
Annapolis Royal Strategic Plan



June 2021

1 – PURPOSE

What is a strategic plan? Simply put, a strategic plan determines where an organization is going over the next few years and how it's going to get there. A strategic plan is a coordinated and systematic way to develop a course and direction for the Town.

2 – VISION

Vision Statement:

To encourage, support, and promote the Town's long-term economic vitality. To provide a safe, inclusive, and diverse community while maintaining its deep-rooted history and culture. To preserve and protect the Town's natural and built heritage, environment, and small-town atmosphere, while enhancing the quality of life for its community - current and future.

Summary of the vision statement:

To be where 550 people want to live, work, and play by 2026.

3 – MISSION STATEMENT

To serve the community by delivering effective municipal services and maintaining a progressive and fiscally responsible government, while partnering to encourage sustainable economic growth and environmental development, foster a unique and culturally rich experience and ensure a high quality of life for the citizens of the Town.

4 – MANDATE

The Town's mandate comes from the Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act (MGA): Under Section 9A of the MGA, the purposes of a municipality are to

- (a) provide good government;
- (b) provide services, facilities, and other things that, in the opinion of the council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the municipality; and
- (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

In addition:

- make policies and pass resolutions and by-laws on behalf of the Town (MGA Sections 47 to 49)
- collect taxes (MGA Part VI, section 111)
- collect water payments in accordance with Section 6 of the Schedule of Rules and Regulations for the Annapolis Royal Water Utility
- acquire, own, sell, or lease property (MGA, Sections 50 to 52)
- provide police services (MGA Section 54 & Police Act)
- provide water and sewer and other public works services
- provide fire protection services (MGA Section 293)
- encourage economic development (MGA Sections 56 and 57)

5 – VALUES

The following are the things that people stated that they value:

- Our people
 - Heritage: who we are and where we came from
 - Caring environment
 - New residents
 - Seniors
 - Youth
 - Town employees
 - Volunteers
 - Strong community spirit
 - Rich and diverse artistic community

- Our Way of life
 - Greens spaces and trails
 - Safe and clean environment
 - Infrastructure and resources
- Our Environment
 - Nature
 - Clean air and water
 - Beauty
 - Rural
 - Rich agricultural local produce
- Our Economy
 - Business, products, and services
 - Tourism
 - Sustainable development
 - Economically viable

The Town's Values are:

Integrity - *The Town will act with integrity by being forthright and truthful.*

Inclusiveness / Diversity - *The Town will be inclusive by providing equal access to opportunities and resources and by involving people who might otherwise be excluded for any reason.*

Innovation - *The Town will strive to be creative in achieving optimal outcomes for the community.*

Transparency - *The Town will be open; we will communicate, and we will be accountable.*

Responsible stewardship - *The Town will be responsible to existing and future generations in caring for the environment and our people.*

Respect for each other - *The Town will foster an atmosphere of respect for each other's feelings, wishes, rights and traditions.*

Collaboration - *The Town will work with others to continually to improve our community.*

6 – SWOT ANALYSIS

6.1 Strengths

- **Services:** Good internet service, amphitheatre for musical and dramatic performances, museums, dog park, waterfront boardwalk, Nova Scotia's largest outdoor Farmers and Traders Market and longest running of any other farm market around, with 100+ vendors, music entertainment and the Town Crier, high school (grades 6 to 12), health centre, community hub, library with innovation lab, fire department, well maintained sidewalks, public washrooms, police department.
- **Recreation:** public recreational facilities: gym with fitness classes, pickle ball, climbing wall, basketball, etc., walking trails, tennis courts, pool, playground, skate park, outdoor ice rink in winter, soccer fields, nearby golf course.
- **Heritage:** Considered the birthplace of Canada, the first permanent European settlement in Canada, National Historic District designation; Lower St George Street is the oldest street in Canada, beautiful and historic store/house fronts with flower beds and explanatory plaques, O'Dell House Museum housing displays, a genealogy centre and archives, Sinclair Inn – earliest surviving Acadian building in Canada, DeGannes-Cosby house National Historic Site (over 300 year old), Built heritage: over 100 reregistered historic buildings in Town, rich heritage of Mi'kmaq, Black, British, French, Irish and Scots, Garrison Graveyard (oldest English gravestone in Canada). The Historical Association of Annapolis Royal has been preserving, presenting, and promoting the heritage of the area for 102 years. It offers award winning and world-renowned Candlelight Graveyard tours and maintains the historic Annapolis Royal lighthouse.
- **Cultural Attractions:** museums, seventeen-acre-award-winning Historic Gardens with special Acadian celebrations, Wine and Roses, and House and Garden Tour, 100-year-old King's Theatre presenting live music, drama and film, ArtsPlace, a contemporary gallery and arts centre operated by the Annapolis Region Community Arts Council (ARCAC), Fort Anne.

