

# HALIFAX REGIONAL INTEGRATED TOURISM MASTER PLAN FINAL REPORT



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## SUMMARY

**Leading destinations are grounded in a clear picture of where they are going and what needs to happen to achieve it. A plan was needed for how Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) was going to get there, and accomplish it, together.**

**Understanding different organizations and stakeholders would have their own priorities, Discover Halifax was uniquely positioned to lead this work, and engage communities across HRM.**

In 2019, following 32 engagement events, after receiving 234 survey responses, and speaking to more than 300 session attendees, the Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP) was launched.

While the ITMP was developed prior to COVID-19, the work undertaken in the plan significantly supported recovery efforts, as it included recommendations for “shovel ready” projects as investments were being made by all levels of government to keep the economy going.

The ITMP was presented to Regional Council where it was endorsed and adopted immediately.

The plan became the framework and vision that led the tourism industry during the years of the pandemic, providing guidance and a steady hand through uncertainty. It was innovative, bringing tourism-related businesses and organizations to work together to achieve success in the sector.

The ITMP was not a plan for Discover Halifax alone, but a plan for all partners and stakeholders in tourism and their beneficiaries - those who live, visit, and invest in Halifax, because no single organization could do this effectively on their own. It was a framework of common goals, and everyone had a role.



## MASTER PLAN FRAMEWORK

Working together, the Halifax region will harness our local culture to build and promote a model, sustainable tourism destination. By remaining authentic to our heritage and Halifax's distinct vibe, diversity, creativity, and talent, we will share our unique communities and a quality of life that is deeply connected to our ocean advantage.

## VISION

To be widely recognized as the favourite city in Canada.

## GOALS

- Grow tourism employment
- Enrich the lives of residents
- Grow tourism revenues
- Align with related strategies

## STRATEGIC THEMES



Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators



Attract highest yield and growth markets



Make it easy to get here and visit



Establish, identify, and appoint tourism leadership



Develop responsible tourism



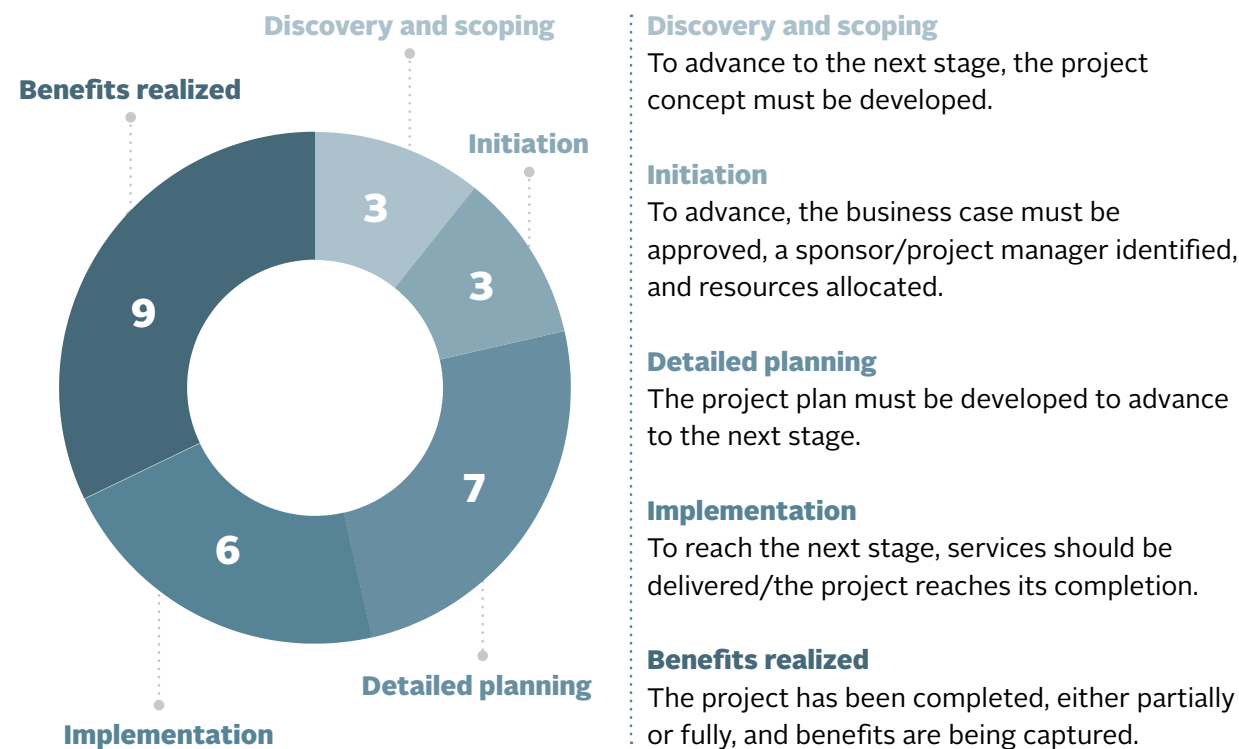
Be vibrant and alive, 365

**There were 28 initiatives identified to support the ITMP vision, for Halifax to be widely recognized as the favourite city in Canada.**

**The goals were clear: Grow tourism revenue and employment, enrich the lives of residents, and align with related strategies.**

Through the collective impact of combined efforts and resources of all tourism stakeholders, so much has been accomplished on the initiatives.

While benefits weren't achieved for each initiative, we are proud of the work that was put in by the tourism industry to reach the detailed planning or a further advanced stage for 75 per cent of them.



- Discovery and scoping**  
To advance to the next stage, the project concept must be developed.
- Initiation**  
To advance, the business case must be approved, a sponsor/project manager identified, and resources allocated.
- Detailed planning**  
The project plan must be developed to advance to the next stage.
- Implementation**  
To reach the next stage, services should be delivered/the project reaches its completion.
- Benefits realized**  
The project has been completed, either partially or fully, and benefits are being captured.

**Some initiatives thrived and succeeded through COVID-19, but for others, the pandemic proved to be an insurmountable challenge, as businesses and organizations shifted priorities and plans.**

Discover Halifax is excited to share news that the next chapter of the ITMP is beginning, to map the next five years of tourism growth in Halifax. By restarting community-driven conversations we will lead the effort to build upon work previously completed.

Alongside our partners, we will start the conversation and lay the groundwork for meaningful, community-focused goals for the future, to maximize tourism benefits for all 210 communities in the HRM and shine a spotlight on the diversity of the region.





