Chapter V

URBAN AND PORT ACTIVITIES IN HALIFAX
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5. INTRODUCTION

Urban harbours across the world have traditionally been used to link inland activities to the external world. It holds true for Halifax urban harbour. Harbours especially in urban areas provide transport and trade links to the inland activities. Besides, harbors have also traditionally been used for fishing, recreational and tourism activities. Uses of harbour become more complex as harbour or port related activities and facilities grow and expand. This is what happened in case of Halifax urban harbour system. Unlike the Kandla port where harbour uses are dominated by port related activities, Halifax Harbour supports more complex and diversified uses in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

We have briefly presented the historical growth of Halifax in this chapter. Concentration and trends of urban population growth have also been discussed. An attempt has also been made to analyse the status and trends of urban activities with an emphasis on harbour related uses. Recreational and tourism related activities have also been analysed. Other major and minor harbour use activities such as military, fishing, commercial, industrial and institutional particularly (R&D) have also been discussed. Existing land use pattern has been discussed in this chapter. The proposed future land use plan has also been discussed to see the growth and direction of urban and port activities that manifest on space.

5.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF HALIFAX HARBOUR

The urban and port activities of Halifax Harbour are as old as the establishment of the city of Halifax and Dartmouth. In fact both the cities have been established as the result of this harbour due to its natural advantages in terms of deep inlet that provides

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excellent terminal and birthing facilities and ice free shipping movements throughout the year. Port facilities and activities started with the establishment of a shipyard way back in the mid-eighteenth century by the first governor of Halifax Edward Cornwallis. Initial years of the establishment of port of Halifax had experienced bad phases of wars and reconstruction. Within sixty years of its establishment Halifax suffered more than 40 wars from native Indians as well as from French settlers.

The first man made explosion before the use of atom bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki took place on December 6th 1917 when the Norwegian Ship *Imo* sailing out of the harbour with supplies for the Belgian relief collided with the incoming French ship *Mont Blanc* carrying munitions. The explosion continued 24 hours and entire city was destroyed killing 1630 people. Several thousand were injured and rendered homeless. The port facilities were completely destroyed and the *Haligonians* (residents of Halifax) had to spend their nights in tents and window less houses. During the Second World War Halifax suffered another explosion at the Harbour on July 18th 1945 causing lesser degree of devastation and destruction than the previous one.

However, after the great wars the reconstruction work revived the past glory of Halifax port and had provided access to the vast Canadian land for the European settlers in Canada. Pier 21 established in 1953 opened the gate for the Europeans and others to settle down in this country of resources.

More than 250 years of cumulative use of the Halifax Harbour resulted in more complex uses and activities in the city of Halifax and Dartmouth. In 1749 when Governor Edward Cornwallis with 2500 native British people, set ashore at Halifax and Dartmouth then known as Chebuctou, he described this harbour as milk and honey. In his first few months of enthusiastic dispatch report to First Lord of Admiralty -The Duke of Bedford, he wrote: “... the coasts are as rich as they are ever been represented. We caught fish everyday since we came.... The harbour itself is full of fish of all kinds; the officers agree that the harbour is the finest they have ever seen...” Since, then there is no backward looking as far as the uses of this harbour for the human needs and benefits are concerned. More recently, the harbour and city

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3 Encyclopedia Canada, vol, V-VI pp61-65
5 *ibid*, p23-24
activities have become complex and diversified with increasing human population in the city of Halifax and Dartmouth.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is one of the largest municipalities in Maritime Canada. About one third of total population of the province of Nova Scotia resides in HRM. Of this total major concentration of population is found in Halifax-Dartmouth metro regions (Statistics Canada, 2000). This population of HRM has been growing constantly in recent decades. After 1970 there has been rather substantial increase in population of Halifax-Dartmouth metropolitan areas. Figure 5.2 shows the total population of HRM from 1976 to 1996.

