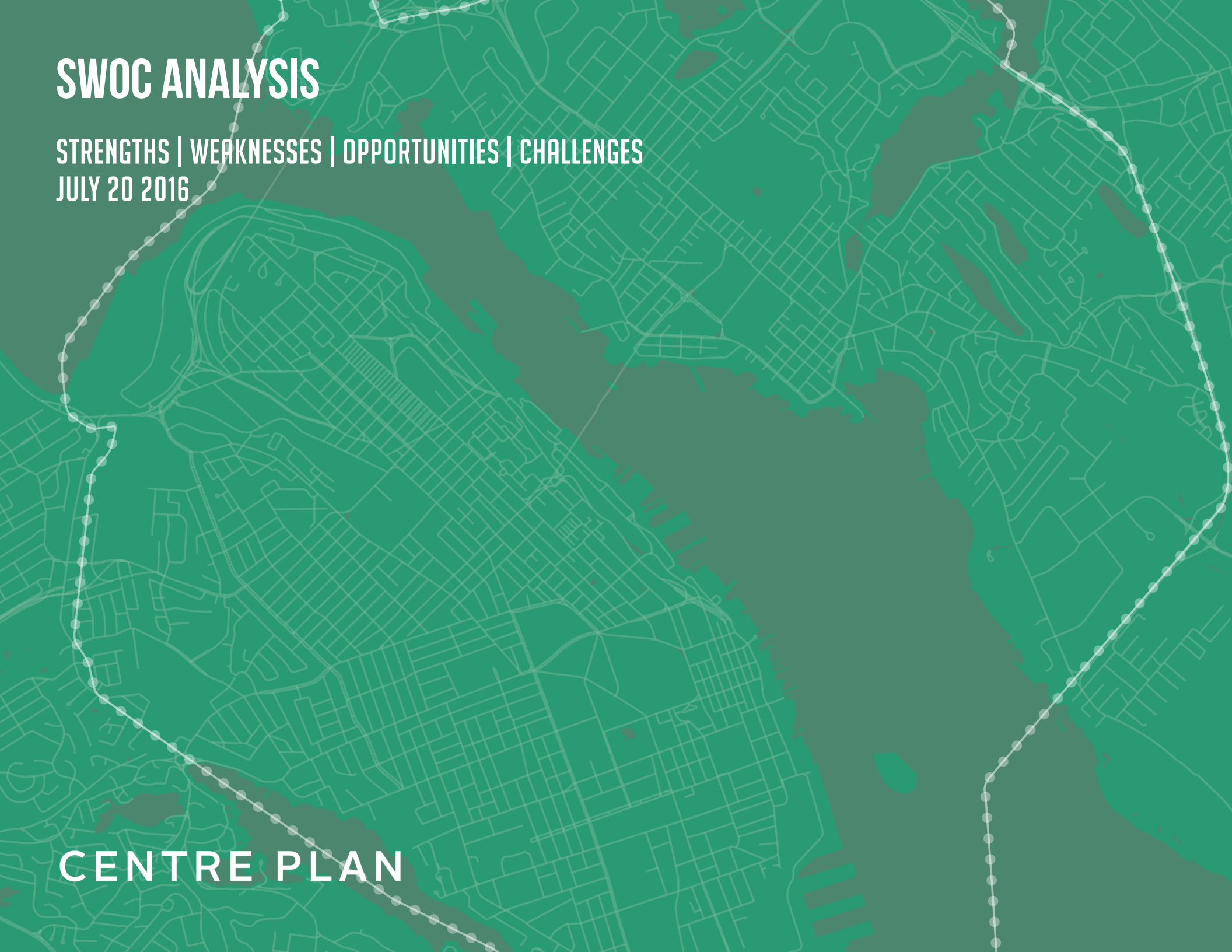


SWOC ANALYSIS



STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES | OPPORTUNITIES | CHALLENGES

JULY 20 2016

CENTRE PLAN

Prepared for:

Halifax Regional Municipality

Prepared by:

O2 Planning + Design, Inc.
& UPLAND Studio

O2 UPLAND

CENTRE PLAN

LAND USE + DESIGN	2
HOUSING	4
PUBLIC SPACES + PLACES	6
SUSTAINABILITY	8
MOBILITY	10
JOB + ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	12
CULTURE + HERITAGE	14

This SWOC Analysis is comprised of a series of thematic mapping and analysis exercises used to identify key features within the Regional Centre.

