

The Spryfield Business Case

November 2007

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Halifax Regional Municipality [HRM] is one of Canada's most dynamic urban communities. It is a strategic transportation hub featuring Atlantic Canada's busiest port and largest international airport. Greater Halifax boasts a number of fast growing industries including aerospace/defence, financial services, information and communications technologies, and life sciences. Feeding these growth sectors is Canada's most intensive university infrastructure. HRM is home to six major universities and features 81.1 post-secondary students per 1,000 people, three times the national average. More than 60% of the working population has post-secondary education, the highest rate in Canada. Halifax is becoming increasingly known as a place to do business; in fact, KPMG's 2006 Competitive Alternatives study, ranked Greater Halifax first in overall cost competitiveness among mid-sized cities in North America.

Within HRM, there are a number of distinct communities - each with their own character and style, and each targeting different avenues for growth. Some are focused solely on residential growth, while others are fostering a blend of residential and commercial activity. Spryfield is such a community.

West of Halifax Peninsula, the community of Spryfield has over 27,000 residents and a number of assets that make it an ideal location for new and expanding businesses, particularly those in the customer contact and IT industries. More specifically, Spryfield:

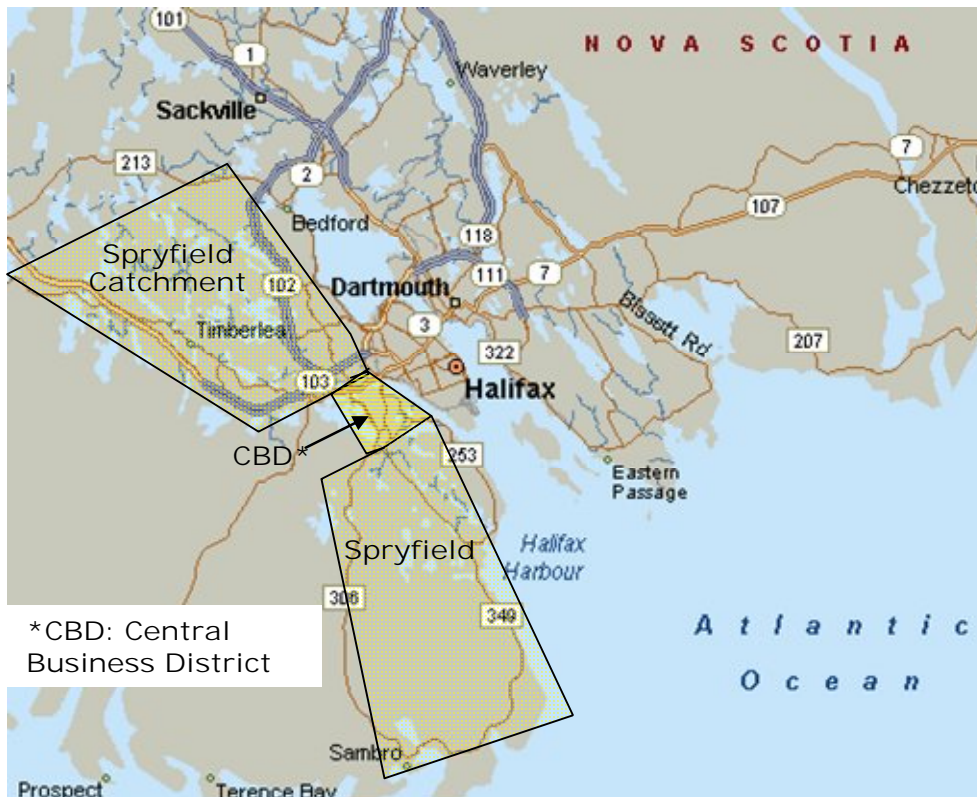
- is strategically located between the urban core of Halifax and the fastest growing suburban residential areas in all of HRM;
- is home to a distinct and relatively untapped labour pool;
- offers competitive operational costs;
- has an excellent transportation infrastructure; and
- has available commercial real estate space that can easily meet the needs of call centre operators and IT companies, among others.