## THANK YOU!

**Discover Halifax wishes to extend a huge thank you to all ITMP 2019 lead and partner organizations that contributed their input, knowledge, and expertise to the development of Halifax's first Integrated Tourism Master Plan.**

- Alderney Landing
- Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
- Arts and culture community organizations
- Atlantic Canada Cruise Association
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Black Business Initiative
- Black Cultural Centre
- Build Nova Scotia
- Business Improvement Districts
- Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia
- Destination Canada
- Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores
- Discover Halifax
- Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission
- Events East
- Events Nova Scotia
- Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse
- Friends of McNabs Island Society
- Government of Canada
- Halifax International Airport Authority
- Halifax music industry organizations
- Halifax Partnership
- Halifax Port Authority
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia
- Hotel Association of Nova Scotia
- Mi'kmaq communities
- Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Society
- Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency
- Nova Scotia Community College
- Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network
- Nova Scotia Parks
- Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance
- Parks Canada
- Private sector supports
- Province of Nova Scotia
- Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia
- Taste of Nova Scotia
- Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia
- Tourism Nova Scotia
- Wild Islands Tourism Advancement Partnership

# INITIATIVE ONE

## Create an investment filter to help assess impacts of proposed investments



Attract highest yield and growth markets



Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** Discover Halifax

**Partners:** Tourism Nova Scotia, Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), Halifax Partnership, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)

### COMPLETE

An early challenge identified in our research and consultation was that many plans were being presented to governments for investment as tourism projects, however there was no mechanism to evaluate or rank them.

We knew we needed to develop a consistent approach to evaluate these proposals, and ensure it included a way to prioritize investments in the industry.

This was the first initiative to be completed under the ITMP, and all the others that follow were assessed and evaluated using this filter.

The investment filter has also been used to assess the economic impact of large events in the region, such as 2023's North American Indigenous Games, and projects including the development of the Sheet Harbour Marina.

Additionally, Discover Halifax has acquired a calculator which is being used to evaluate the economic impact of all types of business events, festivals, etc. This new calculator is being broadly adopted across the country and was specifically tweaked for HRM to reflect our tax rates and input-output model.

We are now able to apply a consistent assessment of projects and events, and the benefits they bring to the visitor economy.

There is an opportunity for proponents and potential investors to use the tool more, and we will continue to build this expertise at Discover Halifax as we grow our destination development services.



# INITIATIVE TWO

## Attract more people to skilled labour program for the restaurant sector



Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia (RANS)

**Partners:** Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS), Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency

### ONGOING

The hospitality sector has been challenged to find employees since the COVID-19 pandemic, so partners in the tourism industry came together to help these businesses to the levels needed.

The Hotel Association of Nova Scotia launched the Halifax Hospitality Hiring Fair, an annual event that plays a crucial role in connecting job seekers with employers across the industry, including hotels, restaurants, events, the airport, and more.

Headed into its fourth year, this popular event offers opportunities from entry-level and part-time to career-oriented and full-time positions. Some hiring is even done on the spot. Events like this help to attract skilled labour and individuals focused on a long-time career in the sector, ensuring the industry thrives in the years to come.

Additionally, Discover Halifax is collaborating with RANS to enhance the culinary landscape of Nova Scotia. RANS has been key to advancing the sector through government advocacy, marketing, supplier partnerships, education, and community engagement.

This collaboration strengthens supplier networks and integrates local culinary offerings into tourism packages. It enriches the dining experience and supports a thriving restaurant ecosystem backed by strong community engagement and innovative strategies.

By guiding young people into skilled labour programs, the sector benefits from a steady stream of professionals who bring cultural richness and innovation, which enhances employment opportunities and addresses consumer demand for diverse and authentic dining experiences.



# INITIATIVE THREE

## Implement the Wild Islands plan



Attract highest yield and growth markets



Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** Wild Islands Tourism Advancement Partnership

**Partners:** Build Nova Scotia, Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores, Tourism Nova Scotia, HRM, Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), Black Business Initiative, Mi'kmaq communities

### ONGOING

The Wild Islands Coast is a breathtaking stretch along Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore that features approximately 750 islands, with access points for visitors in Musquodoboit Harbour, Sheet Harbour, and Sherbrooke.

In 2019, the [Wild Islands Coast Master Development Plan](#) was presented to partners that included design concepts, brand, interpretive approach, and a visitor services strategy.

The Wild Islands plan will enhance the visitor experience by connecting them to the water and islands, offering outdoor adventures that will make the region a signature destination. Discover Halifax supports this initiative

to empower the community and promote collaborative destination development, ensuring tourism benefits the Eastern Shore long-term.

While progress slowed over the last few years, local champions, community volunteers, and partner organizations have begun to reorganize. As we look ahead to the next five years of tourism planning and destination development, we hope to see the renewal of this project.

By utilizing the natural, cultural, and human resources of the Wild Islands Coast, we will foster a resilient, self-sufficient community rooted in local identity and heritage.





# INITIATIVE FOUR

## Enhance demand generators for designated arts, entertainment, and heritage districts



Attract highest yield and growth markets



Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators



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**Lead:** HRM

**Partners:** Business improvement districts, Build Nova Scotia, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (AGNS)

### ONGOING

The COVID-19 pandemic redefined the priorities of many organizations to navigate through uncertain economic times, and those involved in this initiative were no different. As envisioned, there hasn't been much progress, but as we look to the next phase of the ITMP, there are opportunities to review the potential of this initiative and reengage the sectors.

That being said, HRM has undertaken a large development with the Cogswell District Redevelopment Project. When completed, this project will transform underutilized highway infrastructure into a dynamic, mixed-use community in the heart of historic downtown Halifax.

The new Cogswell District will boost the appeal of Halifax as a destination through the creation of public spaces, parks, and green corridors that will draw visitors seeking a variety of retail, dining, and entertainment venues, offering a diverse range of attractions for both tourists and residents.

The blend of modern architecture alongside Halifax's historical character will provide a unique experience that marries contemporary urban living with rich cultural heritage. The area is also expected to host events, festivals, and cultural activities, establishing itself as a vibrant arts and entertainment hub.



# INITIATIVE FIVE

## Create an experience development program



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Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** Discover Halifax

**Partners:** Tourism Nova Scotia, RANS, Taste of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network (NSITEN), Black Cultural Centre, Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, Destination Canada

### ONGOING

Discover Halifax is exploring a customer service portal that will leverage Artificial Intelligence technology, and allow visitors to curate unique itineraries, based on specific inputs. Work is ongoing to collect the data, and most importantly, ensure the database is up to date with relevant and accurate information to provide the best visitor experience.

In collaboration, RANS and Discover Halifax have created a culinary experience program, integrating local culinary offerings into tourism packages which not only enriches the dining experience, but also supports a thriving restaurant ecosystem.

In addition, HRM has been working diligently to develop our region's rich cultural and historical heritage into immersive experiences. Through

both the Cultural Landscape Framework Study and Sharing Our Stories: HRM Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan, work has been taking shape to expand the visitor experience to the unique culture that has shaped our history.

Through the ITMP update, we will continue to work with NSITEN, the Africville Heritage Trust, and L'Acadie de Chezzetcook to identify further opportunities for cultural tourism.

Thanks to the planning and research already completed, Discover Halifax's newly established destination development team has a great starting framework to take initiatives forward, and build a comprehensive, sustainable cultural tourism program that honors Halifax's past while looking forward to its future.