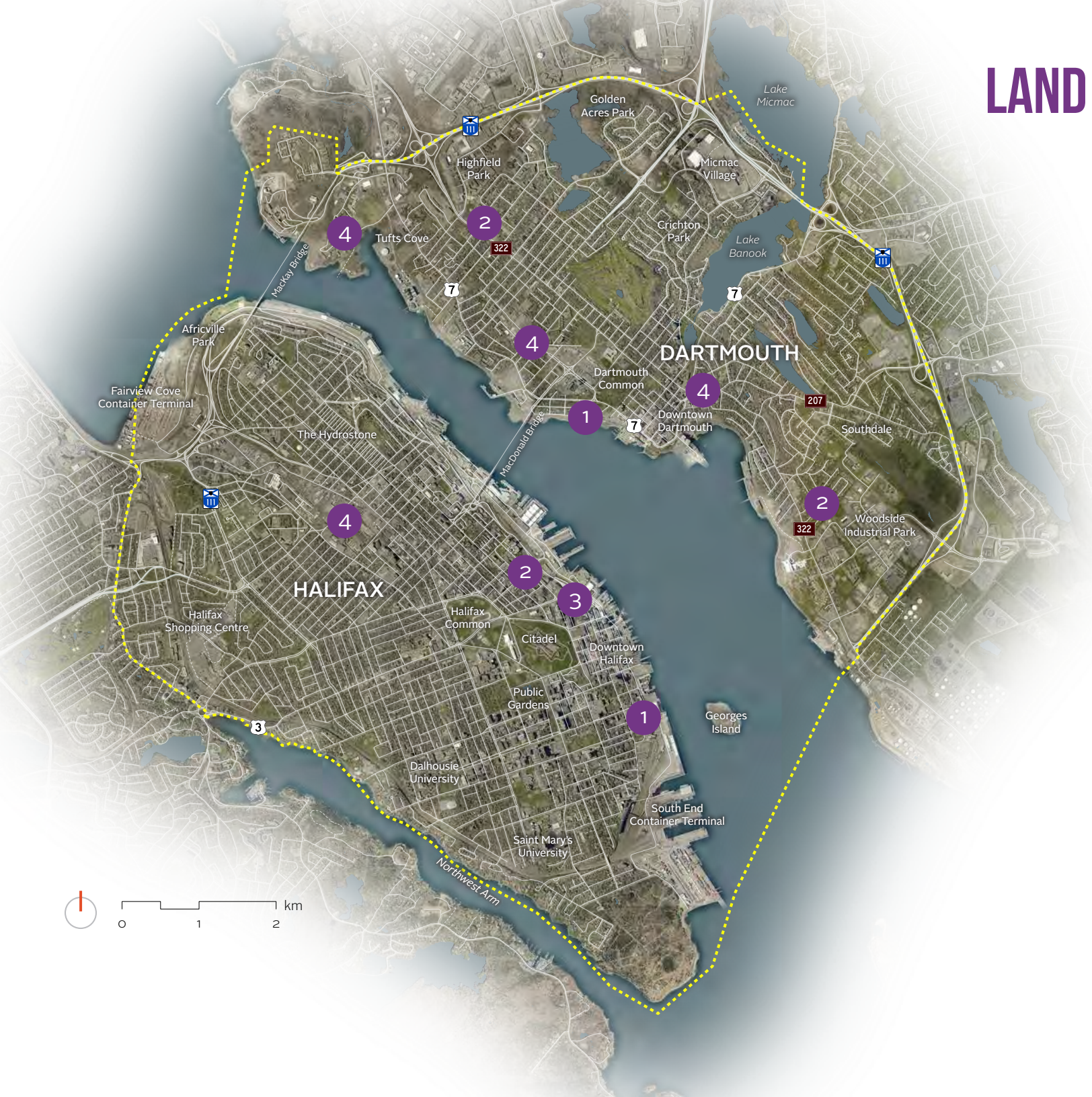
The content for this SWOC is the result of feedback collected and summarized from the public during a strengths and opportunities mapping exercise at the Centre Plan Kick-Off Event (March 2016), as well as from comments posted on the Online Mapping Tool hosted on centreplan.ca (April – July 2016).

Additionally, relevant spatial analysis conducted by the Centre Plan Project Team, for the Growth Scenarios Open House (June 2016), was also included.

The features have been organized into the seven themes of the Plan; Land Use & Design, Housing, Public Spaces & Places, Sustainability, Mobility, Jobs & Economic Development, and Culture & Heritage. Features that are connected to a specific location within Regional Centre have been identified on a map and are noted with text in bold and a corresponding number.

This analysis will be used to frame and inform the Draft Centre Plan.

