

Meeting the Moment, Together

Andy's Plan of Action for HRM



2024
Platform



My priorities and platform

This plan comes from years of experience as an urban and rural planner, and a deep understanding and commitment to listening to people across HRM. I've seen first-hand how effective leadership and collaboration can transform challenges into opportunities – in projects from the HRM Centre Plan to the Halifax Central Library, always prioritizing community consultation and engagement.

I am committing to working collaboratively with all levels of government and community partners to find practical solutions that make a real difference in the lives of all residents and communities of HRM. To roll up my sleeves and work directly with you to get things done.

Together with Council, I know we can build a stronger, vibrant, and connected HRM – a community of communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. I ask this election for your support to make this vision a reality.



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Encampments

It is neither compassionate nor empathetic to allow someone to live **in a tent in a park** - this is NOT a solution to homelessness, and we can do better to get people out of tents and into the housing continuum. The growth of tent encampments throughout the municipality has prevented residents from using parks, has had negative impacts on businesses, and has cost HRM taxpayers millions of dollars. Most of all, encampments are not providing a real solution for those living in them.

My plan would...

- Create** a Central Intake System, updated daily in real-time, so we can reliably understand who is in the encampments, and what each person's unique barriers are. This is the critical first step in mapping people to the support they need.
- Create** a rapid response team of public health, mental health, and social work professionals, including from the Province, all coordinating together on the ground to get people in the encampments the help they need. The longer people live in tents the more rapidly their mental and physical health deteriorates, so this early intervention is critical.
- Freeze** the approval of any new encampment sites. This includes not opening the nine new sites recently approved by HRM Council, which includes the proposed Common and Point Pleasant Park sites. Instead, HRM will work in a renewed partnership with the Province, and with the new rapid response team, to quickly move people from tents to pallet shelters, tiny homes, shelters, subsidized housing, and other durable solutions. Tents are the worst possible option for people and we can do better, faster.
- The broader community expects and deserves safe access to public parks that are not designated encampment sites. Tents appearing in undesignated areas will be greeted by the new rapid response team within 24 hours of notification so that individuals can be **redirected** to the support and services that they need, and to maintain residents' access to community public spaces. I will **draw** on 30 years of experience as a city planner to remove roadblocks to approvals so that homes can be built faster in the right locations, and increase housing affordability across HRM.

- ☑ The broader community **deserves and expects** safe access to public parks that are not designated encampment sites. People erecting tents in undesignated areas will be greeted by the new Rapid Response Team of professionals within 24 hours, so individuals can be redirected to designated sites, and the support and services they need in order to maintain residents' access to community public spaces.
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Housing

When it comes to building homes, HRM is stretching approval times unnecessarily. Affordable home construction techniques can reduce costs, and HRM is not allowing the most affordable techniques. HRM is holding up approval of some of the most affordable land in the municipality (some of which have been seeking approval for 9+ years).

HRM's tight grip on these three variables (approval times, construction techniques, land cost) adds up to higher rents and bigger mortgages that people can't afford.

If elected Mayor, I will make immediate changes to these three housing variables that are in HRM's direct control, and within two years, will reduce the cost of new houses by double-digit percentage points so your kids and mine can afford a home. I will create a City Hall that's biased towards action, one that rewards innovation and problem-solving. I've been a rural and urban planner for more than 30 years and I know how to get this done. I will be HRM's Builder-in-Chief.

My plan would...

- ☑ **Speed Up Approvals**

We will quickly approve more homes in the right locations across HRM that are lower in cost than what is available on the market right now.

We will use **technology, automation, and redirection of human resources** to rapidly issue building permits, and speed up response times for questions from applicants.

In exchange for rapid approvals, builders will build homes faster and at a lower price. Builders will also be **incentivized** to work with non-profit housing providers to create non-market housing units. Working with a

non-profit partner won't make sense on every project, but where it does, we will expect the private sector to work in good faith with our community housing sector. Shovels will be in the ground on an accelerated timeline or the permits and agreements will be **revoked**.

Expand Permitted Construction Techniques

We will update planning rules to allow for the approval of thousands of new homes using prefabricated, modular, flat-packed, containerized, and mass timber homes to be quickly deployed in HRM.

We will work with the Province of Nova Scotia to update the Building Code to **remove barriers** to innovative construction techniques.