# INITIATIVE SIX

## Launch Halifax Music City Strategy



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Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** Discover Halifax, Halifax Partnership, Halifax's music industry

**Partners:** Province of Nova Scotia

### ONGOING

Halifax has a growing number of music festivals that are gaining popularity among locals and visitors alike, and discussions about cementing Halifax's regional reputation as the hub for live music has been going on for years.

According to research, visitors often come to Halifax for a show and end up staying for various reasons. But getting them here is key, and the entertainment and music sectors are crucial to that initial research or interest.

The goal is to create a vibrant music ecosystem that attracts both local, national, and international audiences, positioning Halifax as a premier music destination.

In 2023, the Halifax Music Sector Growth Report was completed, creating the beginning of a strategy designed to foster long-term growth

for the music sector in Halifax by leveraging the region's musical diversity. The report highlighted the importance of nurturing both emerging and established musicians, ensuring they have the necessary resources, space, and support to advance their careers.

The report also highlighted the increasing need for a diverse and accessible array of music venues, the establishment of community hubs, and developing better mechanisms for audience engagement and promotion, especially through partnerships with tourism.

As we look ahead to the next phase of the ITMP, the sector will continue to champion Halifax as a music city, and we'll work with our community partners to ensure we are set up for future success.





# INITIATIVE SEVEN

## Develop and enhance culinary experience program



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Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** Discover Halifax, RANS

**Partners:** Taste of Nova Scotia, NSCC, Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance, Destination Canada

### ONGOING

Discover Halifax and RANS continue to collaborate to enhance the culinary scene through various initiatives, including marketing the region as a culinary destination, highlighting local chefs, unique dining experiences, and food festivals with extensive campaigns and social media.

Supporting its members with advocacy, training, and promotional activities, RANS also organizes events like restaurant weeks and culinary competitions to drive traffic to local eateries and foster community among restaurateurs.

These events, such as Dine Around, provide a platform for chefs to showcase their talents and for visitors and locals alike to explore diverse culinary offerings.

Together with municipal government and business improvement districts, we work to create partnerships with local producers, breweries, and wineries to promote farm-to-table dining experiences and sustainability, enhancing the overall dining experience.

Initiatives like food tours and culinary trails offer visitors immersive experiences that highlight the history, culture, and people behind the food, making Halifax a destination for culinary adventures.



# INITIATIVE EIGHT



## Create two events, including a signature event



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Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** Discover Halifax, HRM

**Partners:** Build Nova Scotia, Province of Nova Scotia, arts and culture community, private sector support

### ONGOING

Events were critical during COVID-19, and a combined effort by partners, stakeholders, and governments to fund new and innovative ways to host them contributed to the success of recovery in Halifax.

One such event, the Evergreen Festival, was held at a variety of outdoor locations across HRM in November and December, enabling people to gather but still maintain a physical distance from one another. It has been held for four years running, thanks to a multi-year funding commitment from governments.

There is a new team dedicated to festivals and events at Discover Halifax, which will further

support a vibrant calendar of events and economic activity, while working collaboratively with industry stakeholders.

Working with our partners at HRM, Events East, and Events Nova Scotia, the team will develop a Regional Event Strategy and an Event Attraction Strategy for Halifax.

While it takes time to build awareness and establish a signature event (think the Calgary Stampede) at a destination, over the next few years, initiating a unique and memorable experience to attract visitors will be a priority.



# INITIATIVE NINE

## Create a community-led vision for the Dartmouth Waterfront



Make it easy to get here and visit



Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** HRM, Build Nova Scotia

**Partners:** Alderney Landing, Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission (DDBC), Halifax Port Authority (HPA)

### ONGOING

Creating a connected, pedestrian-focused public space that incorporates growth and development opportunities is key as we look to plan the future of the Dartmouth Waterfront, and in 2024, Regional Council approved work to create a strategy for the area.

In partnership with HPA, Alderney Landing, King's Wharf, and DDBC, the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project combines development of an open space plan with creating functional emergency access infrastructure.

**The Revitalization Project has many objectives, including:**

- Establishing a vision for the Dartmouth Waterfront.
- Creating enjoyable, pedestrian-focused gathering spaces.

- Enhancing active transportation connectivity.
- Providing emergency access options along the waterfront.
- Better connecting Downtown Dartmouth to the waterfront.

The team at Discover Halifax continue to work directly with municipal staff to provide support for the public planning process. We will also take on review of the tourism carrying capacity of Downtown Dartmouth through the next phase of the ITMP planning work, and will provide that information to our partners.



# INITIATIVE TEN

## Enhance the canoe-kayaking competition facility on Lake Banook



Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia

**Partners:** HRM

### COMPLETE

When Lake Banook was chosen to host the 2022 Canoe Sprint World Championships, improvements were recommended to prepare for the competition, and to add legacy pieces to the site.

To enable Lake Banook to be more functional, new accessible docks and new bleachers for spectators were purchased. A staircase and terraced walls have also been installed. There were upgrades to Birch Cove Park, where an athletes' village is typically set up for

competitions, including accessible washrooms, an expanded gym, enhanced facility storage, and development of the trail system.

These enhancements ensure Lake Banook remains a world-class venue for future competitions and continues to be a community asset, thanks to investment from all three levels of government.



# INITIATIVE ELEVEN

## Implement the Peggy's Cove master plan



Develop responsible tourism



Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** Build Nova Scotia

**Partners:** Tourism Nova Scotia, ACOA

### COMPLETE

Peggy's Cove is one of Nova Scotia's most magnetic attractions, emulating the quintessential scenery that visitors love and residents cherish. But it is a living community first, with an active fishing village that is home to year-round residents.

Its popularity had created longstanding challenges of crowds, traffic congestion, maintenance, and inadequate infrastructure. In addition, it wasn't accessible to everyone.

In 2018, through the Tourism Revitalization of Icons Program, Build Nova Scotia began work to improve the experience for locals and visitors alike, working closely with the community to create a comprehensive plan.

Building on the existing funding, a total investment of nearly \$10 million was made

from the provincial and federal governments to support the first phase of the Peggy's Cove Infrastructure Improvement Strategy.

The work included many different projects, including road and parking improvements, pedestrian infrastructure, accessible public washrooms, and a viewing deck that is an accessible place for everyone.

The project has brought rave reviews from locals and visitors, increased visitation and business activity, and created a renewed interest in private investment in the village, contributing to enhanced experiences for everyone.



# INITIATIVE TWELVE

## Fully implement the Harbour Islands Visitor Experience Strategy (Georges and McNabs)



Develop responsible  
tourism



Build and enhance  
Halifax's key  
demand generators

**Lead:** Build Nova Scotia, Parks Canada

**Partners:** Nova Scotia Parks, Friends of McNabs Island Society, Tourism Nova Scotia

### GEORGES ISLAND - COMPLETE

Georges Island has become a pivotal addition to the tourism landscape of Halifax since opening to the public in 2020. Previously, this historical gem could only be admired from a distance, but now it has welcomed over 30,000 visitors who can explore its rich history firsthand.