Between 1976 and 1996 the total population of Halifax increased from 2,78,531 to 3,42,966 with an average annual growth rate of 1.83 per cent. The increasing population trend is continued and it has reached 3,60,000 in the year 2001. This is because of increase in net migration in HRM during the same period of time (Total net in migration includes international, inter provincial and intra provincial in-migration). However, during these periods the major areas of population concentration namely, Halifax - Dartmouth metro region has shown marginal declining trends in population both in

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Fig. 5.2 Total Population of HRM 1976-1996

Source: Halifax Regional Municipality, 2002

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Note that Maritime Provinces consist of four provinces of Canada e.g. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, New Foundland and Prince Edward Island in the order of the size of their population according to Census of Canada, 2000

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the initial periods e.g. during 1976-81 and in the later period of 1991-96. This demographic phenomenon is a result of:

- A constant decline in natural increase of population during 1976-8. There was also a phase of out-migration from Halifax-Dartmouth during the same period of time.
- Since about 66 percent of total HRM population resided in Halifax-Dartmouth hence it reflected a negative population growth.
- The negative growth rate of population during 1991-96, has been largely possible due to sub-urbanization process and easy access to market and working place due to increasing transport facilities and connectivity in HRM.
- Since 1982 there has been a constant increase in the total net in-migration in HRM regions due to increasing work opportunities in business and service sectors.

The demographic characteristics in terms of population change reflects the importance that HRM has in terms of economic opportunities and its capacity to support the comparatively larger population in Maritime Canada. From port and harbour related activities to military, industrial, fishing and institutional activities Halifax Harbour has been supporting them through the long history of more than two and a half century.

5.3 URBAN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The urban activity of a metropolitan area reflects its economic and social characteristics over a defined geographical boundary. By urban activities we mean all the activities, which take place in a Census Metropolitan area. Urban metro areas are highly characterized by a large population base. At the same time they perform predominantly non-agricultural activities. In the recent last three decades Halifax Metropolitan area, especially the city of Halifax has been passing through a phase of

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As defined by the Statistics Canada for the Census purposes "a census metropolitan area (CMA is a very large urban area (know as the urban core) together with adjacent urban and rural areas (know as urban and rural fringes) that have a high degree of social and economic integration with the urban core. A CMA has an urban core population of at least 100,000, based on the previous census. Also See appendices-A: for more details of concepts on the classification of urban areas in Canada."
re-development supported by an increasing population. The economic fact sheet of HRM region reveals that during the last two decades economic activities in HRM were dominated by service sector industries which in their turn were dominated by government sector activities of all three levels of government agencies. Institutional activities such as universities, hospitals and private sector service industries including banking and financial institutions were more prominent. In other words the economic activities of HRM have been highly diversified.

5.3.1 Status of economic activities:

Industrial activities have been classified in Canada based on a 3-digit North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS). It categorizes industrial activities into primary, manufacturing, construction, transport & communication, trade, finance, insurance and real estate and other service sector. The sub-sectors of these major sectors have been further divided and represented by A to R. (See Table 5.3.1 in Annexure. V)

With 31 per cent share of total provincial population, HRM provides employment to 41 per cent of total labour force of Nova Scotia. This signifies the importance of Halifax in providing and supporting industrial activities for the state as well as for the Atlantic region as a whole.

Fig. 5.3.1 Industrial Activities in HRM 1976

Source: Halifax Regional Municipality, 2002

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As mentioned earlier the industrial activities in HRM have been dominated by the other service sector followed by both wholesale and retail trade in terms of the size of the labour force they employed. In 1996 more than 41 percent of labour force were in the other service sector excluding the government services that represented another 14 per cent of labour force in HRM in the same year. Trade and Transport and Communication sectors consisted of 17.6 and 7.8 per cent of labour force respectively in 1996, while manufacturing and construction activities represented 6.2 and 5.2 percent of the total labour force in HRM. The primary sector labour force is very negligible which is only 1.5 percent including agriculture, fishing and logging activities.

5.3.2 Trends in economic Activities:

In terms of growth of these major sectors of economic activities during the last two decades financial sectors including insurance and real estate have registered a maximum growth of 133.7 percent between 1976 and 1996. However, service sector activities have also registered a similar growth rate of 132.7 percent during the same period.

![Fig. 5.3.2 Industrial Activities in HRM, 1996](image)

Source: Halifax Regional Municipality, 2002

The high rate of growth in these two sectors has been largely because of the initial phase of large financial investment and job opportunities in service sectors that have been created during 1976-81. Partly, this high rate of growth has been due to lower base year figure in case of financial sectors. However, over the year especially after
1981, growth rates have been showing a declining trend until 1991 but there has been an increase in absolute number of people employed. A negative growth rate of 4.8 percent has been registered for this sector between 1991-96. Except for the service sector that has registered a positive rate of growth of 9.7 percent, other sectors have registered negative growth rate between 1991 and 1996.