Unlock More Land for Housing

There have been applications to make low-cost land available for housing for as long as nine years. Approving such land can reduce the cost of a new home by double digits. HRM will **approve** the low-cost land in these application backlogs.

We will re-establish the Opportunity Sites Task Force (which I created when I was a planner at HRM) to identify serviced and unserviced land for future housing, and work with landowners, municipalities, builders, and government to identify and remove the barriers that have kept housing from being built on that land. This will include analyzing existing buildings in HRM ownership that could be converted into housing.

We will conduct a strategic review of the municipal service boundary, which controls where municipal sewer and water are provided, to determine where strategic expansions are needed.

As Mayor, I will put to work my existing positive relationships with the Province of Nova Scotia, the Government of Canada, and the home building sector in HRM to apply to available substantial housing infrastructure funds to build the sewer, water, roads, sidewalks, and trails necessary to support new housing developments.

Support Community Housing and Small Developers

Create a **help desk** to give community housing organizations and smaller developers access to city planners to give them the information and support they need throughout the planning and building process.

Create new self-serve tools to allow smaller-scale projects and community housing organizations to plan their applications **quicker and more effectively**.

Ensure Accountability/Culture Change

Create a Housing Delivery Team (HDT) of existing staff to coordinate all planning, development and building permit applications. It will be this team's job to get approvals out the door.

The HDT will track application volumes and timelines, and work closely with the province to remove barriers and unlock opportunities.

Regular Updates: This team will **report monthly** to the City Council, updating them on progress, challenges, and recommendations to overcome them.

Congestion, Transit and Roads

HRM is a rapidly growing 21st-century capital city that encompasses urban, suburban, and rural communities that must be reliably interconnected. It has become too hard to move around our municipality.

Extreme congestion is robbing residents and businesses of time and money, all while increasing emissions. Transit is not as reliable as it should be, which is putting more people in cars, and gridlock due to poorly-timed road construction and repairs contributes to this congestion.

As Mayor, I'll use my experience as an urban and rural planner to get our city moving again to put time and money back into residents' pockets.

My plan would...

Support Transit

- ☑ Implement bus rapid transit (BRT) solutions to get people **moving again**.
- ☑ Make Halifax Transit **more reliable and put user experiences first**, by analyzing transit data to identify bottlenecks, identifying under-serviced areas or routes with consistent delays and adapting them quickly to get buses moving, and creating a true tap-to-pay system to make it easier to get on a bus. This will increase ridership, ease congestion, and reduce emissions.
- ☑ **Boost** our recruitment and retention efforts for staff.

Relieve Congestion

- ☑ **Reduce** the impact of construction on traffic by getting more work done in off-peak traffic times, like nights and weekends, to make sure people can get to work and school on time.
- ☑ The condition of our roads and the amount of potholes is unacceptable. To make our roads drivable I will **create** a new specialized Rapid Response Team to fill potholes faster. When a resident calls 311 to report a road repair issue, they will be contacted within 24 hours with an update and a plan to address the issue.
- ☑ **Revise** the procurement process to extend the roadbuilding season and get more work done.

Affordability

HRM residents have been through the biggest economic shock of our lifetimes in recent years. Yet, last year, the City Council voted to *increase* the HRM tax rate to cover the costs of things not meant to be paid for by HRM taxpayers, such as encampments and shelters. I don't accept that the Council needs to raise tax rates during an affordability crisis to fund services.

Respecting every tax dollar and staying laser-focused on the front-line service delivery is HRM's mandate. We need to stay focused on services like filling potholes, running buses and ferries, and delivering more housing across HRM.

My plan would...

- ☑ **Freeze** the municipal tax rate for two years while a comprehensive value-for-money audit on HRM's service delivery is completed.
 - ☑ **Use data and technology** to streamline service delivery and make HRM operations more efficient.
 - ☑ We must **diversify** revenues so we do not have to rely solely on HRM taxpayers. I will build partnerships with the private sector and leverage my existing relationships with other levels of government to take full advantage of every funding opportunity to support municipal service delivery.
 - ☑ HRM facilities will **need** to be mixed-use with commercial opportunities to help build and fund the facility, rather than, for example, the Dartmouth Bridge Terminal which is missing any economic activity that could help fund the facility.
 - ☑ **Expanding** eligibility to the Affordable Access Program. This means more residents who have been hit hardest by the affordability crisis will pay less in property taxes and have access to lower-cost bus passes.
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Public Safety

Residents are increasingly feeling unsafe in HRM, and when they voice these concerns, they feel unheard. At the same time, front-line police officers are telling me they need more tools to do their job.