Designated a National Historic Site in 1965, Georges Island remained inaccessible until the installation of a new wharf made public visits possible. The story of its opening is a testament to the power of partnerships, realized through collaborative funding from the Government of Canada, the Province of Nova Scotia, Build Nova Scotia, and Parks Canada.

The accessibility of Georges Island has been significantly enhanced by the transportation services provided by local tour operator Ambassatours Gray Line. This service ensures that both residents and visitors can conveniently embark on adventures to the island, making it an attractive destination.

As Georges Island continues to evolve, it promises to create even more memorable experiences for its visitors. Its development into a fully operational tourist attraction will enrich the cultural and historical offerings of Halifax, and contribute to economic growth through tourism.



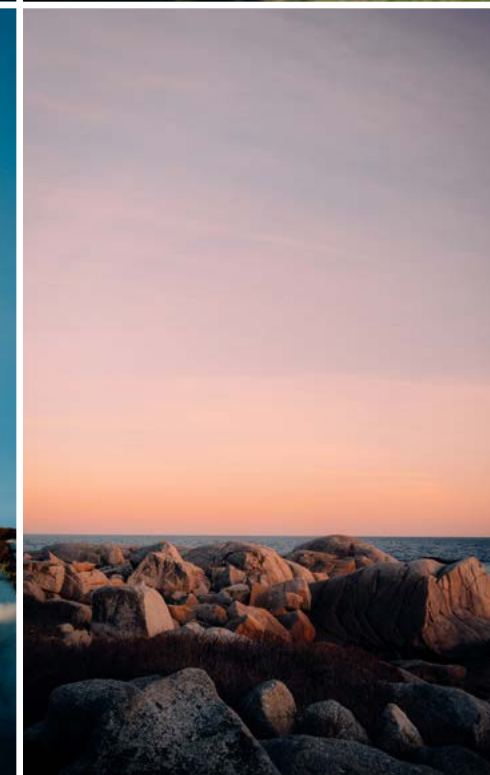
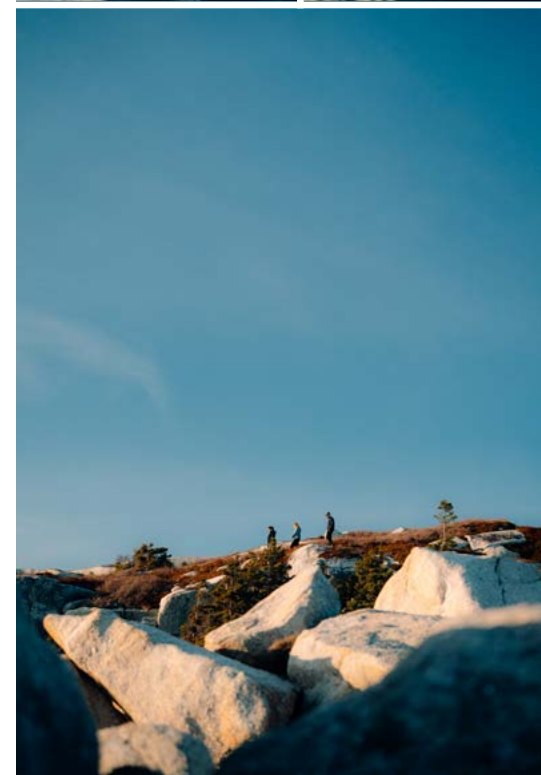
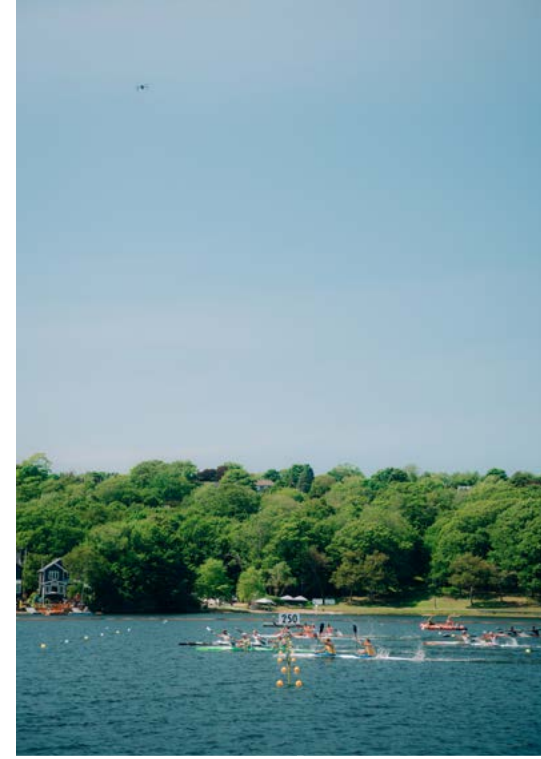
## MCNABS ISLAND – ONGOING

The destination development challenge for McNabs Island centres around balancing accessibility and infrastructure development with environmental preservation. Although McNabs is a short boat ride from Eastern Passage, limited access via charter services restricts visitor numbers to the island. The development of any necessary infrastructure such as docks, trails, and educational centers must be done sustainably to protect the natural landscape.

Environmental challenges include a changing coastline due to rising sea levels and storms, which threaten diverse ecosystems and habitats on McNabs Island.

A community group formed, Friends of McNabs Island Society, to support preservation and promotional efforts, but they face ongoing resource constraints as a volunteer non-profit.

During consultation and engagement for the ITMP update, we will discuss how to best create an engaging visitor experience without compromising preservation to ensure the treasures of McNabs Island can be enjoyed by future generations.







# INITIATIVE THIRTEEN

## Implement the Marine Visitation Plan



Build and enhance Halifax's key demand generators

**Lead:** Build Nova Scotia

**Partners:** Marine infrastructure and supply chain businesses

### ONGOING

There is a series of investments and projects associated with the Marine Visitation Plan, and given that, this isn't an initiative to be completed per se.

These projects, along with other significant developments along the Halifax Waterfront, will continue to build on Halifax's ocean advantage in a way that supports economic prosperity. Work under the plan will continue in the years to come, but there are certainly a few stories to tell about activities complete and underway.

If you've visited the Halifax Waterfront recently, you'll enjoy more public space at the water's edge thanks to an expanded boardwalk and more wharfage near the Salt Yard area. For those accessing the waterfront by boat, there is more than 1.5 kilometers of public berth space, and over 700 meters of floating docks.

Further down the boardwalk near the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, work is underway to

improve coastal infrastructure and enhance the visitor experience of museum-goers and waterfront users. The revitalization of the Acadia Wharf is a collaborative project led by Build Nova Scotia, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, and other partners.

Marine enhancements throughout the region add value for visitors and give residents amenities to access and enjoy, and in 2021, a dock and boardwalk were completed in Fisherman's Cove. The dock provides access to boats, which helps increase visitation to the 200-year-old working fishing village.

In the St. Margarets Bay region, marine enhancements and infrastructure improvements were supported by HRM as the region prepared to host the 2022 World Sailing Championship. The Shining Waters Marina and Boatyard has recently completed some upgrades as well, now offering Standup Paddle Board rentals, a boat maintenance team, and an onsite taproom.