1.2 Spryfield Defined

The Spryfield community [identified on the next map as "Spryfield"] is located immediately to the west of the Halifax Peninsula, stretching south from the Armdale Rotary along three main transportation arterials - Purcells Cove Road [highway 253], Herring Cove Road [highway 349] and Northwest Arm Drive / Highway 306. It takes in a number of established and well-defined neighbourhoods surrounding the more commercialized centre of Spryfield itself, including Armdale, Purcells Cove, Herring Cove, Harrietsfield, etc, and crosses over two municipal council districts. The population total for this described area in 2006 was 27,436.

The Spryfield Central Business District [identified on the next map as “CBD”] is concentrated along the central section of the Herring Cove Road, and it houses the majority of the community’s existing employment and business activity. The bulk of the population identified as the Spryfield community lives in close proximity to the CBD. The focal point of the CBD itself is the South Centre Mall, a two hundred thousand square foot commercial space anchored by a Canadian Tire store, and other retail amenities. The District includes: two large grocery stores; medical offices, pharmacies; a variety of professional services, and, various food establishments. Both the Royal Bank and the Bank of Montreal maintain branch offices in the District. The CBD’s ongoing commercial development is supported fully by the Spryfield and District Business Commission, which has as its slogan: “Spryfield Village, Heartbeat of the Loop”.

The Spryfield Catchment Area represents all of the pre-defined Spryfield community AND the resident population in HRM positioned within an easy commute of the Spryfield central business district. The demographics associated with the catchment area are of significant consideration for any new businesses considering setting up in the Spryfield CBD, as it represents a significantly-sized local labour pool from which to draw future employees. In the 2006 Census, there were an estimated 94,000 people in the catchment area, having experienced an accelerated pace of 20% population growth over a ten year period.



1.3 Spryfield's Strategic location

The strong growth figures for the Halifax Regional Municipality over the last ten years has seen most of the residential development occur in areas outside the central core. As with most urban centres in North America, the growth continues to push housing further and further from the downtown.

For businesses looking for a strategic location in HRM that provides access to this large, growing labour pool, with minimal commute times, the Spryfield central business district is increasingly seen as an ideal venue. Residents from the fast growing neighbourhoods such as St. Margarets and Clayton Park are a short distance via multilane highways. As well, Metro Transit provides frequent bus links into the Spryfield community from the peninsula, allowing for those residents to also travel in from the urban core.



2. The Labour Market

2.1 Modest Population Growth

Access to sufficient labour is a central theme in any business site selection process. Between 1996 and 2006, Spryfield's population grew a modest 3.5%. However, the catchment area beyond the community grew 20% during the same ten years. This growth reflects the continued surge of new development taking place along the 102 and 103 highway corridors, traveling outwards from the Halifax peninsula. Before continuing in towards the city centre, these two major highways intersect at a point approximately five kilometres north of the Spryfield Central Business District.

Population Growth 1996 - 2006

Region:	1996	2001	2006	Growth	%
Spryfield Community	26,510	26,500	27,445	935	3.5%
Spryfield Catchment	78,105	85,455	93,740	15,635	20.0%
HRM	342,850	359,110	372,680	29,830	8.7%

Source: Statistics Canada Census

2.2 A youthful population

While the median age in the catchment area is slightly higher than the figure for HRM as a whole [though under the provincial median age], the percentage of the population between 20 - 29 years of age is slightly higher. According to the 2006 Census, nearly 15% of all local residents were between the ages of 20-29. Combined with the fast population growth, this would indicate that young people and young families are moving into this identified region, providing the labour force for both now and the future.

Age - Youth Cohorts 2006

Region:	20-29yrs	Total	%
Spryfield Community	3,160	27,445	11.5%
HRM	54,145	372,680	14.5%
Nova Scotia	107,365	913,460	11.7%

Source: Statistics Canada Census

2.3 Attracting people from outside Nova Scotia

In 2001, 10% of the residents living in the Spryfield community had moved into the area from outside Halifax within the previous five years - a figure well above the provincial average. This fact confirms that when people are looking at moving into HRM, Spryfield and the residential areas in close proximity to it are attractive to newcomers to Greater Halifax. This is important for businesses looking to set up operations in HRM. Choosing a Spryfield location means your business will access a growing labour market, and that these communities will likely continue to expand with people from outside of HRM interested in moving in.