LAND USE + DESIGN



LAND USE + DESIGN

STRENGTHS



- Both downtown areas are revitalizing
- Many existing mixed-use areas within the Regional Centre
- Regional Centre consists of many neighbourhoods with diverse identities
- Many areas have a grid-based street network that offer smaller blocks and a fine-grained development pattern
- Both Dartmouth and Halifax each have their own distinct architectural vernacular
- The evolution of both Halifax and Dartmouth has resulted in a land use pattern that is intuitive and has a clear structure
- The hilly typography has resulted in an urban character with depth and charm
- There are multiple schools throughout the Regional Centre and most are located near higher concentrations of school aged youth

OPPORTUNITIES



- Large number of surface parking lots provide redevelopment opportunities
- Variety of locations that could accommodate various scales of development, in keeping with surrounding community
- An increasing community acceptance of mixed uses
- Better collaboration with First Nations on land use decisions
- Improved density bonusing system to provide more transparency and tangible public benefit
- Opportunity to attract more families to the Regional Centre in areas near existing schools through family friendly detached housing alternatives and increased amenities.
- Dartmouth's larger lots can likely accommodate moderate intensification within the established communities
- **Developable lands with reconfiguration of Cogswell Interchange (3)**
- **Underutilized lands along Wyse Rd, Young St, Dartmouth Cove , and Shannon Park (4)**

WEAKNESSES



- Disconnect between 1970s zoning and modern expectations for the city
- Residents do not always feel development matches existing neighbourhood character (height, scale, etc.)
- Concerns about unpredictability of planning and development process for both neighbours and developers
- Some schools are located in areas with lower concentrations of school-aged children. This includes the south end of the peninsula, some areas in the north end and some areas of Dartmouth
- **Physical barrier and noise impacts from rail lines and trucking routes (1)**
- **Lack of easily-accessible grocery stores (2)**

