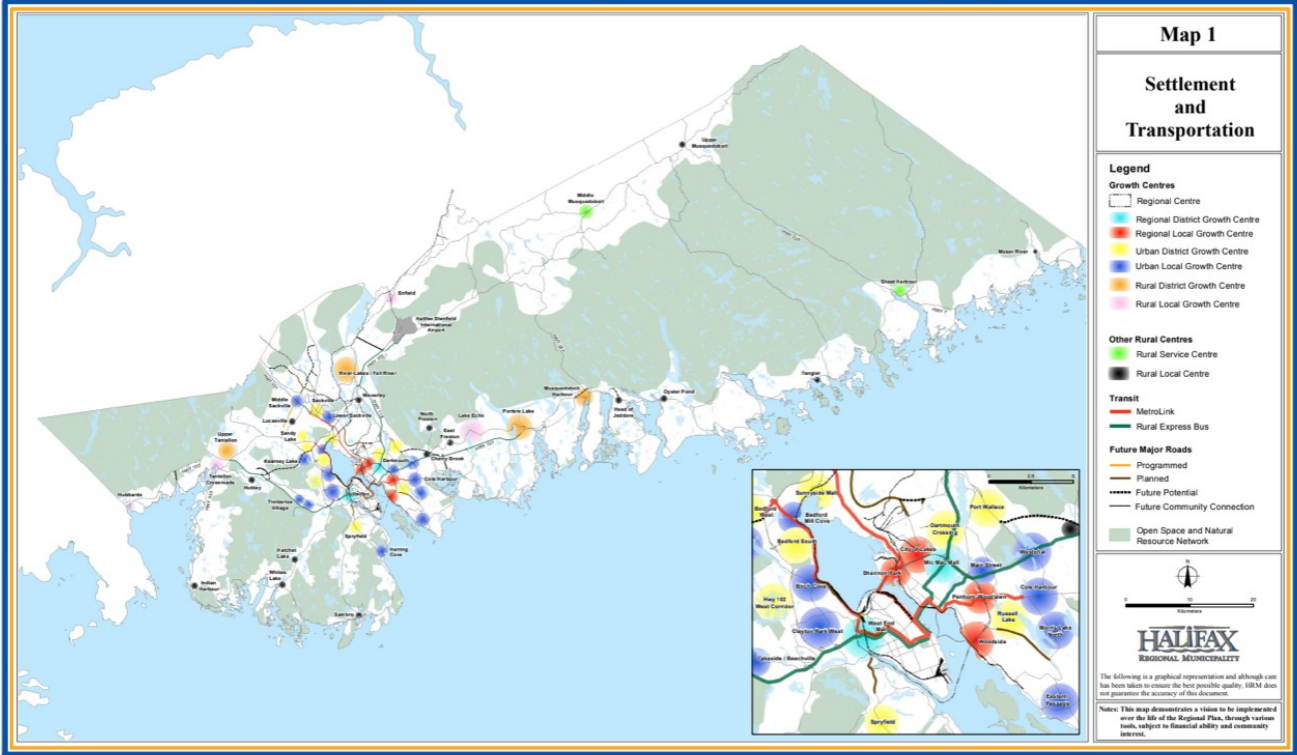
Legend

Requests for Site Specific Amendments to the Regional Plan

PHASE

-  New Request
-  Phase 3: Quick Adjustments
-  Phase 4: Draft Regional Plan
-  Phase 5: Future Capacity



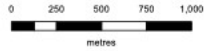


Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy
Mainland South Secondary Planning Strategy
Map 9F

Generalized Future Land Use

Designation

- LDR Low Density Residential
- MDR Medium Density Residential
- HDR High Density Residential
- RDD Residential Development District
- MNC Minor Commercial
- MJC Major Commercial
- IND Industrial
- INS Institutional
- OS Major Community Open Space



HALIFAX

Approved: 23 June 1987
Amended: 31 July 2018
The accuracy of any representation on this plan
is not guaranteed.

