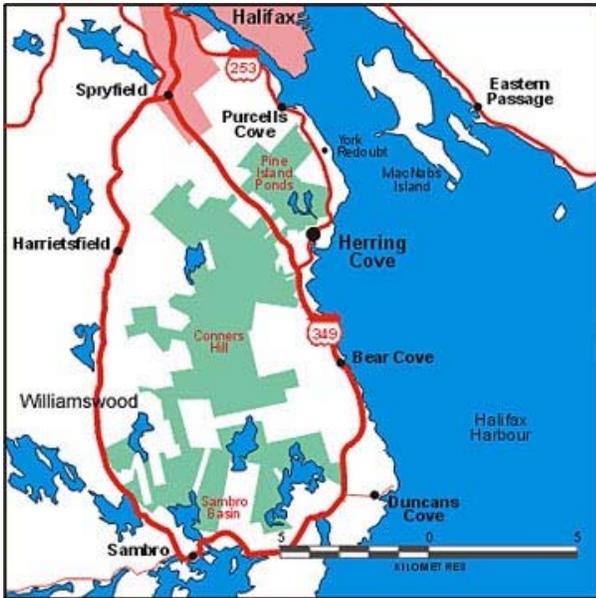


# Spryfield – A Community On The Go!

June, 2005



**A Close-Knit Farming Community** – Spryfield started as a farming community when Captain William Spry, Chief Surveyor for Nova Scotia, cleared land for his farm fields in the 1770's. The area became known as Spry's Field, and remnants of that agricultural heritage are evident today.

Old families from the early settlers have resulted in a large, non-migrant population (45.6% of Spryfielders are non-migrant; 29.5% in Halifax Regional Municipality; 22.1% in Nova Scotia)<sup>1</sup>. Lower housing costs (\$687 SF; \$823 HRM; \$633 NS) and rental costs (\$497 SF; \$657 HRM; \$589 NS) have resulted in a highly mobile segment that moves often (55.9% SF; 45.8% HRM; 36.0% NS).

There were operating dairies in Spryfield well into the 1950's, and the last farms and market gardens, which had fed Halifax for generations, did not close until the early 1960's. Today there is a strong sense of neighbourliness, particularly among long-time residents, yet social isolation has been identified as a health issue among seniors. There are still pockets of old farm land and large tracts of semi-wilderness, but nearly every single heritage building has been destroyed to make way for the new.

<sup>1</sup> Community Counts Program, 2005 SF - Spryfield, HRM - Halifax Regional Municipality, NS - Nova Scotia

**Entering the Modern Age** – In 1969, when peninsular Halifax annexed Spryfield on the mainland, the first grocery stores appeared and city council at the time invested generously in capital projects to improve roads, establish water and sewer lines, and build sidewalks.

The city's Social Planning Department took an innovative approach in bringing human services to the area by initiating and supporting the Multi-Service System, which assisted agencies from different levels of government to coordinate their services in health, education, recreation, social services and culture.

This led to the construction of the Captain William Spry Community Centre in 1985. It housed agency offices, a wave pool, and public library, and was funded in a partnership of the province, the city, and the community through the Spryfield Lions Club.

Four neighbourhood schools serve primary to grade twelve, and several churches have outreach programs. There are lakes to swim in during summer and skate on in winter, as well as a variety of walking trails through the woods and barrens. Local residents still refer to "the village" when going to the business district on Herring Cove Road, they still enjoy hundreds of acres of green space within walking distance, and yet the population of 4,460 also has access to all the amenities of a fine city.

## **A Community of Contrasts**

For most of its life, Spryfield housing has been fairly homogeneous, with different socio-economic levels living side by side in relatively modest housing. That changed when Greystone public housing was built and low-rent apartment buildings sprang up.

The disparity is increasing, with isolated pockets of high-income housing now being built and development pressure rising. In Spryfield, 26% of renters pay more than 30% of their income on rent vs. 13% in HRM and 10% in NS.

Overall, the average household income is lower (\$30,036 SF; \$56,366 HRM; \$48,457 NS); those who do work earn less on average (\$18,941 SF; \$30,616 HRM; \$26,632 NS); and educational attainment is lower (20 years old and over with less than high school completion: 46.4% SF; 22.3% HRM; 31.7% NS). Many employees, however, work full time year-round (52.6% SF; 55.8% HRM; 49.6% NS).

Many residents are involved in a wide variety of community groups, everything from the Quarter Note Singers and CRABapple Mapping Project quilt makers to an activist group fighting to protect Colpitt Lake; from the renewed Spryfield Residents' Association and revived McIntosh Run Watershed Association to the long established Mainland South Heritage Society; from the long-running Spryfield Community Garden to the relatively new Urban Farm Museum allotments. Many more residents, however, are not connected to community life and are not proud to call themselves Spryfielders.

The population is younger than average (33.5 years SF; 36.3 HRM; 38.0 NS); contains more lone-parent families (37.6% SF; 16.6% HRM; 16.8% NS); has a larger proportion of children (29.2% SF; 26.7% HRM; 23.9% NS); and more children at home (42.6% SF; 36.9% HRM; 36.7% NS). Spryfield, however, has no day care facilities.

Groups such as the Chebucto Boys and Girls Club, Family SOS – Healthy Kidz, Cornerstone Family Centre, and a pilot project of the YWCA offer after-school programs. There are also Library programs, HRM Recreation activities on offer, and a wide variety of programs and activities at the Single Parent Centre. Even so, there is a demand for more things to do and more places to go for all ages in Spryfield, and a desire to have a vibrant arts scene.

In spite of the ready access to green space, many residents do not recreate outdoors. Many use public transit (25.4% SF; 9.9% HRM; 4.8% NS), and a significant proportion walk to work (14.0% SF; 10.3% HRM; 8.3% NS). 'Just Live It' is a partnership devoted to increasing physical activity levels, starting with youth at J.L. Ilsley High School.

According to the Chebucto West Community Health Board's recent survey, there is some overlap in health issues among different age groups, and many problems are deep-rooted.

Maternal / infant and child care health issues are:

- ◆ stable and supportive family
- ◆ eating healthy
- ◆ safe environment
- ◆ daycare.

The top health issues for youths are:

- ◆ alcohol, drugs and tobacco
- ◆ self-esteem, peer pressure, depression
- ◆ lack of physical activity
- ◆ healthy relationships
- ◆ homelessness.

For adults the issues are:

- ◆ job stress
- ◆ lack of physical activity
- ◆ eating healthy
- ◆ alcohol, drugs and tobacco
- ◆ food security (enough funding for nutritious food)
- ◆ homelessness.

Seniors' health issues include:

- ◆ money for medication, healthy foods, etc.
- ◆ quality home and long term care
- ◆ health care and wellness programs
- ◆ social isolation – transportation to and from
- ◆ dental health
- ◆ public safety / security
- ◆ mental health.

The more than 30 years of the Multi-Service System operating out of the Community Centre has nurtured a strong network of public and non-profit agencies that work together well and serve those in need with compassion. The Community Centre's physical and human resources have also supported the development of a wide variety of community groups, although to date there has been little interaction between agencies and community groups.

The Spryfield and District Business Commission has recently been established after several years of businesses communicating more with each other, and the editor of the local newspaper, the Chebucto News, has worked to make the business and social sectors more aware of and appreciative of each other.

The time is ripe to make sure that voices from all parts of the community are heard, and to bring all neighbourhoods and sectors together, so that Spryfield can develop into a healthy and vibrant community for all of its citizens.