There has been a constant increase in overall size of the labour force of HRM in the last twenty years except between 1991-96 when a negative growth rate of 2.2 was registered. The decline has been due to the negative growth rate registered in all the industrial categories except for the other service sectors that registered a positive growth rate of 9.7 per cent during the same period. The total labour force has increased in size from 108,035 in 1976 to 178,255 in 1996. In 1991 the size of the labour force employed in all industries was at the maximum of 182,315. The overall increase has been due to an increase in employment in service sector industries such as in business services, educational services, health and social services, accommodation food and beverage and other services.

In respect to industrial activities by employment, HRM can be described as a service center of Nova Scotia and to some extent it has been a major service center for Atlantic Region as a whole. Secondary sectors such as manufacturing and construction industries had a smaller labour force in HRM as compared to other service sectors. One of the largest activities in HRM is port activity. Halifax Harbour not only performs port activity but it also caters to the several recreational and allied activities in and around the Halifax Harbour.

5.4 PORT ACTIVITIES

Known for centuries as the “Gateway of North America”, Halifax Port has been catering to the various needs of Canada especially, the Atlantic region\(^{11}\) and its neighbouring country, the USA for shipping and port related activities. The relative importance of Halifax Port in modern day is greater than any other port of North America. It is the first inbound and the last outbound port on the North American continent, enabling shortest route for the ships operating on the North Atlantic and on Round-the-World and Suez routings. In this way it reduces the journey to Southeast Asia (via Suez) more than any other North American container port on the east

\(^{11}\) Atlantic regions consists of four provinces of Canada e.g. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, New Found Land and Prince Edward Island
Bird’s Eye View of the Major Activities of Halifax Harbour

Gypsum Mining at the Harbour Halifax

Imperial Oil Wharves, Halifax Harbour

Power Plant, Halifax Harbour

Fairview Terminals, Bedford Basin

Land fill Activities at Bedford Basin.

Coast Guards Station, Dartmouth
Taking advantage of 60 feet deep harbour water in the main channel, it provides birthing facilities right up to the main land. Halifax Port is the only port on the east coast of North America to be able to handle fully laden post-Panamax container vessels. Halifax Port has been well connected to the rest of Canada and the USA by railroad, water and by air routes. On dock rail service by Canadian National Rail (CN) offers daily rail services to and from the major cities of eastern Canada and USA. The port of Halifax is one of the well-equipped and modern ports of call of Canada with excellent services and facilities. The performance of any port is indicated by the total cargo handled in a year. The status and trends in Cargo handling has been described in the following section.

5.4.1 Cargo And Traffic Handling:

Halifax port has been showing steady growth of cargo, that are being handle during the last five decade. Figure 5.4.1 shows the total, bulk and general cargo handled during 1950 – 2001. The total cargo handled at Halifax port was four million tonnes in 1950 which has increased to fourteen million tonnes in 2001. It is the bulk cargo that forms the majority of cargo handled at Halifax port. Halifax port has handled a general cargo of 5 million tonnes in the year 2001. It was about one million tonne in the year 1950. The trend line indicates that the total cargo is likely to reach the mark of seventeen million tonne in 2005. Thus it specializes in handling the Bulk cargo, particularly grains and machinery.

Fig. 5.4.1

Source: Halifax Port Authority, 2002

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12 Halifax Port Authority, 2001, "Facilities Guide," Halifax Port Authority, Halifax, Canada
13 Post-Panamax container vessels are large vessels, which cannot cross the Panama Canal; they have been developed and are in operation after the Panama Canal operations in recent years. There are already three post-Panamax birthing facilities in operation at the Port of Halifax.
Port of Halifax specializes in containerized cargo handling amongst the east coast ports of North America. It has handled 4.5 million tonnes of containerized cargo in the year 2001 and is expected to handled five millions tonnes in 2005. The containerized cargo was started in 1969 at Halifax port. The growth of containerized cargo has not been steady at Halifax port. However, it has been showing increasing trends during 1969 and 2001.

Other cargo handled by the port of Halifax like break bulk, Ro/Ro, Twenty Feet Unit Equivalent (TEU) total, and grain shipped via water have been 151, 190, 542, and 290 thousands tonnes respectively. National Gypsum Wharf handled 2.9 million tonnes of gypsum in 2001. Halifax Auto Port handled 53 thousand units of motorcars and small trucks with an estimated tonnage of over 75 thousand tonnes during the same year.