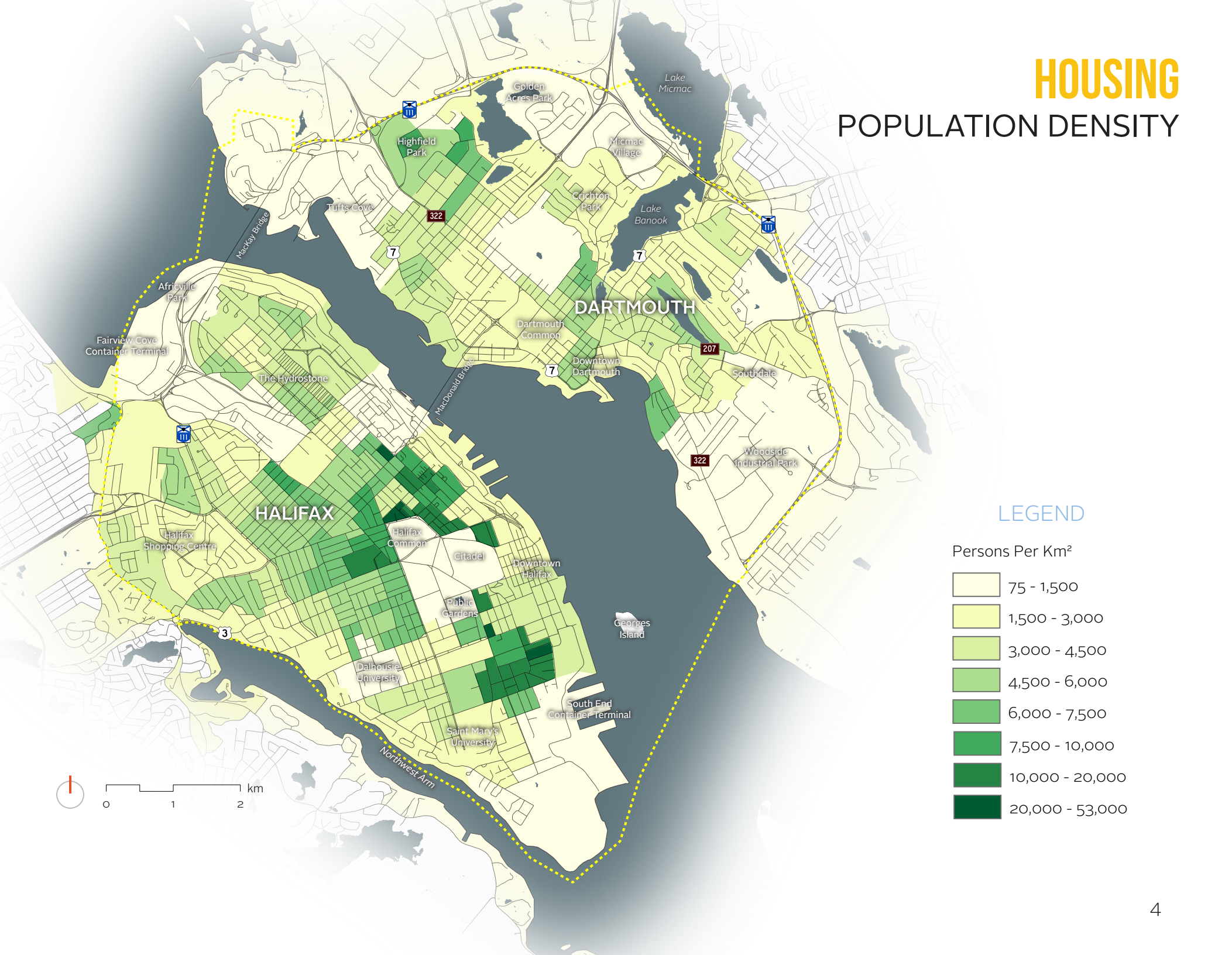
CHALLENGES



- Creating buildings that complement existing stock (particularly heritage buildings)
- Accommodating parking demands in an attractive and efficient manner
- Balancing the expectations of existing residents with accommodating growth and new residents
- Balancing developers' needs with residents' voices
- Coordinating land use decisions among all levels of government
- Protecting unique views while accommodating development

HOUSING

POPULATION DENSITY



HOUSING

STRENGTHS



- According to the CMHC, the Regional Centre has a stable housing market when compared to other major Canadian cities
- Existing housing stock has a good diversity of housing types

WEAKNESSES



- Lack of affordability and diversity in new residential construction
- Lack of options for multi-unit family housing within the core
- Difficulty finding barrier-free housing
- Affordable housing tends to be concentrated in a few areas
- Lack of an official definition for “affordable”

OPPORTUNITIES



- Infill housing and invisible/soft density in existing neighbourhoods
- “Missing middle” housing, i.e. providing new options somewhere between detached homes and high density apartments
- Inclusionary zoning
- Alternate tenure options (co-ops, land trusts)
- Better policies and regulations for rooming houses
- Linking affordable housing and transit options
- Many of the areas with a higher density of lower incomes correspond to areas with a higher population density, which supports encouraging a variety of housing forms.