# INITIATIVE FOURTEEN

## Develop the new waterfront art district for everyone to experience art and culture



Be vibrant and  
alive, 365



Build and enhance  
Halifax's key  
demand generators

**Lead:** AGNS, Build Nova Scotia, HRM

### PAUSED

The concept for the new art gallery and arts district on the Salter Block of the Halifax Waterfront was bold, focused on people, art, and culture to create an inspiring and inclusive environment.

Unfortunately, due to rising inflation and increased construction costs, the project has been paused indefinitely.





# INITIATIVE FIFTEEN

## Complete a needs analysis for additional and enhanced outdoor performance venues



Be vibrant and  
alive, 365



Build and enhance  
Halifax's key  
demand generators

**Lead:** HRM

### COMPLETE

Halifax has become a prominent destination for hosting national and international events, showcasing our ability to manage large-scale, diverse gatherings.

Successfully hosting events such as the 2022 Canoe Sprint World Championships, the 2023 North American Indigenous Games, the 2024 Juno Awards, and the first-ever Canada Sail Grand Prix have demonstrated Halifax's readiness and capability to handle significant events, and have further solidified our reputation of delivering world-class event experiences.

To make sure we're ready for the future, in collaboration with HRM, Events Nova Scotia, and Events East, we are conducting a comprehensive study to further develop Halifax as a premier destination for cultural and sporting events.

This work is about discovering opportunity and untapped potential, while identifying possible risks, and will involve a detailed inventory and analysis of existing venues to assess their

readiness to host, based on national and international technical requirements. It will also assess local organizations' capacity to host these events.

**The study is underway and expected to be complete by year end. Identified stakeholders, including venue operators, producers, provincial sport organizations, key partners, arts organizations, have been asked to participate to help:**

- Ensure our event history list is up to date.
- Obtain specific information on current event hosting venue capacity.
- Understand the capacity of event organizations to plan, organize, and deliver events.

The information provided will help inform discussions on the Regional Event Strategy and the Event Attraction Strategy, and is focused on ensuring Halifax continues to deliver world-class experiences.



# INITIATIVE SIXTEEN

## Establish an Events Attraction Office



Attract highest  
yield and growth  
markets



Be vibrant and  
alive, 365

**Lead:** HRM, Discover Halifax

**Partners:** Events East

### COMPLETE

In 2023, Discover Halifax established a business unit dedicated to festivals and events, which will further support a vibrant calendar of events and economic activity, while working collaboratively with industry partners and stakeholders, Events East, Events Nova Scotia, HRM, and the province.

Working closely with local businesses, organizations, and event planners, we will showcase the assets and attractions of our region, and play a role in driving tourism and economic growth by creating and attracting successful and memorable events.

We will also provide support to encourage and to grow local festivals in our community. Working with our partners at HRM, Events East, and Events Nova Scotia, the team will develop a Regional Event Strategy and an Event Attraction Strategy for Halifax.

Halifax has much to offer in terms of venues, services, and experiences. This new business unit provides a range of supporting services to help event organizers plan and execute their events, including assistance with logistics, marketing, and promotion.



# INITIATIVE SEVENTEEN

## Expand stopover program at Halifax Stanfield



Attract highest yield and growth markets



Make it easy to get here and visit

**Lead:** Halifax International Airport Authority (HIAA), Discover Halifax

### PAUSED

Working with the Halifax International Airport Authority, and our partners at WestJet, we launched the Stopover Halifax program in 2019.

You can do a lot in one day in Halifax, from walking the bustling waterfront, hiking scenic trails at the ocean's edge, or exploring iconic Peggy's Cove. A stopover program allows passengers to extend their travels by stopping over in a connecting city enroute to or from their destination to explore the region through curated experience packages.

But the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped much of the travel industry and major airlines have adopted new strategies to adapt.

Discover Halifax is optimistic of how this new environment can be leveraged to support growth in Halifax, and Atlantic Canada as a whole. Through the next phase of the ITMP, we will further explore these opportunities with our partners.



# INITIATIVE EIGHTEEN

## Develop business case for increased marketing investment in fly markets



Attract highest yield and growth markets



Make it easy to get here and visit

**Lead:** Discover Halifax, HIAA

### COMPLETE

Thanks to a historic agreement developed between HRM and the Hotel Association of Nova Scotia in 2023, Discover Halifax secured financing to permanently expand its marketing program outside the Maritime provinces to include domestic cities with direct flights to Halifax.

And we're seeing results from our pilot project in 2021 and 2022. Website traffic, a strong measure of interest and intent to travel, has grown extensively in the new primary fly markets of Ontario, Alberta, and Newfoundland.

In 2022, website traffic growth from these new markets saw large increases: 79 per

cent in Alberta, 178 per cent in Ontario, and a whopping 1,775 per cent in Newfoundland and Labrador. Out-of-region provinces with minimal investment received only an eight per cent lift over the same comparison period.

Our reputation score continues to climb among Canadian fly-market respondents and will continue work to build trust as a destination among these potential visitors. Our goal is to reach new audiences and show what makes Halifax a unique and unforgettable destination.



# INITIATIVE NINETEEN

## Develop an incentive program to attract strategic conferences in low season



Attract highest yield and growth markets



Be vibrant and alive, 365

**Lead:** Discover Halifax

**Partners:** Events East, Events Nova Scotia, Halifax Partnership

### COMPLETE

Competing for meetings and conferences is extremely competitive, nationally and globally. It has a long sales cycle with most events planned between two and five years in advance, and most Canadian destinations have formalized incentive programs to help attract these events.

Halifax was the only major destination in Canada to not have a program in place, and one was needed to secure strategic events in investment industries like oceans, life and science, technology, and events between November and May.

By offering financial support to conference organizers who choose to host their events in Halifax during the low-season months, we reduce the financial burden for conference

organizers.

**Financial incentives could be used by event organizers for many initiatives, including:**

- Expanding marketing efforts to delegates.
- Transportation to and from the airport, or around the destination.
- Enhance the overall delegate experience.

The program was launched in 2022 and is showing success. By targeting conferences during the low season, we will boost tourism and generate economic activity during a traditionally slow time for the industry. Also, the program will help diversify the region's economy and establish Halifax as a year-round destination for business events.



# INITIATIVE TWENTY

## Adopt ride-hailing services



Make it easy to get here and visit

**Lead:** HRM

**Partners:** Halifax Partnership, Discover Halifax

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### COMPLETE

When people visit modern cities, they expect access to certain services, like accessible transportation, and Halifax's adoption of ride-sharing services made it easier for people to get around.

In 2020, Regional Council approved ride-hailing services, like Uber and Lyft. These services have added to the availability of reliable transportation and have provided visitors access to ride-hailing services common in cities globally.

While in place for years, ride-hailing services are still making improvements to the services they provide, including expanding access to areas of the region not serviced by other transportation options. For example, Uber launched in Halifax in December 2020, but drivers had only been active in the urban core and some suburban areas. In May 2024, Uber announced it has expanded to all areas within HRM, from St. Margarets Bay to the Eastern Shore.