![Fig. 5.4.2](image)

Source: Halifax Port Authority, 2002

A total number of 2296 vessels that visited the Port of Halifax in 2001, out of which 1512 were foreign trading vessels. A total of 56 million tonnes of GRT had been registered in the same year. The port of Halifax handled 869 container vessels with GRT-container vessels of 33 million tonnes in 2001. It also provided passenger cruise services for holiday and travel on the east coast of North America including New York. In 2001 it provided 96 cruise vessels an all time high with a 160 thousand passengers.

5.4.1.2 Trends in cargo and Traffic at the Port of Halifax:

There has been a stable total cargo tonnage of around 14 million tonnes that has been handled by the Port of Halifax between 1991 and 2001. However, its relative
contribution to total cargo of all the Ports of Canada has declined from 8.24 per cent to 7.25 per cent between 1991 and 1997 (data on the total Cargo of Canadian Port is not available for 2001). Table 5.4.1 shows the relative share of cargo of all the major and minor ports of Canada. (See Table 5.4.1 in Annexure. V). The other ports particularly, Montreal, Saint John and Vancouver had registered an increase in their respective cargo tonnage during the same period of time. However, there has been 79.21 percent increase in the container cargo between 1991 and 2001, i.e., from 2.4 million tonnes to 4.4 million tonnes respectively. The total number of vessels of which majority were foreign trading vessels had also registered an increase from 1711 to 2296 during the same period. The Number of container and cruise vessels had been showing a constant increase except in case of container vessels which showed a decline in 1994. There has been a substantial increase in the number of cruise vessels and passengers during the same period of time. In 1992 there were only 44-cruise vessels operating at Halifax, which increased to 96 in 2001 with a five fold increase in the number of cruise passengers.

It is evident from the above discussion that most of the harbour areas have been dominated by port related activities and facilities. In Halifax port activities employ the largest labour force as compared to all other activities in Halifax Metro region\textsuperscript{14}. However, the Halifax Harbour uses are not limited to port related activities only. There are other major activities in the Halifax metro region, which depend on the use of Harbour both as site and for services. For instance, recreational and tourism activities are some of the major activities in Halifax, which depend directly or indirectly on harbour use in many respects.

\textbf{5.5 RECREATIONAL AND TOURISM ACTIVITIES}

Halifax harbour city has traditionally been supporting recreational and tourism activities to some extent. However, from the 1960s onwards there has been major redevelopment work at the harbour, which promoted the recreational and tourism activities. The orientation of the city of Halifax has been reemphasized towards the

harbour for recreational and tourism activities through promotion of business and waterfront development.\(^{15}\)

5.5.1 Recreational Facilities and Activities:

Recreational facilities such as yacht clubs, marinas, boat tour, hovercraft tour to harbour and around the city promote recreational and tourists activities. There are also several public and private boat launches along the harbour. Table 5.5.1 shows the berthing and mooring facilities at the boat clubs and marinas at Halifax Harbour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clubs</th>
<th>Berth</th>
<th>Moorings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waegwaltic</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armdale Yacht Club</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Nova Scotia Squadron</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shearwater Yacht Club</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartmouth Marina</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Dartmouth</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartmouth Club</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford Basin Club</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvin Boulter’s Marina</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>N.A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purcells Cove Marina</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fournier, (1990)

Recreational activities such as sailing, rowing, and canoeing have been taking place at the harbour. However, the aesthetic quality of the Halifax harbour has long been an asset for these activities.\(^{16}\) Swimming and sunbathing at the few beaches such as Black Rock, Fleming Park, and Maugher Beach are the favourite holiday sports around the Harbour in summer and early fall. Scuba diving has been popular around the harbour at selected places especially around MacNabs Island, George Island, the Northwest Arm and along the shore between York Redoubt and Chebucto Head where the waters are very clear and wrecks are abundant.


There are some major recreational and public events, which take place around the harbours. Annual Buskar festival for a week, Canada day Celebration and fireworks and the “Tall Ships Festival” at the waterfront every four years are some of the major tourist attractions and recreational activities of the Halifax Harbour though less significant as far as tourism in Halifax is concerned.