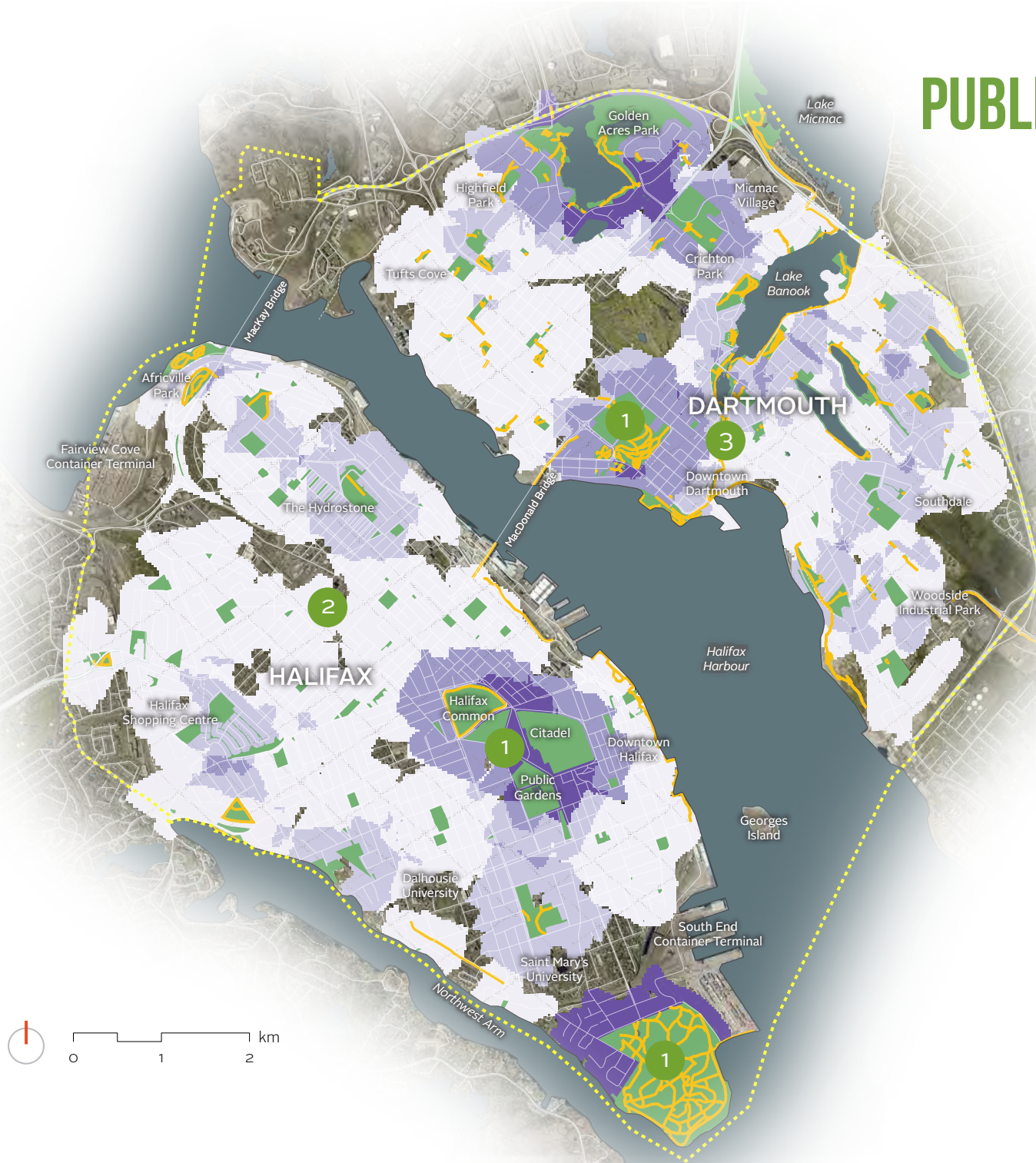
CHALLENGES



- Creating mechanisms and regulations to ensure that affordable housing remains accessible, while maintaining good living conditions
- Enforcing regulations on housing can be difficult and time consuming
- Providing enough student housing and addressing its relationship with surrounding neighbourhoods
- Investing in neighbourhoods without pushing existing residents out
- Adapting the existing housing stock to accommodate changing demographics, particularly in the context of an aging population

PUBLIC SPACES + PLACES

ACCESS TO PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

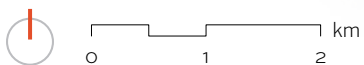


LEGEND

- Parks & Open Space
- Pathways

Amount of Parks and Open Space Within 400m

- 0.1 - 5 Ha
- 5 - 10 Ha
- 10 - 25 Ha
- 25 - 75 Ha



PUBLIC SPACES + PLACES

STRENGTHS



- Abundance of smaller, neighbourhood-based green spaces in most areas
- Community gardens
- Large urban forest provides a tree canopy that covers a large portion of the Regional Centre
- Community strongly values existing parks, open spaces, and lakes
- Easy access for many people to water (lakes and harbour)
- Green corridors connect the Regional Centre to other areas of the city
- Dartmouth has a good distribution of parks spaces with good variability in size and a reasonably well-connected pathway network.
- **Large, accessible green spaces within the city (1)**

WEAKNESSES



- Lack of off-leash dog parks
- Lack of flexibility to allow short-term commercial businesses use of parkland
- The pathway network on the peninsula is fragmented with large gaps
- Dartmouth has a greater density of parks and more trails but there is still fragmentation
- There are large proportions of the peninsula, especially the north end, that are not within 400 metres of a significant amount of parks space.

OPPORTUNITIES



- Expanded public access to Halifax Harbour
- There is an opportunity to expand trails and parks spaces through an open space network
- There is an opportunity to explore other methods to acquire more open space in under-served areas
- **New green open space as the Young area develops (2)**
- **Improve natural connection through Shubie Canal system (3)**

CHALLENGES



- Lack of tools to require additional parkland dedication and improvement when existing buildings are redeveloped to higher densities
- Allocating limited resources for maintenance and upgrades among all of the parks in the Regional Centre
- Concentrating population density across the Regional Centre that is within a 5 min walk of park space

SUSTAINABILITY



SUSTAINABILITY

STRENGTHS



- Solar City program
- Regional Centre has a high proportion of people commuting by walking, cycling, and transit
- Access to the ocean through extensive coastline in the Regional Centre

WEAKNESSES



- Sewage treatment could be improved and be able to handle additional capacity
- Much of the storm water infrastructure will need to be upgraded given the frequency of man-hole flooding