Mobility 2001

Region:	Migration into Area [5yr] %
Spryfield Community	10.1%
Spryfield Catchment	17.9%
HRM	11.4%
Nova Scotia	7.3%

Source: Statistics Canada Census***

2.4 A Bilingual Workforce

In 2001, there were over 40,000 people in HRM that speak English and French, or almost 12% of the total population. The Spryfield community and the surrounding catchment area are home to 11,500 of these bilingual persons – more than 25% of the total amount of bilingual speakers within HRM. Speaking both official languages is recognized as an important skill for working in the customer contact centre, back office or other service industries that cater to a national audience in Canada.

2.5 Educational levels

As of the 2001 Census, 59% of adult residents in the Spryfield community had some form of post-secondary education [trade diploma, college or university] - a figure above the provincial average. 19% of residents had a university degree.

2.6 Employment by occupation

Almost one-third of Spryfield's workforce is in sales and service jobs. Business, finance and administrative occupations make up the second largest category of workers residing in Spryfield. These statistics support the value proposition that Spryfield has an excellent mix of labour skills suitable to the call centre and IT industries.

Employment by Occupation (2001)

Occupation Group:	Spryfield Community	% of Total
Sales and service	4,185	31%
Business, finance and administrative	2,495	19%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related	1,780	13%
Management	1,100	8%
Social science, education, government and religion	945	7%
Natural and applied sciences	765	6%
Health occupations	865	6%
Art, culture, recreation and sport	355	3%
Other	845	6%

Source: Statistics Canada

3. Operating Costs

3.1 Lease Rates/Construction Costs

Within Greater Halifax, the Spryfield community currently offers companies, on average, lower commercial leasing costs when compared with those found in other urban or suburban jurisdictions within HRM. While there are not sufficient localized data sets concerning real estate activity to tabulate exact figures for annual variables found between local communities in HRM, it is generally identified that commercial rents in the Spryfield CBD - all other factors found to be equal - typically run \$2.00 / square foot cheaper than comparable commercial spaces found in the downtown core. This anecdotal information should be re-verified, on occasion, with local business operators and commercial landowners. Furthermore, there are currently a number of existing local enterprises that have moved into the Spryfield community in recent years for, among other reasons, the identified cost competitiveness of existing lease rates.

Most other related business operating costs [e.g. utilities] do not vary by location within HRM. However, it is important to note that there are a few business costs that do vary, and may be considered in the site selection process. For example, the cost of parking can be considerable [paid for either by the employee or employer]. Locating in Spryfield eliminates this particular cost consideration, where current land use regulations for commercial development allow for considerable on-site parking.

3.2 Lower Wage Rates

Wage rates are not published by specific communities within HRM. However, through Census dissemination area data, the average wage levels for local residents can be outlined, which can, to some degree, provide an indication of local variances. The chart below shows average employment income for residents in the Spryfield community was 7% lower than the overall HRM average. For full time, full year workers, average employment income was 8% lower in the Spryfield community.

As well, the cost of living in the Spryfield community is lower than in other communities in HRM and as a result, even with slightly lower wage averages, disposable income should be higher (see the "Living Environment" section for more information on cost of living).

Average Employment Income 2001

	Spryfield Community	HRM
All workers	\$28,342	\$30,614
Worked full year, full time	\$38,176	\$41,508

As a Percentage of HRM Averages:

All workers	93%
Worked full year, full time	92%

Source: Statistics Canada Census

3.3 Taxes

The current [2007-2008] commercial tax rate for municipal services for a property in the Spryfield community is 3.054 [there are a few additional charges levied - e.g. mandatory education; correctional services]. Currently, the combined general Commercial and Business Occupancy Tax rate is the same for urban and suburban areas of HRM - what does vary is the Business Improvement Districts levy by local commercial area. The chart below shows the levy by business improvement district within HRM. It is important to point out that property taxes are paid based on assessment values. The Spryfield community currently has commercial building assessments lower than other areas of HRM such as the downtown, and therefore lower overall taxes to be paid.