# INITIATIVE TWENTY-ONE

## Action the Halifax Rapid Transit Strategy



Make it easy to get here and visit



Develop responsible tourism

**Lead:** HRM

**Partners:** Provincial government, Federal government

### ONGOING

Halifax's Rapid Transit Strategy includes a network of four Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines and three new ferry routes, aimed at creating more compact, walkable communities and offering alternatives to private vehicle use.

The proposed BRT lines would operate every ten minutes and will be within walking distance of approximately 120,000 residents, reducing the need to expand the road network. The proposed ferry routes will provide direct connections between downtown Halifax and new terminals at Mill Cove, Larry Uteck, and Shannon Park, providing reliable service with faster travel times to downtown than by car.

In 2024, a significant joint investment by all three levels of government was announced to develop one of the new ferry routes, the Mill Cove Ferry Service, which would feature

five electric ferries, two new terminals, and a maintenance facility. This new ferry service will not only address traffic congestion, but it will set HRM up for future population growth in the suburbs.

In addition, encouraging the use of this new route downtown supports HRM climate change goals as the new ferry terminals, at Mill Cove and replacing the old Halifax terminal, will be net-zero.

A bridge over the existing CN rail line in Bedford will also connect buses, cars, pedestrians, and cyclists to the Mill Cove terminal. This project is aligned with the Joint Regional Transportation Agency's Regional Transportation Plan, which focuses on the safe, efficient, and coordinated movement of people and goods throughout the region.



As a destination, we understand the importance of sustainability and eco-friendly travel options. The improved connectivity between different modes of transportation ensures visitors can seamlessly move between key attractions, fostering a more enjoyable and accessible experience.

The development of Halifax's Rapid Transit Strategy and the Mill Cove Ferry Service will improve local public transit and boost the appeal of Halifax as a modern and sustainable destination.





# INITIATIVE TWENTY-TWO

## Support policy process for short-term rentals



Make it easy to get here and visit



Develop responsible tourism

**Lead:** HRM

**Partners:** Discover Halifax

### ONGOING

As cities and regions around the world were considering and adopting policies regulating short-term rentals (STRs) like AirBnB or Vrbo, Nova Scotia and Halifax were no different. In 2019, discussions and research began to understand the impact of STRs in HRM communities.

STRs were shown to account for 15 per cent of demand in Halifax for overnight stays, and were growing at a rate exceeding traditional accommodation, such as hotels.

Informed by nearly 4,000 survey responses from residents and hosts, a jurisdictional scan, and feedback from the industry, hotels, and

the provincial government, Regional Council was presented with a report, recommending changes to ensure a fair and accountable system for the STRs. And in fall 2023, a new by-law was adopted, regulating STRs and establishing consistent region-wide policies.

While the heavy lift is complete, there is still work being done on the by-law as STR owners, and HRM, adapt to the new regulations and learn from how it's applied.



# INITIATIVE TWENTY-THREE

## Increase the availability of public washrooms throughout the region



Make it easy to get here and visit

**Lead:** HRM

**Partners:** Build Nova Scotia

### ONGOING

The ability to find accessible, clean public washrooms throughout the region can significantly impact visitor experience, and throughout the initial ITMP consultation process, we heard that access needed to increase. As project lead, HRM has made progress in this area, developing a process for park washroom improvements.

In August 2020, a point reference was added to the Open Data Map, showing the location of public washrooms available for use. In August 2021, new accessible washrooms were added to Fort Needham Park, enhancing HRM's overall network of public washrooms.

As project partners, Build Nova Scotia ensures that access to public washrooms is discussed as part of community engagement and public space planning with partners. This work includes the Cunard Project and the Salt Yard area on the Halifax Waterfront, and accessible public

washrooms built in key areas at Peggy's Cove. Stand-alone public washrooms in some rural areas of HRM can become expensive, underlying the importance of seeking opportunities to partner with private sector developments, or other local initiatives, to increase access for the public.

HRM's Rural Recreation Strategy recommends adding facilities to rural parks. Like those found in national parks and campgrounds, access to a washroom is crucial for increasing the visitor experience, encouraging longer stays, and making parks more accessible. By addressing infrastructure gaps, the strategy makes rural areas more attractive to tourists, supporting community well-being and generating economic benefits.



# INITIATIVE TWENTY-FOUR

## Internet for Nova Scotia – improve broadband throughout the region



Make it easy to get here and visit

**Lead:** Build Nova Scotia

### ONGOING

Like residents, visitors expect high-quality internet and cellular network access. They use these services to book experiences online, make accommodation reservations, check-in, post and research reviews, and access maps for directions. Reliable internet is paramount and the Internet for Nova Scotia Initiative is helping ensure visitors are connected.

As of July 2024, over 98,000 homes and businesses, of 103,000 identified as underserved, have access to high-speed internet through the Initiative. To date, there is coverage over approximately 99 per cent of homes and businesses. Projects are currently underway to deliver reliable, high-speed access to reach 99.99 per cent of homes and businesses across the province.

This is an incredible achievement, and Build Nova Scotia believes we will be among the first provinces in Canada to reach this level of coverage.

In November 2022, the Satellite Internet Service Rebate Program expanded to additional homes and businesses that didn't have access to high-speed internet, including those in a current project area. The rebate continues and will cover the one-time costs for eligible homes and businesses to set up satellite internet, including hardware, taxes, shipping and installation, up to a maximum of \$1,000.



# INITIATIVE TWENTY-FIVE

## Evolve Discover Halifax to become backbone organization for ITMP



Develop responsible tourism



Establish, identify, and appoint tourism leadership

**Lead:** HRM

**Partners:** Discover Halifax

### COMPLETE

The creation of a destination development services business unit within Discover Halifax in 2023 signified a strategic investment that will enrich the visitor experience, ensure long-term sustainability, and support a community-first approach to growth in the tourism sector.

The expanded focus will ensure Halifax develops as a destination, reflecting a growing trend among organizations to take a more holistic approach to maximize tourism benefits. This will also include supporting the work and progress of the ITMP into the future.

Moving the needle on the ITMP requires an approach that can mobilize resources necessary to positively impact outcomes. No single organization can do this effectively on their own, and being the organization behind the ITMP for all tourism organizations is an example of the power of collective impact.

Discover Halifax will help coordinate the many organizations and partners that benefit from tourism in our region, combining the efforts and resources of multiple entities in a common agenda.

As we look to the next phase of the ITMP, Discover Halifax will try to create new opportunities for local businesses and job growth in the tourism sector, and ensure our destination reflects a growing recognition of the importance of sustainable tourism practices. By taking a long-term view and investing in destination development, Halifax is positioning itself to become a more competitive and appealing destination in the years to come.