OPPORTUNITIES



- Include environmental/sustainability standards as part of discretionary development reviews
- Opportunity to increase renewable energy usage, including solar, wind, geothermal, etc.
- District heating and sewage heat recovery
- More urban agriculture (community gardens, bees, urban chickens, fruit trees)
- “Green” stormwater management
- Green rooftops on new development
- Complete communities, neighbourhoods, and streets that are family friendly
- Redevelopment provides an opportunity to introduce more low impact development technologies to help the storm water system.
- **Water quality testing in all lakes (1)**

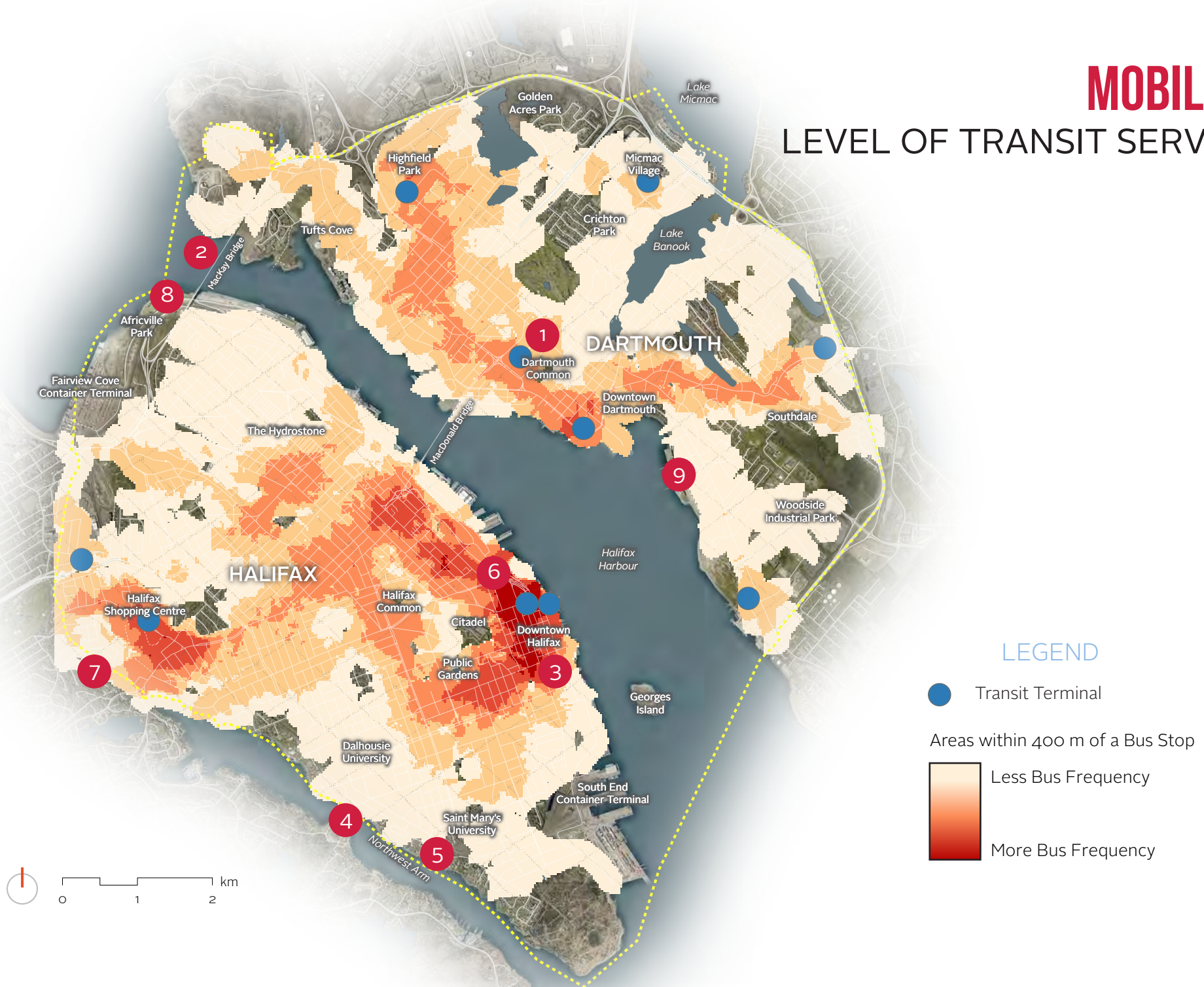
CHALLENGES



- The plan needs a clear definition of the word “sustainability”
- Increased density will require upgrades to the waste water system
- Bird collisions with buildings
- **Climate change and associated sea level rise (2)**