Combined Commercial and Business Occupancy Levy For Business Improvement Districts

Downtown Halifax (Maximum \$5,000):	0.2306
Downtown Dartmouth (Maximum \$1,500):	0.8700
Spring Garden Road (Maximum \$9,000):	0.7850
Quinpool Road (Maximum \$3,500):	0.2818
Spryfield & District (Maximum \$1,000):	0.3500
Sackville Drive (Maximum \$750):	0.2400

Source: HRM 2007/2008 Approved Budget - Schedule of Area Tax Rates

3.4 Costs Comparison Chart

In summarizing the potential operating cost benefits of a site selected in the Spryfield community, the following chart helps identify where both the labour and the facilities cost benefits match favorably with other jurisdictions:

Geographically Variable Operating Cost Comparison
Proposed Contact Center/Back Office Operation

	Spryfield	Greater Halifax	Fredericton, NB	Montreal, QC	Toronto, ON	Calgary, AB	Vancouver, BC
LABOUR COSTS							
Median annual wage rates [1]							
General manager	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000
Accounting clerk	26,999	29,669	29,863	32,844	34,796	32,631	35,155
Accountant	42,474	46,675	46,548	50,627	53,077	51,141	53,504
Computer operator	34,281	37,671	37,717	41,219	43,507	41,325	43,786
Data entry operator	25,439	27,955	28,180	31,050	33,149	30,769	33,306
File clerk	23,735	26,082	26,342	29,090	31,153	28,735	31,286
Receptionist	24,341	26,748	26,995	29,787	31,863	29,458	32,004
Annual Labour Costs [2]							
General manager	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000
Accounting clerk	1,349,940	1,483,450	1,493,150	1,642,200	1,739,800	1,631,550	1,757,750
Accountant	1,061,856	1,166,875	1,163,700	1,265,675	1,326,925	1,278,525	1,337,600
Computer operator	171,403	188,355	188,585	206,095	217,535	206,625	218,930
Data entry operator	1,271,953	1,397,750	1,409,000	1,552,500	1,657,450	1,538,450	1,665,300
File clerk	118,673	130,410	131,710	145,450	155,765	143,675	156,430
Receptionist	48,681	53,496	53,990	59,574	63,726	58,916	64,008
Total base salary cost	\$4,102,506	\$4,500,336	\$4,520,135	\$4,951,494	\$5,241,201	\$4,937,741	\$5,280,018
Fringe benefit rate [3]	24.8%	24.8%	24.8%	29.4%	26.4%	24.9%	23.9%
Total fringe benefit cost	\$1,017,769	\$1,116,464	\$1,122,143	\$1,453,650	\$1,382,058	\$1,230,934	\$1,261,148
Total annual labour costs	\$5,120,274	\$5,616,800	\$5,642,278	\$6,405,144	\$6,623,259	\$6,168,675	\$6,541,166
FACILITIES COSTS [4]							
Cost per square foot (gross)	\$19.00	\$21.00	\$20.00	\$22.50	\$30.00	\$24.00	\$24.00
Square footage required	<u>22,500</u>	<u>22,500</u>	<u>22,500</u>	<u>22,500</u>	<u>22,500</u>	<u>22,500</u>	<u>22,500</u>
Total annual facilities costs	\$427,500	\$472,500	\$450,000	\$506,250	\$675,050	\$540,040	\$540,040

Geographically Variable Operating Cost Comparison
Contact Center/Back Office Operation

	Spryfield	Greater Halifax	Fredericton, NB	Montreal, QC	Toronto, ON	Calgary, AB	Vancouver, BC
UTILITIES COSTS [5]							
Electricity	\$144,402	\$144,402	\$149,098	\$120,922	\$162,012	\$137,358	\$81,006
Telecommunications	477,818	477,818	481,340	436,728	436,728	469,600	444,946
Total annual utilities costs	\$622,220	\$622,220	\$630,438	\$557,650	\$598,740	\$606,958	\$525,952
Total geographically variable operating costs	\$6,169,994	\$6,711,520	\$6,722,716	\$7,469,044	\$7,897,049	\$7,315,673	\$7,607,158
Annual \$\$ Savings - Spryfield		\$541,526	\$552,722	\$1,299,049	\$1,727,054	\$1,145,678	\$1,437,164
% Cost Reduction - Spryfield		-8%	-8%	-17%	-22%	-16%	-19%

