

Special Planning Area Designation

Special Planning Area (SPA) designations are intended to help accelerate housing development within the HRM.

Designation of SPAs occurs by the Minister through recommendations of the Executive Panel on Housing in HRM

A Special Planning Area is an area designated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the recommendation of the Executive Panel, which allows the Minister to assume authority for planning approvals in those areas.

Guiding Principles for SPA Consideration:

- Developments must be within Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), and as such;
- HRM is the primary planning organization with respect to housing developments in the municipality;
- Ordinarily, developments considered for designation should be the subject of an existing application to the HRM.
- Developments must include an acceptable commencement date.

SPA Evaluation Criteria

Typically, developments considered for designation as a Special Planning Area will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- i. Site Suitability: For example, water/wastewater and/or environmental studies complete and adequate infrastructure in place or funding secured for same;
- ii. Transportation Ready or Funded: Transportation studies complete and adequate infrastructure in place or funding secured for same (i.e., supports climate friendly multi-modal transportation)
- iii. Mix of Housing Types: Development proposes or could accommodate a mix of tenure and housing types and/or contributes to densifying the area (i.e., Single-unit, multi-unit, townhome, supporting multi-demographic housing needs, etc.);
- iv. Regional Plan Alignment: Development alignment consistent with the most current HRM Regional Municipal Planning Strategy;

- v. Community Benefit: Development ideally includes affordable housing, increasing green/park space/recreational amenities, cultural indoor space, long term care, or primary healthcare component.
- vi. Quick Opportunities: Development is feasible to quickly translate into built units.
- vii. Priority Alignment: Development alignment with provincial and municipal housing priorities such as Land for Housing Project, Provincial Housing Needs Assessment, and non-profit housing component of builds; and

Requirements Once Designated

Developers that receive SPA designation will be required to:

- Provide written confirmation they can meet established timelines.
- Submit regular progress reports to the Executive Panel.
- Comply with all environmental, permitting and standard HRM planning process requirements.

SPAs are one of several initiatives the Executive Panel on Housing is undertaking to expedite development in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The Executive Panel is working to create an environment over the long term that will facilitate increased housing supply of all types. This includes implementing the 15 recommendations found in the [HRM Housing Development Barrier Review](#).

However, the Executive Panel remains interested in learning more about new and innovative ways to responsibly accelerate housing development within the HRM. If you have any suggestions you would like to share, please contact us by email: housingtaskforce@novascotia.ca.

Relevant links

Below are the links to:

- [Maps of the Special Planning Areas](#)
- [HRM Special Planning Area Site](#)
- [Executive Panel Terms of Reference](#)

- [HRM Housing Development Barrier Review](#)
- [Regulations Under the Housing in HRM Act](#)
- [Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act](#)