We need to enforce the existing laws. No place should be exempt from the law. Whether you're walking home from work or the hospital, you deserve to feel safe in your city.

My plan would...

- ☑ **Give** police body-cams and the tools they need to keep us all safe. Body cameras will make things safer for both residents and police officers.
- ☑ **Bring** in more CCTV cameras in key areas to help our police investigate more effectively.
- ☑ As Mayor, I'll work with the Halifax Regional Police (HRP) and HRM's Office of Public Safety to make sure we're **engaging** with our residents in

neighbourhood meetings, business forums, and other venues so that we can hear directly from residents about the issues and whether our efforts are working.

Main Streets

We're a large municipality, a community of communities. People *should not* have to burn a litre of gas to buy a litre of milk. People *should* be able to walk down a main street with their families and stop for an ice cream or a coffee, or visit a local corner store, and sit in an outdoor seating area with recreation opportunities nearby.

My plan would...

- To achieve this, we will **implement** a Main Streets Initiative to bring back main streets in communities across HRM.
 - This will **remove** outdated planning barriers that are preventing entrepreneurs from building these main streets.
 - Direct** HRM staff to work with local business improvement districts and community groups from Musquodoboit Harbour to Sambro, to hear from community members on how they'd like their main street to be, and to determine what infrastructure improvements are required to support emerging main streets.
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Working Collaboratively

We live in an era of increasingly complex challenges, and increasingly rewarding opportunities. To meet these challenges and opportunities effectively, we must work collaboratively and productively with all public and private sector partners. The time for problem description is over. The time for problem-solving is here.

Yet there are Councillors in this mayoral race who even now continue to choose finger-pointing and blame rather than working collaboratively to get good work done. This election can bring an end to this era of finger-pointing.

I will lead a city government that rolls up our sleeves, extends the hand of partnership, and gets to work delivering for you and your family. We can and will build a city where everyone can thrive if everyone works together.

As mayor I would...

Partnerships

- Work** in earnest partnership with anyone who will work with me, including other levels of government, to build homes that you can afford, deliver a more reliable transit system, and chart a new course on managing encampments in our city.
- My first act as Mayor will be to call Premier Tim Houston and tell him he has a willing partner in me, and in City Hall, to **solve this housing crisis**.
- I have worked in, and with, all three levels of government throughout my 30-year career as a city planner and parliamentarian. I will bring to City Hall ready-made **productive** relationships in these networks that will hit the ground running.

Community Consultation

- My successes in my 30-year career as a city planner - from helping to write the HRM Regional Plan to leading the HRMbyDesign Downtown Plan, to helping to deliver the Halifax Central Library - happened because I have always insisted on **keeping public consultation at the centre of the work**.
 - We will **renew** HRM's commitment to meaningful public consultation so residents have a voice in the decisions that impact their neighbourhoods and their lives, especially around managing the extraordinary growth that we are experiencing across HRM. This includes working **closely** with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office.
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Protecting Our Communities and Fighting Climate Change

From hurricanes to wildfires to flooding, HRM is on the front lines of the fight against climate change. Our municipality needs a plan to keep residents safe.

My plan would...

- ☑ **Protect** our communities from flooding by prioritizing municipal stormwater management systems and infrastructure to handle increased rainfall and rising sea levels due to climate change.
- ☑ **Develop** a robust emergency response plan in place to ensure our first responders can be proactive, and not reactive, to safely evacuate our communities in case of wildfire. It is unacceptable that the existing Council did not have a documented emergency plan in place. I will use my experience as an urban and rural planner to make sure we have a comprehensive and clear plan in place to keep our communities and first responders safe. This includes ensuring that areas at risk from wildfires have more than one evacuation route. As Mayor, this will be a top priority for me.
- ☑ **Protect** our parks and prioritize community gardens and green spaces across our municipality to enhance biodiversity and air quality.
- ☑ **Protect** and restore our lakes by partnering with the provincial Department of Environment and Climate Change, community organizations, and local research institutions through increased funding to:
- ☑ **Increase** water quality monitoring to ensure early detection of algae blooms and act quickly to reduce their spread;
- ☑ **Prioritize** and implement nature-based solutions like living shorelines and wetland restoration projects and;
- ☑ **Fund** cutting-edge research to drive innovative local solutions to restore the health of our lakes.