Notes:

1. Source: 2006 ERI Geographic Reference Report. Median base salary estimates for each urban centre with the exception of Spryfield. Wage rates for Spryfield have been deflated by the average income differential on full year, full time wages from the 2001 Census for Spryfield compared to HRM as a whole. In addition, the General Manager's salary was assumed non-variable from location to location.
2. Sample staff compliment for an accounting intensive back office/contact centre operation: [1] General manager; [50] accounting clerks; [25] Accountants; [5] Computer operators; [50] Data entry operators; [5] File clerks; [2] Receptionists = 138 Total staff..
3. Source: 2006 KMPG Competitive Alternatives report. Includes both statutory and company-sponsored benefit costs.
4. Source: All except Spryfield - 2006 KMPG Competitive Alternatives report. Assumes 22,500 square feet of Class A office space leased. Spryfield rate estimated based on current market conditions.
5. Source: 2006 KMPG Competitive Alternatives report. Based on 22,500 square feet of office space and a contact centre level call volume.

4. Current Real Estate

4.1 Principal Opportunities

Along with access to a strong and competitive local labour market, another central theme to any business case is the recognition of immediate and well-identified opportunities for site development. The following are Spryfield's current real estate opportunities.

4.1.1 South Centre Mall



The South Centre Mall, located at the corner of Herring Cove and Dentith Road, is a central part of Spryfield's commercial hub. It is the community's largest multi-user commercial site, and it serves as Metro Transit's local station.

South Centre Mall currently has a vacant 20,000 square foot space which could be re-developed to house a call centre or IT operations, among other uses. It also has 5,800 square feet in finished space available for more immediate occupancy. Information and site visit requests can be made either directly to the Mall Administration [see attached appendix] or through the Spryfield Business Commission.

5. Planning and Infrastructure

5.1 Planning for the Future

The Halifax Regional Municipality fully supports efforts to expand the existing commercial activity in the Spryfield central business district. In 2004, the Municipality commissioned the Herring Cove Road Streetscape Study. The Study was designed to increase understanding of the supportive design elements and potential uses in the Spryfield commercial corridor, and create a concept plan that would help the community prosper and grow.

A conclusion from this study was that Spryfield is an important area for development in the overall regional context, and that both the citizens and local businesses in the community welcome it. This conclusion is an important consideration to potential new businesses, in that not all communities experiencing growth are necessarily supportive of seeing continued development, or increased development, occur. Led by the local Business Commission, the Spryfield community is one that recognizes the positive changes that can result from championing a pro-growth agenda.

Further to the specific application of a Streetscape Study, it is also important to note that HRM has also recently undergone a comprehensive planning exercise, culminating in the adoption by HRM Regional Council in August 2006 of the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy. [or Regional Plan] This is the first ever Regional Plan for HRM since its amalgamation in 1996, and is expected to influence municipal policy and the patterns of both residential and commercial development over the next two decades. As the 'fundamental goal' of the Plan was to achieve balanced growth that minimized the risks to both the natural environment and quality of life / character of local communities, a key aspect in strategy development was to direct future growth towards compact, mixed-use settlement centres.

Spryfield has subsequently been identified in the Regional Plan as a Suburban District Centre, and as such, is anticipated to see targeted efforts at growth and improved infrastructure that will in turn reduce the costs and impacts on undeveloped [or less developed] areas of the Municipality. Through a secondary planning process, the objective is to see Spryfield become a mixed-use, transit friendly Centre that can accommodate various housing types, and provide some opportunities for local employment to residents.

The development of this particular business case can be seen as a coordinated by-product of both the local business community wanting to see continued commercial growth, and the objectives of the Regional Plan to see future development occurred in targeted Centres.