# INITIATIVE TWENTY-SIX

## Develop a plan for sustainable growth of the cruise sector



Develop responsible tourism



Establish, identify, and appoint tourism leadership

**Lead:** Discover Halifax, HPA

**Partners:** Atlantic Canada Cruise Association

### ONGOING

Halifax is the marquee cruise port in Atlantic Canada, welcoming hundreds of thousands of cruise guests in a typical year, from April until early November.

These passengers and the cruise sector provide economic benefits to our region, but there are sustainability concerns, particularly regarding growth. There is a desire to avoid challenges in the future, such as over-tourism, by developing new onshore experiences and dispersing benefits more effectively throughout the region.

Using Geographic Information System (GIS) modeling, HPA, HRM, and Discover Halifax are working together to understand the carrying capacity of our major attractions. This research will inform planning discussions by visually showing pressure points and opportunities, particularly in areas of interest like the Halifax and Dartmouth Waterfronts, parks and historic sites, beaches, trails, and other major attractions.





# INITIATIVE TWENTY-SEVEN

## Develop the business case for heritage tourism



Establish, identify,  
and appoint tourism  
leadership

**Lead:** Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia

**Partners:** Province of Nova Scotia

### ONGOING

Heritage tourism boosts economic growth, and fosters community engagement and empowerment by involving local communities in tourism initiatives. It also promotes cultural preservation and education, fostering a deeper appreciation of our heritage.

Halifax aims to secure a position as a premier heritage tourism destination, enriching experiences for residents and visitors while preserving its unique cultural legacy, and HRM has been working diligently to develop the region's cultural and historical heritage into immersive experiences.

Through both the Cultural Landscape Framework Study and Sharing Our Stories: HRM Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan, work has been taking shape to expand the visitor experience to the unique culture that has shaped our history.

- In 2022, the Africville Heritage Trust presented at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), seeking designation as an international site of historic significance. The designation would provide opportunities for international cultural tourism to the site and highlight the importance of Africville's unique heritage to Halifax's recent past.
- A world-class interpretive center would serve as the cornerstone of this development, making Africville a pivotal attraction for cultural tourism and promoting a deeper understanding of the African Nova Scotian experience.
- Heritage trails and pathways play a key role in connecting traditional routes, historic roads, and significant sites like the Shubenacadie Canal Waterway. The



Mi'kmaq have deep ties to these lands and waterways, a connection that dates back thousands of years and is vital to their cultural heritage.

The waterway has been a crucial route for the Mi'kmaq, linking communities from Kjiptuk to Nova Scotia's interior. Artifacts found along the waterway, some over 4,000 years old, highlight their enduring presence and history in this region. These trails enhance public access and provide an engaging way for visitors to connect with the diverse histories of our region, making the experience educational and enjoyable.

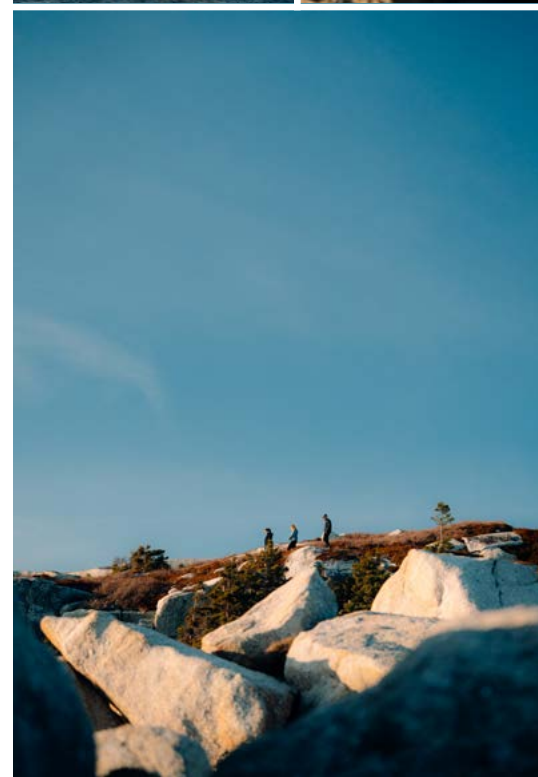
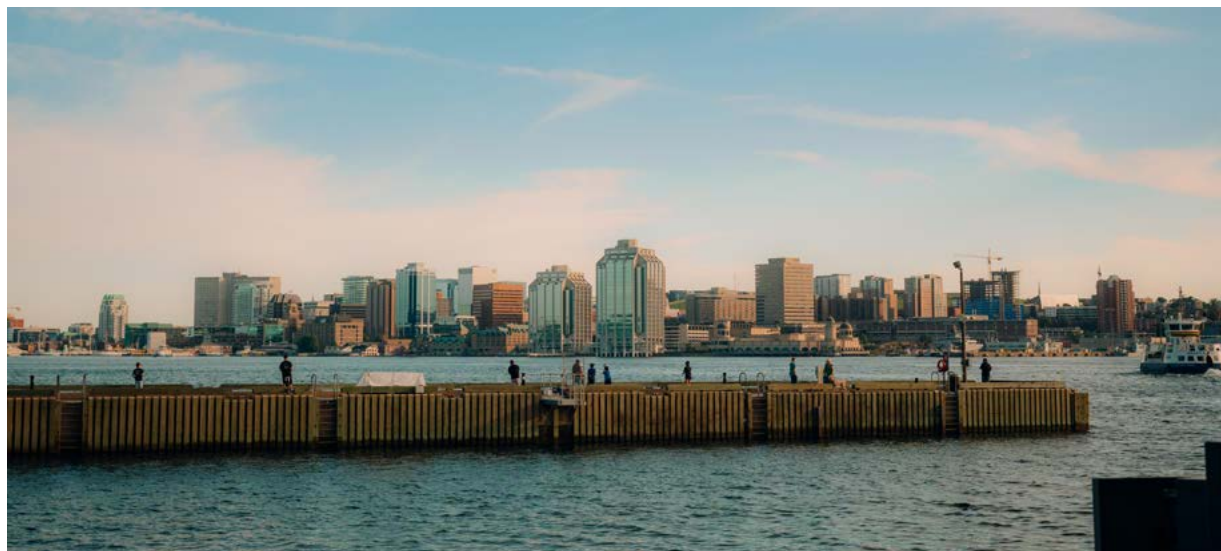
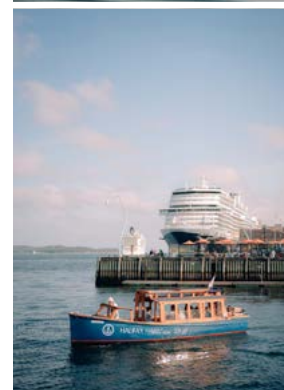
- Key cultural and historical districts like the Hydrostone District, Granville Street Historic District, Schmitville Heritage District, and other emerging areas in Halifax are also central to this program.

By preserving and promoting these historical districts, we help transform them into vibrant, living museums with events,

guided tours, and interactive exhibits. This approach benefits visitors and local businesses alike, boosting foot traffic and economic activity.