Other recreational tourism related activities at the Halifax harbour include boat tours; helicopter tours for bird’s eye view of the harbour and city, harbour sidewalk, visit to MacNabs Island and whale watching. The present poor quality of harbour water and aesthetics around the harbour has often been said to confront these activities. Nevertheless, there has been an increasing trend in tourism in Halifax metro region due to various facilities and recreational activities available in and around this region.

5.5.2 Trends in number of domestic tourists in Halifax:

Table 5.5.2 shows recent data on the number of person-trip to Halifax has been showing a constant increasing trend from 1996 to 2001. In the year 2001, 42.34 percent of all tourists who visited Nova Scotia visited Halifax. Both the state share and absolute number of person-trips by domestic travel in Halifax has been increasing between 1996 and 2001. The share to state total has increased from 39.53 in 1996 to 42.34 percent in 2002. The absolute number of person-trips to Halifax has increased from 2,224 thousands to 2,947 thousand per year with and average annual growth rate of 4.8 per cent during the same period. This is a high rate of annual growth in tourism in Halifax. This is an indication that Halifax has become a popular tourist destination in Canada especially in Maritime Canada in recent years.
Table 5.5.2 Number of Person-Trips per year by domestic travel to Nova Scotia and Halifax, 1996-2001 (Figures in ‘000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nova Scotia</th>
<th>Halifax Metro</th>
<th>Percentage to State Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>5626</td>
<td>2224</td>
<td>39.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>N.A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6191</td>
<td>2512</td>
<td>40.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>6806</td>
<td>2666</td>
<td>39.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7019</td>
<td>2873</td>
<td>40.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>6960</td>
<td>2947</td>
<td>42.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.A = data not available
Sources: Statistics Canada, CANSIM II SERIES V208028, TABLE NUMBER: 4260001

5.6 OTHER HARBOUR USE ACTIVITIES

The Halifax Harbour provides multi-purpose uses and other facilities for various port activities ranging from shipping, shipbuilding and repair, defense activities, research and fishing – both commercial and recreational fishing, to advanced scientific research in oceanography and marine areas by various research institutions in the city of Halifax.

5.6.1 Shipping Activities:

Halifax harbour is a major shipping port in North America and it provides shipping facilities to almost 3 thousand ships annually. Details on the shipping cargo have already been discussed. A special feature of the Halifax Harbour is the array of passenger cruise liners that promote tourism and other recreational activities at the harbour. However, the shipping activities along the waterfront make no particular demand on water quality. Nevertheless, dredging activities that facilitate shipping may have negative impact on the water quality and sediments of the Harbour.

17 Robert, Fournier, (1990), Halifax Harbour Task Force Report, Halifax Regional Municipality, Halifax, Canada, P34
5.6.2 Shipbuilding, Military and Industrial Use of the Harbour:

Shipbuilding and repair works is another big activity around the waterfront of Halifax Harbour. Halifax Shipyard Limited employs around thousand persons for both shipbuilding and repairs works\(^{18}\). Along with the shipyards, there is another large establishment of the Department of National Defense (DND) of Atlantic Region with naval staffs and coast guards. The DND provides security and has been carrying research in the field of oceanography and marine sciences. The coast guard monitors and facilitates the shipping activities. The navy and the coast guard frequently carry out military exercises.

Heavy industries such Imperial Oil refinery at the eastern passage and Nova Scotia Power Corporation at the Tuff cove also use harbour water. These industries use harbour water for the cooling purposes and return it back at a slightly higher temperature. In this way the water quality gets affected and shows signs of contamination, which directly or indirectly affects other harbour uses such as fishing.

5.6.3 Fishing Activities:

Although, Halifax Harbour has not been a major fishing area as compared to other areas of Scotia Shelf and Grand Bank, it supports some seasonal fishing activities around the harbour. The time series data on commercial catch and recreational fishing is not available; therefore it is difficult to comment on the amount of fish catch from the Halifax Harbour. However, some amount of commercial fishing of lobster, herring, haddock, mackerel and code takes place at the Herring Cove, Eastern Passage, and elsewhere in the Harbour for the local consumption. About 100 fishermen are involved in the fishing activities from these areas. Recreational fishing also takes place in Northwest Arms and elsewhere.