Furthermore, it may be added that HRM has already undertaken a number of initiatives of their own accord that support the development of Spryfield as a Centre, be it through decisions concerning recreational amenities, parkland, transportation, or, in one noteworthy instance, the development of the Halifax Water Commission's central offices within the Spryfield community.

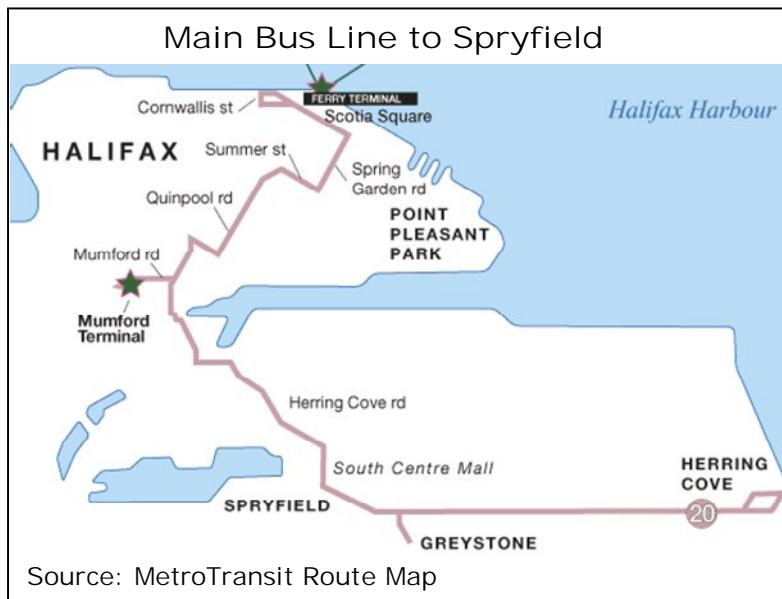
5.2 Transportation Infrastructure

A key advantage for the development of Spryfield as a major business hub within the Municipality is its proximity to the regional highway transportation system. There is relatively easy access to the Spryfield central business district from both the Halifax Peninsula; from the fast growing communities that run along the 102 and 103 corridors to the north and west; and from new local residential developments originating in the more immediate areas along the Herring Cove and Purcells Cove Road.



The municipal government also continues to improve the transportation infrastructure for local commuters. The Armdale Rotary site was recently upgraded in the summer of 2007 to help traffic flow move more smoothly and efficiently. The Municipality is also supporting the implementation of a high speed ferry landing at Purcells Cove, making links with the Halifax peninsula even more accessible.

For bus services, the Spryfield community is served by two regular Metro Transit bus routes [Routes 14 and 20] operating every half hour during weekdays, and one express bus [Route 32] operating during peak times. The HRM Regional Plan calls for two additional MetroLink routes to link the growth centres located at Bedford and Spryfield [and intermediate communities in-between] with downtown Halifax and the region's major business parks. The proposed MetroLink service will offer more comfortable buses with air conditioning, upholstered seats and bike racks, as well as other updated passenger amenities.



HRM has an extensive network of bike trails in Spryfield for those who prefer to ride their bicycle to work. There are bike paths on or near Old Herring Cove Road, Old Sambro Road and Williams Lake Road. In addition, there are significant residential areas [and new development planned] within walking distance of the Spryfield Business District. As of the 2001 Census, over 18% of residents in the Spryfield catchment area got to work in some fashion other than driving or riding in a vehicle.

Businesses and residents needing to access the Halifax Robert L. Stanfield International Airport are just a short 25-30 minute commute from Spryfield on Route 102 with very little traffic congestion. The airport provides multiple daily flights to numerous Canada, U.S. and European locations.

5.3 Telecommunications

The Spryfield Central Business District is serviced by multiple telecommunications companies, including Aliant and EastLink. In addition, the main undersea telecommunications infrastructure linking Europe and North America actually connects in the community. It includes a 700 kilometre cable between Boston and Halifax; a 5,000 kilometre cable from Halifax to Dublin, Ireland; and a 4,800 kilometre cable from Halifax to Liverpool, England.