MOBILITY

LEVEL OF TRANSIT SERVICE



MOBILITY

STRENGTHS



- Well-connected grid network in much of the Regional Centre
- Small block sizes in much of the Regional Centre are conducive to active transportation
- Active transportation network is improving each year
- Strong public desire for good, well-connected active transportation infrastructure
- **Centrally-located transit hub at the Dartmouth Bridge Terminal (1)**

WEAKNESSES



- Limited number of access points into the Regional Centre
- Buses stuck in mixed traffic
- Unreliable/infrequent transit service in many areas
- Many amenities (groceries, services, etc.) difficult to reach without a car
- Parking, though often available, can be difficult to locate
- Lack of higher-order transit (rail, BRT, fast ferries, etc.)
- **Lack of any active transportation connection between Dartmouth and Halifax north of MacDonald Bridge (2)**
- **Heavy truck traffic within the core (3)**

OPPORTUNITIES



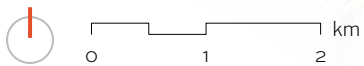
- Comprehensive transportation planning that integrates land use with mobility needs
- Establish a hierarchy of modes
- Complete build out of bike lane network
- More locations for car sharing and bike sharing
- Extended bus and ferry hours
- More investment in the pedestrian realm
- Given the constrained development and largely grid network of the Regional Centre, multiple mobility options are feasible
- **Active transportation connection across the Northwest Arm (4)**
- **Complete the construction of the Halifax Urban Greenway (5)**
- **Reconnect North End Halifax to Downtown with the reconfiguration of the Cogswell Interchange (6)**
- **Connect the active transportation system on the peninsula to the Bayers Lake / Chain of Lakes Trails (7)**
- **Improve access to Africville (8)**
- **Complete the construction of the Dartmouth Harbour-front Trail (9)**

CHALLENGES



- Adapting the existing, well-established road network to modern mobility needs
- Coordinating land development planning with transit planning
- Creating an easy-to-use active transportation network that takes the Regional Centre's many hills into consideration
- Accommodating multiple modes of transportation within narrow street right-of-ways

PROXIMITY TO EMPLOYMENT CENTRES



JOBS + ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STRENGTHS



- Educated workforce
- Major, stable employers within the Regional Centre (universities, health care, government, DND, etc.)
- Well diversified economy
- Regional economic hub for Atlantic Canada
- Strong marine economy (shipping, research, defense, oil and gas, etc.)
- Jobs are relatively well dispersed throughout the Regional Centre
- There are opportunities to live close to where you work
- The employment concentrations outside of the Regional Centre can help facilitate counter-flow movement during rush hour

WEAKNESSES



- Lack of affordable and suitable space for startups and small businesses
- A regulatory environment that can be hard to navigate for small businesses
- Tax cap on residential uses but not commercial uses leads to tax burden imbalance over time
- High office vacancy rate
- Residents in Dartmouth are across the harbour from areas of higher employment density
- Downtown Dartmouth has a significantly lower employment density than Downtown Halifax