5.7 LAND USE PATTERN IN HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Land use pattern of the Halifax Regional Municipality is the manifestation of the arrangement of urban and economic activities on space. The existing land use pattern of the Halifax Regional Municipality is shown in Figure 5.7.1. Out of a total 445.35 km² area 240.39 km² (60 percent) has been put under open space category and is left for future development. Another 145-km² land has been left for natural resource use.

The land put under residential, mixed land use (commercial, institutional, hotels etc.) and streets and roads cover 18.45 km², 1.54km² and 1.61 km² respectively. The City centre and land reserved for harbour and marine uses together occupies about 1 km² of the total land. One significant feature of the land use of Halifax is that about 9 percent of total land is occupied by the riparian buffer zone i.e., area under rivers and lakes. Being a coastal city it has plenty of freshwater bodies like lakes and rivers. Most of them get frozen in winter season. It has been observed that the huge open spaces can be utilized for the commercial as well residential purposes in future.

Source: Halifax Regional Municipality, 2005
The proposed land use plan of Halifax regional Municipality for the year 2010 has been shown in Figure 5.7.2. The proposed change in the land use for the year 2010 increased the open spaces more than two times of the total area from 1990.

**Fig. 5.7.2 Proposed Land Use of Halifax 2010**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Resource Use</th>
<th>Open Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riparian Buffer</td>
<td>6.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected Open Space</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Land Use (Com, Inst, hotels, etc)</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Centre</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Halifax Regional Municipality, 2005
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The natural resource use category of land has shown no change in the proposed land use for the year 2010 while riparian buffer has increased from 36.54 km² to 60.27 km² between 1990 and 2010 since the total land area of Halifax Regional Municipality has been increased. There has been marginal change in land area under harbour use for the year 2010. The proposed land use plan focuses on the reorientation of city center with greater emphasis on mixed land use.

5.8 CONCLUSIONS

1. Halifax Harbour is one of the most strategically located harbours of North America on the Atlantic coast. That is why Halifax Harbour acquired traditional glory and was called ‘Warden of North.’ Halifax has the comparative geographical advantage of a natural harbour operating throughout
the year and supports very complex urban and port activities due to its strategic advantages.

2. Halifax Harbour has been supporting port and urban activities ever since its establishment in 1749. Because of comparative geographical advantage of natural harbour with deep ocean water into the main land, it has become North America's best port in Atlantic Coast. It has better access to main land of Canada and reduces the travel time of ships coming from Europe by a day. However, the Halifax Harbour has diversified its role from primarily being a port city to a commercial and service center of the Atlantic region of Canada. It houses one third of the total population of Nova Scotia.

3. Recent trends in population shows rather a slow growth rate, however, there has been a constant increase in the absolute number of population of Halifax Regional Municipality. This has been possible due to increase in the in-migration of population from other parts of the world as well as from within Canada. A large population of Halifax depends on port related activities.

4. The urban economic activities of Halifax Metro Region are diversified as it supports a variety of urban economic activities. If one goes by the composition of labour force, 'other services' provide most of the employment. Hence it can be said that Halifax is primarily a service center of Nova Scotia. However, one cannot deny the importance of Halifax Harbour that supports either directly or indirectly a variety of urban and port related activities.

5. There has been a constant stability in the total cargo handled at the Halifax Harbour. However, it specializes in container cargo which has registered an increasing trend in recent times. Halifax has been a major tourist destination in Atlantic Province of Canada in recent times. There has been a substantial increase in both the domestic and international tourists visiting Halifax. There are many recreational activities that attracts tourist in Halifax Harbour. Halifax Harbour also supports shipbuilding, military and industrial activities at the Harbour.
6. Present land use pattern of Halifax Regional Municipality shows large open spaces available for development. The natural resource reserves are also very large while residential areas occupy a small area compared to the riparian buffer. The proposed land use puts emphasis on the reorientation of the city center by substantially increasing land area under this category. The total land has incased substantially in the proposed land use for the year 2010.

7. The Harbour provides marine research facilities and houses Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Defense Research Establishment of Atlantic Canada, Halifax Fisheries Research Laboratory, The Atlantic Research Laboratory (NRC), Dalhousie University and other private firms.

8. Halifax urban harbour has also witnessed various kinds of ocean dumping activities such as accidental or deliberate spills of oil and other chemical products. It has also been used as a receptacle for urban sewage and runoff in the belief that its assimilative capacity will take care of the toxic impact of various inputs. However, this has been proved wrong over the years. An assessment of environmental issue has been described in detailed in the following chapter.