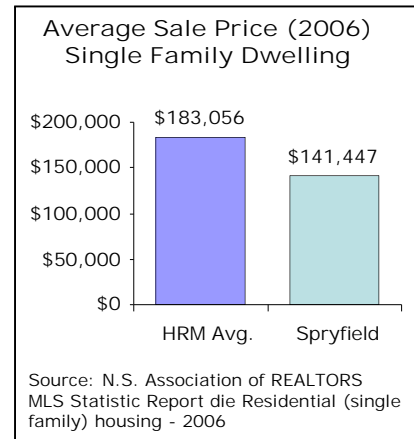
6. Living Environment

6.1 Cost of Living

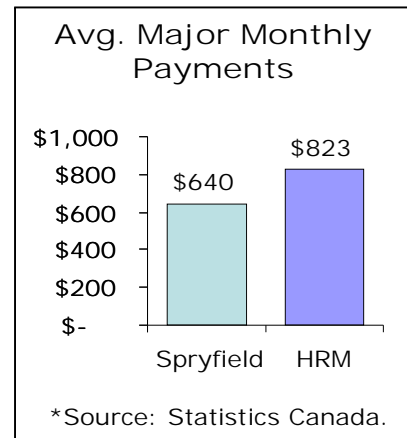
Housing costs in the Spryfield community are among most competitive in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The Multiple Listing Service (MLS) tracks house listing, sales and price data for thirty six regions within HRM. 2006, Spryfield featured among the lowest cost housing with an average home selling price of \$142,000 – well below the average of \$183,000.

For rental accommodation, figures identifying apartment rental rates taken from Statistics Canada outline that the average gross monthly rent in the Spryfield community [in 2001] was \$511/month – a figure well below the HRM average of \$657.

Statistics Canada also reports on the average major monthly payments faced by residents. These payments include electricity, fuel, city services, mortgage payments, and property taxes. In 2001, the average resident of Spryfield spent less each month major payments than residents elsewhere in HRM. 22% lower cost of major monthly payments translates a significant cost of living advantage over some other neighbourhoods in HRM.



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6.2 Recreational Amenities

An important component in any business decision to locate in a specific community is not only the size of the local labour market; but how well served the community is with recreation opportunities, service facilities, and other features that provide residents a desired quality-of-life. In this capacity, the Spryfield community is well served with a number of municipal amenities, as well as it being in proximity to a number of outstanding natural geographic features [e.g. Crystal Crescent Beach] that residents can enjoy.



Capt. William Spry Community Centre
Spryfield Lions Wave Pool

Both the Captain William Spry Community Centre and Spryfield Lions Rink offers programming for residents of all ages; facilities for indoor sports; and community-use boardrooms for local groups. The Spry Centre also houses a library branch and the Spryfield Lions Wave Pool - the only one of its kind in HRM.

6.3 Crime Rate

Spryfield is to be regarded as a good community in which to live, work and raise a family. Focus group discussions in 2005 found most residents consider that friendliness is a key attribute of the community. Crime rates in the Spryfield area is lower than in HRM as a whole, according to data published by the Halifax Regional Police¹. In addition, incidences of crime by almost all major categories are on continued decline. Drug crimes, for example, have dropped dramatically, and the incidence of robbery and theft is relatively low.

Crime by Type, Spryfield

	1997	2004	Change
Robbery	12	9	-3
Theft	164	133	-31
Drugs	208	24	-184
Homicide/Attempts	1	1	0
Assaults	169	89	-80
Property Damage	142	114	-28
Break and Enter	208	136	-72

Source: HRM

6.4 Business Engagement – A growth Vision for Spryfield

Arguably one of the most important advantages the Spryfield community offers new companies considering establishing in HRM is that the local business community is focused on growing a dynamic cluster of new businesses in their Central Business District.

Since its establishment as a Business Improvement District, the Spryfield & District Business Commission has maintained a vision that will connect and grow their communities, with the goal of making it a better place to both live and work. The Commission was instrumental in getting “District Centre” status within the HRM regional plan, and continues to work hard to secure additional public transit and support new real estate developments in support of the goal of building a vibrant business district.