OPPORTUNITIES



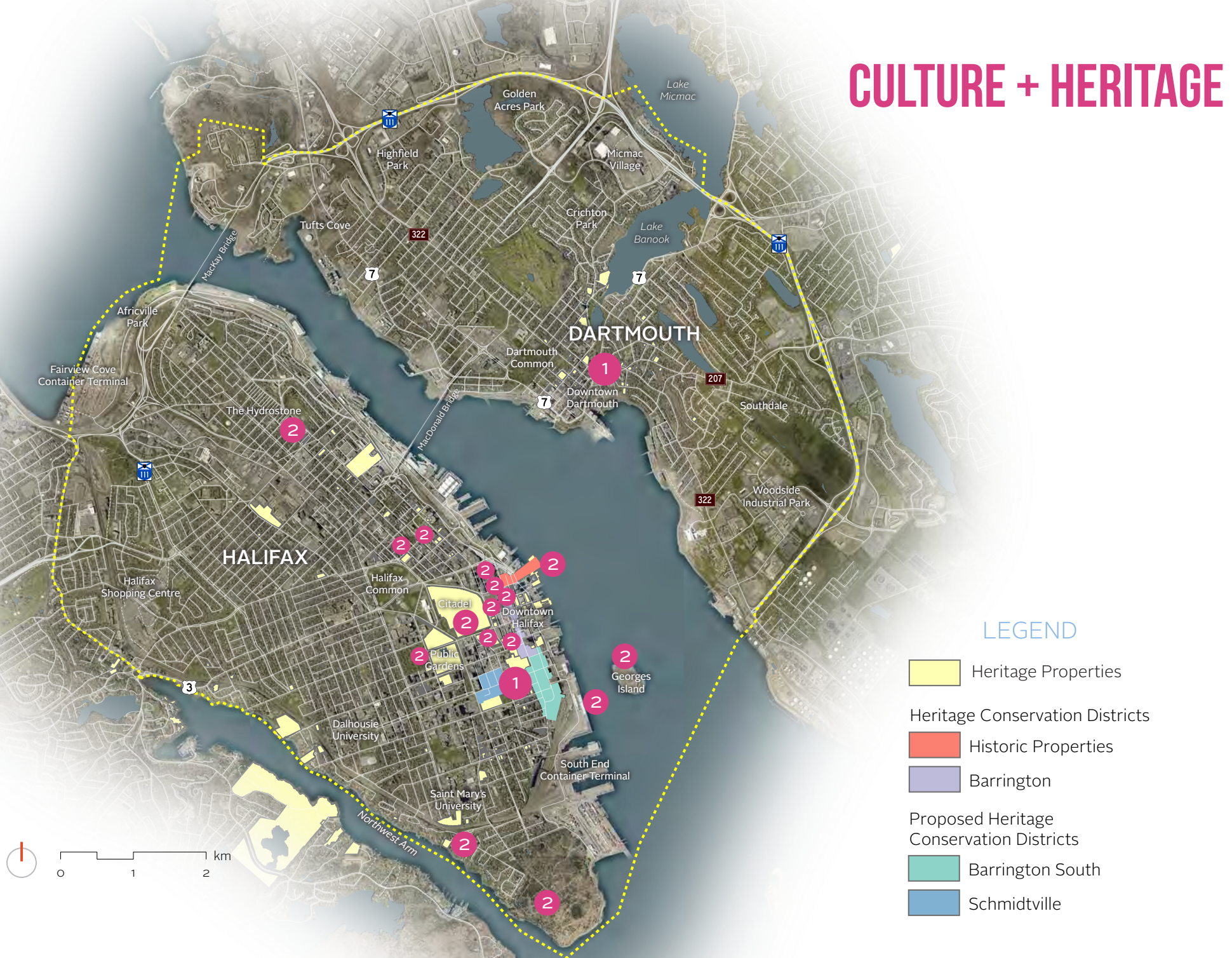
- Reinvestment of main commercial streetscapes
- Enable more opportunities for live-work arrangements and home-based businesses
- Encourage variety and flexibility for ground floor commercial space
- Future residential growth in the Regional Centre can result in increased business opportunities
- Potential to offer tax incentives to retain businesses in the Regional Centre
- Areas with a high population density on the peninsula are located near areas of higher employment density
- Additional retail demand can be created through transit and transportation improvements
- Opportunity to re-purpose older office space as new Class A offices come on line

CHALLENGES



- Loss of employers to business parks and other suburban locations
- Mitigating disruptions to businesses as improvements are made to surrounding buildings and the public realm
- Providing sufficient employment opportunities for recent university graduates
- There are significant concentrations of employment outside of the Regional Centre which provides mobility challenges, particularly for non-vehicle oriented development

CULTURE + HERITAGE



CULTURE + HERITAGE

STRENGTHS



- Diverse built heritage, even in areas that are not officially designated heritage districts
- Economic/tourism value of built heritage
- Strong cultural connection with the water (both harbour and lakes)
- Diverse incomes, cultures, and backgrounds within the Regional Centre
- Very active arts community
- **High concentration of heritage buildings (1)**
- **Several National Historic Sites are located within the Regional Centre (2)**

WEAKNESSES



- Lack of diversity in the size and type of performing arts spaces
- Ongoing loss of heritage building stock
- Lack of activities available in the winter months
- Isolation of racial groups and communities
- Lack of public art
- Lack of heritage designations in Dartmouth

OPPORTUNITIES



- Recognizing the cultural qualities that are distinct to Dartmouth and Halifax
- Development of additional heritage districts
- More public and street art
- Creating a Dartmouth Museum
- More heritage interpretation throughout the Regional Centre
- More free or low-cost cultural facilities
- Creating an “after dark” city

CHALLENGES



- Ensuring diverse community perspectives (e.g. Mi'kmaq, Black communities, new immigrants) in planning process
- Sustaining cultural events at all times of day and year
- Balancing heritage preservation with development