Supporting Our Small Businesses

Small business is the beating heart of our municipality's economy and vibrancy. Our entrepreneurs need a partner to help them grow and thrive.

My plan would...

- ☑ **Eliminate** patio application fees for small businesses. Our local patios are where we gather on a nice day, enjoy the weather, and connect with our friends and neighbours. HRM is charging patio fees higher than the national average and it is costing our business both time and money in submitting these applications. Let's cut this red tape and support our small businesses by saving them a thousand dollars a year.
- ☑ **Review** commercial tax rates to make sure they are competitive, fair, and efficient. Our commercial tax system is complicated with many different rates applied and we need to ensure that we're as streamlined as possible.
- ☑ HRM will work closely with our business community to **reduce** barriers to their success. Your success is our success as a municipality. To that end, I'll be creating a Mayor's Red Tape Reduction Task Force to hear from you directly on how we can make it easier for you to do business, create jobs, and grow our local economy. As Mayor, I will put my full weight behind making sure HRM is a partner and not a roadblock to your growth.

Supporting Rural Communities

HRM is a community of communities. We are so much more than our urban centres. From Ecum Secum to Hubbards, our rural communities captivate people from all over the world. We need to make sure they are supported and connected to the decisions made at City Hall.

My plan would...

- ☑ **Invest** in our community partners by creating a Community Celebration Fund to offset some of the cost of hosting special events across HRM. We want to help take some of the pressure off of our hard-working volunteers who are bringing our residents together across our municipality. Volunteer Fire departments and community halls are part of the fabric of our rural communities. They are where people come together to celebrate special events and occasions, have a meal, and support each other.

- ☑ **Equip** local Search and Rescue and Volunteer Fire departments with the tools and funding they need to keep us safe.
 - ☑ **Repurpose** existing staff resources to create a Community Support Navigator to help our community groups apply for grants, create annual plans and budgets, and make connections to other Government departments. Our community groups work hard to give back to their neighbours, especially in rural parts of HRM. They deserve some help while they work hard to help all of us.
 - ☑ As Mayor, I commit to hosting **regular meetings in person** in community halls, legions, and fire departments from Ecum Secum to Hubbards. HRM is a community of communities and too many of our smaller rural areas feel disconnected from the decision-making process at City Hall. We won't be able to solve every problem in these meetings, but rural residents will see me in person in their community to bring issues and questions directly to me.
 - ☑ Use these regular meetings to directly inform and focus the value-for-money audit of all municipal services and revenues to **make sure** that our rural residents are **connected** to the decisions at City Hall and are receiving **full value** for their tax dollars.
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Supporting Our Seniors

HRM's seniors worked hard and sacrificed to help build the municipality we all enjoy today. We need to make sure they are heard, supported, and recognized.

My plan would...

- ☑ **Support** organizations that offer volunteer or social programs that target and engage seniors in community life with both grants and administrative support for filling out funding applications, strategic planning, and budgets.
- ☑ **Establish** a municipal senior advisory council made up of community representatives to advocate for senior issues, ensuring that the voices of seniors are heard in policy-making.

- ☑ **Expand and improve** the reliability of the Access-A-Bus service across HRM, which provides door-to-door transit for seniors who face mobility challenges.
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Supporting the Arts

The arts have a long and proud tradition in our municipality and bring wellbeing and vibrancy to our communities. Artists bring us together, tell our stories and help us understand our present and our future.

My plan would...

- ☑ **Drive** stronger partnerships between public institutions, local businesses, and nonprofit organizations to encourage local sponsorships of art projects, and create sustainable models for arts funding.
- ☑ **Prioritize** the arts in planning and economic development, recognizing the arts as a critical part of the city's identity and economy. We will work closely with our city's artists to attract more festivals and events to our city.
- ☑ **Prioritize** support to established arts organizations, like Neptune Theatre, Alderney Landing, and the Eastern Shore Players to ensure our city's vibrant art scene can continue now and into the future.



**Meet the
moment.**

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