Historically, the Spryfield area has been a residential community with a business district serving the local community. As HRM continues to grow, the Spryfield Business Commission is working to position the community as an emerging centre, and an excellent opportunity for companies considering establishing themselves in the Halifax area that wish to deliver activities that serve larger markets. Representatives through the Commission are positive about their future vision, and are open and accessible to anyone interested in hearing their own testimonials as to how and why new businesses can succeed in their community.

¹ reported in the recent [2005] publication “We are Spryfield”. Note the defined geographic area used in that publication is smaller than the one used in this report.

7. Targeted Approach for New Development

7.1 Business Services

Within HRM, the particular community of Spryfield can be identified as a highly competitive alternative for a variety of potential business services activities. These include:

- Customer contact centres/back offices
- Information technology firms (including animation, software development, IT services)
- Professional services firms
- Training and education

7.1.1 Customer contact centres/back offices

Customer contact centre and back office services industries are highly reliant on a high quality, stable workforce. Spryfield is an ideal location for these labour-intensive operations, largely because its strategic location within HRM provides easy access for workers traveling by car or by public transportation. This is an important benefit to workers who would like to live in HRM's outlying communities. In addition, the operating cost environment is more competitive in Spryfield compared to other locations in Greater Halifax.

The Spryfield Central Business District is serviced by multiple telecommunications companies including Aliant and EastLink. The costs of telecommunications service are competitive in all of HRM. In addition, local telephone services were recently deregulated in HRM allowing for more competitive pricing.

Other key benefits for contact centre companies or firms looking to establish contact centre or back office activities in HRM include:

- The Spryfield neighbourhood has a slightly higher unemployment rate and lower participation rate than the rest of HRM indicating a possible supply of workers.
- The majority of the residents of Spryfield currently commute to other areas of HRM, and employment in their local area would be an attractive alternative. The catchment area has a population base of over 90,000 people. In addition, there are good multilane highways connecting Spryfield to the broader HRM area which has a population of over 370,000 people.
- The Spryfield community and catchment area have a higher settlement rate of migrants and immigrants to Nova Scotia than HRM as a whole. This proves the area is attractive for new workers moving into HRM. This is important as HRM continues to be a magnet for workers from around Atlantic Canada, across Canada and internationally.

7.1.2 Information technology firms

The information technology sector is thriving in Halifax. The sector includes animation firms, software development, IT services, e-Learning application development among others. In addition to the many home grown successful firms, the area has been attracting some of the top firms in the industry including Research in Motion (RIM) the maker of the popular BlackBerry product. Other important firms include XWave and CGI – two of the largest IT services firms in Canada.

Spryfield represents an interesting alternative for IT firms considering HRM. The shorter commute for many workers means than many could choose to ride their bicycle or run to work. The recreational activities available right in Spryfield would be attractive to a labour pool that tends to be very active. In addition, in many urban centres, the IT sector is moving to non-traditional locations to take advantage of the local labour pool, lower costs and more convenient access to office space with ample free parking.

7.1.3 Professional services firms

As HRM continues to grow, alternative business service hubs are emerging. Spryfield is one such hub. It has been designated by HRM as a “District Centre” in the 2006 Regional Plan, and as such, will be growing in its regional influence over the next few decades. Professional services firms [lawyers, accountants, consultants, etc] looking to setup in HRM but who would prefer a location with easy access for workers, should consider the potential long-term growth of the Spryfield Central Business District.

7.1.4 Training and education

HRM has one of the most impressive training and education sectors in all of Canada, with six universities and several major college campuses. In addition, a number of private training schools have their campuses in HRM. Further, the community is emerging as a hub for electronic learning (e-Learning) with a number of firms providing online training to clients around the world. For training firms looking to establish a campus in HRM, Spryfield is an excellent option. In addition to easy access by road and public transit, the area features lower land costs.

7.2 Retail Businesses

The Spryfield Central Business District is currently home to a number of large retailers, and more than several dozen smaller retailers servicing the local market. The Spryfield Business Commission believes that there is considerable opportunity for further retail opportunities for servicing the local retail market, and niche opportunities that would attract shoppers from the larger area.