

HRM - Greening the City

Citizens have clearly indicated that a healthy environment with clean air, land, water and energy options is very important to them. Environmental Stewardship is a shared responsibility and we are very fortunate to have a network of outstanding community, business, private and public sector partnerships all working towards a clean and healthy environment. Within this environment, HRM has made a corporate commitment to sustainability by establishing the Sustainable Environment Management Office (SEMO) to provide corporate leadership, coordination, innovation and policy development promoting environmental infrastructure growth and HRM's stewardship of the natural environment (clean air, land, water and energy).

Specific objectives of SEMO that help to meet it's corporate mandate include:

Transition HRM to a Corporate Culture of environmental sustainability

A previous Sustainability Analysis revealed that HRM faces many challenges in becoming a healthy and sustainable community, specifically in regards to the use of energy and land, and the management of materials both within the organization (e.g. procurement) and in the community. However, the Sustainability Analysis also revealed that there are numerous great initiatives and many good stories to tell about HRM efforts to achieve a healthy and more sustainable community.

HRM has since retained The Natural Step (TNS) of Canada Ltd. to help integrate sustainable practices into everyday decisions, and integrate sustainability into the greater community. Three immediate priorities are:

- Green Corporate Culture - A Sustainability Transition Team has been established with a mandate to foster and grow the green corporate culture.
- Green Procurement - a Green Procurement Strategy has been implemented and HRM has hosted several "Procurement Summits" to share our experiences with both the public and private sector.
- Green Buildings - new municipal facilities are meeting at least LEEDS Silver status, and HRM is providing support to the Province in reviewing the current Building Code. In addition, HRM is developing the **Alderney 5 Energy Project**, a \$3.6 million energy-efficiency retrofit of five waterfront municipal buildings. This project, expected to be completed in 2009, is the first large-scale application of geothermal seasonal cold-energy storage anywhere in the world. The project utilizes a highly innovative, world class cooling technology, demonstrating a new borehole heat exchanger with a 300% more efficient design enabling seasonal geothermal cold energy storage. The harvesting and storage of 100% renewable cold energy without using heat pumps is revolutionary. The advanced building cooling technology also saves on water consumption and eliminates all air conditioning noise.

TNS Canada Ltd. is developing a decision making "filter" to enable Regional Council to assess the impact of decisions and initiatives on sustainability.

Green HRM infrastructure

HRM is developing environmental sustainability criteria for HRM assets and infrastructure, and manages the Sustainable Community (Green) Reserve to maximize sustainability benefits for HRM.

Deliver clean air, land, water and energy policies, strategies and services

The Regional Plan, a 25 year land use planning strategy is the overarching policy document that provides strategic direction, and HRM has taken an integrated systems approach to implement environmental sustainability.

In support of Clean Air and Energy HRM has adopted a Community Energy Plan, including:

- Corporate and Community Green House Gas Plans (20% corporate reduction target by 2012);
- integration of HRM's Clean Air Strategy with Provincial Airshed Management Plans;
- HRM has expanded the role of its Regional Council Sub Committee on Energy and Underground Services to include energy efficiency/sustainability matters.
- promotion of corporate and community based reduced idling initiatives;
- Climate SMART Climate Change Strategy that includes LIDAR mapping of Halifax Harbour and costal zone set backs;
- Enhanced Transit Service;
- Bio-Fuels for buses and buildings; and
- Methane Capture at the former Landfill.

Some specific initiatives to protect "Clean Land" include:

- continue to mainstream Pesticide By-Law Programs and services;
- HRM has a state of the art Solid Waste Management Strategy with high waste diversion rates
- Corporate and community sustainable landscape and gardening practices, including exploring opportunities to partner with the Sierra Club of Canada on Urban Gardens.

HRM has a strong focus on protecting Clean Water in the Region. Highlights of initiatives include:

- The "Harbour Solutions Project" continues to commission new plants and residents can once again swim in Halifax Harbour
- The Halifax Regional Water Commission is developing a 25 year Wastewater/ Storm water Strategy to guide investments in water and wastewater in areas that have the least cost and take advantage of remaining capacity. This is fully integrated with the Regional Plan and supports the transit oriented development patterns and transportation strategy.
- HRM has implemented an water quality monitoring program to monitor the long term ecological health of rivers and lakes in developed areas of the municipality.
- Development regulations that require riparian buffers, open space conservation subdivision design and groundwater assessment for developments that rely on well and septic.

Other initiatives to protect water quality in the Region include Road Salt Management, Septic Stewardship, and a Biosolids Stabilization Program which produces an agricultural additive as an alternative to lime.

Conclusion

HRM participates in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Quality of Life Reporting System which includes the Ecological Footprints of Canadian Municipalities and Regions.

The average Canadian consumes 7.25 hectares of land and sea to sustain our current life needs and wants. The average for HRM is 7.83 hectares or approximately 9% higher than the national average. This is mostly attributable to HRM's higher than the national average (4.52 hectares to 4.00 hectares national average) for its energy footprint.

In conclusion, a sustainable future will require the combined efforts of government, businesses, and the individual. Corporate Knights magazine has ranked HRM as the most sustainable medium-sized city in Canada, and HRM will continue to lead by example and develop a corporate State of the Environment/Infrastructure Report, to monitor the success of municipal operations in moving towards a sustainable future for our community.