- Coastal and rural villages such as Peggy's Cove, Hubbards, and the Acadian community of Chezzetcook add another layer to our cultural tourism tapestry. Their unique traditions and scenic settings offer a backdrop for storytelling and cultural immersion. Highlighting these locations draws attention to their historical significance and encourages visitors to explore beyond the urban center.

Thanks to the planning and research already completed, Discover Halifax's newly established destination development team has a great starting framework to take these initiatives forward, and build a comprehensive, sustainable cultural tourism program that honors Halifax's past while looking forward to its future.





# INITIATIVE TWENTY-EIGHT

## Supporting the development of Wije'winen Centre



Develop responsible  
tourism



Establish, identify,  
and appoint tourism  
leadership

**Lead:** Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Society

### ONGOING

Much progress to build a new Wije'winen Centre (or Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre) has been made, and there's a lot to celebrate.

Envisioned with sustainability in mind, the new Wije'winen Centre will feature solar panels, a green roof, and a rainwater harvesting system. In a nod to Turtle Island, and with respect to the Indigenous teachings that originate with the turtle itself, the facility will be shaped as a turtle, and incorporate natural landscapes throughout.

The Mi'kmaq have a long and rich history in Nova Scotia, and the new Wije'winen Centre is an important step towards recognizing and celebrating this heritage. It will provide a welcome and supportive space for Mi'kmaq and non-Indigenous people who are interested in learning more about the culture.

The federal and provincial governments have committed financial support to the reimaged Wije'winen Centre, totaling approximately \$50

million. And HRM has sold the former Red Cross building site to the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Society for \$1.

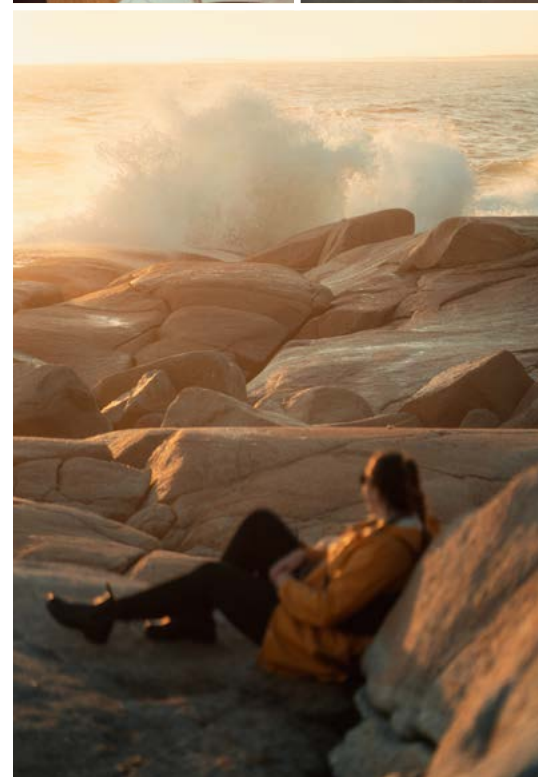
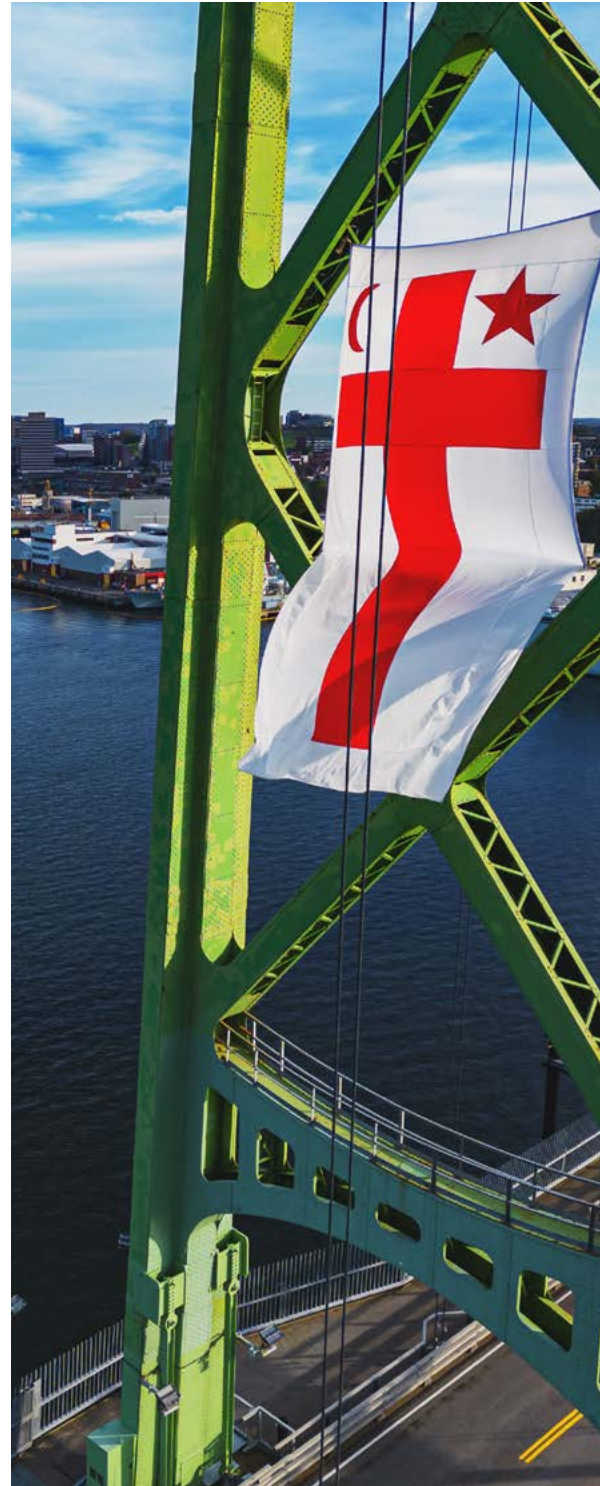
At the edge of Citadel Hill, then new Wije'winen Centre is designed to serve a growing and diverse Indigenous population with expanded programs, a community gathering space, and a new health clinic. It will also include services for the non-Indigenous community and include space for truth and reconciliation, as well as other programming.

In 2024, a Cultural Tourism Strategy was released for the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, focused on promoting Indigenous tourism by offering authentic experiences. The strategy aims to build awareness of Mi'kmaq culture through guided tours, traditional music and dance performances, culinary experiences, crafting workshops, and off-site excursions. The Wije'winen Centre plans to collaborate with local tour operators, tourism promoters,



and educational institutions to market these experiences and attract a diverse audience.

This work will be a path to economic opportunities and tourism capacity building within the Indigenous community, while ensuring cultural sensitivity and environmental responsibility in all offerings.





The logo for Discover Halifax is centered on the page. It features the word "DISCOVER" in a smaller, uppercase font above the word "HALIFAX" in a larger, bold, uppercase font. The text is white and is flanked by several short, white, horizontal lines that create a sense of motion or a stylized graphic element.

DISCOVER  
**HALIFAX**