- **Partnerships:** Valley Waste, transit, joint water (2) and sewer agreements (1), and regional emergency management with the Municipality of the County of Annapolis, Christmas events (Annapolis Board of Trade, businesses), Canada Day (Fort Anne), Natal Day weekend (community), police dispatch services with Bridgewater, RCMP lockups in Digby and Bridgetown. The Explorer Guide has also been a consistent and valuable marketing tool over the years.
 - **Infrastructure:** well funded water utility. Town owned tertiary sewage treatment plant, good Town vehicle and equipment replacement policy.
 - **Community:** Town Facebook feed, Active local and community groups: Annapolis Heritage Society, Historical Association of Annapolis Royal, Garden Club, Instant Theatre Group, Drama Club, Chess Club, language clubs, online communities: , Annapolis County Concerned Citizens Committee, Annapolis Royal and Area Environment and Ecology, Revitalize Annapolis, annual Canada Day and Natal Day Weekend celebrations, Paint the Town annual outdoor arts event, Elephant Grass Printmakers Society, annual Annapolis Basin Community Band Festival, Map Annapolis: web-based community asset mapping of the social history of Annapolis area (recognized by the Governor General of Canada for Excellence in Community History Programming in 2017), Annapolis Board of Trade, Community band, Friends of the Annapolis Royal Library, Annapolis Royal and Royan Twinning group.
 - **Location:** Just two hours outside Halifax and 1.5 hours from the South Shore or Yarmouth, the Town is conveniently located in terms of highways and secondary roads, all go through the Town or nearby. The Town is also close to three Parks Canada sites and two completely different bodies of water above and below the causeway, wharf and 30-foot tides; the Town serves a catchment area of roughly 10,000 people.
 - **Culture:** Strong ties with sister city Royan France, Various music venues: Legion, Pub, Farmers and Traders Market, amphitheatre, the Legion, St George Street in front of King's Theatre, considered a "hot spot" for the Arts – artists and craftspeople
 - **Business:** many great businesses, two grocery stores, art galleries and artisan shops, high end brewery, restaurants, wine bar, hardware/building supplies stores, two banks.
 - **Destination Status:** one of 20 "Small Towns to Visit in Canada"¹, Town won "Most Liveable Small Town in the World in 2004"², Graveyard and Historic District tours for visitors, National Historic District, waterfront destination.
 - **Financial:** strong internal controls and financially stable government, the Water Utility has built up substantial reserves.
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- **Environment:** progressive Town tree planting program, Clean Annapolis River Project (CARP): NGO addressing issues in the Annapolis River Watershed, natural beauty surrounding us from any vantage point in Town, physical beauty of the Town's geographical location.
- **Housing:** variety of housing: single family homes, homes with more than 1 housing unit, condos, apartments, seniors' housing, potential for tiny homes and proximity of MacLeod Annapolis Royal Nursing Home (66 beds), recent strength of resale housing market.
- **Population Growth:** lots of development in recent years: Fortier Mills, condos, new warehouses.
- **Recreation:** public recreational facilities: gym with fitness classes, pickle ball, climbing wall, basketball, etc., walking trails, tennis courts, pool, playground, skate park, outdoor ice rink in winter, soccer fields, nearby golf course.
- **Population:** diversity and level of education of population.
- **Catchments:** population is estimated at 10,000.

6.2 Weaknesses

- **Financial:** reliance on a single ratepayer for 18% of Town revenues (FCI³ Indicator), policing costs account for 18% of the Town's budget, declining capital reserves. Increasing proportion of budget being spent on "nice to have" instead of essential services including street repaving.
- **Small Population** size (491 people)⁴ despite modest gains in the last two censuses.
- **Planning:** lack of a strategic plan, risk management plans, succession plans, and a comprehensive marketing plan for the Town.
- **Expired Agreements:** for sewer, water, and fire agreements with the Municipality of the County of Annapolis; funding levels for Town recreation facilities and programs do not reflect County usage.
- **Infrastructure:** poor space allocation for Town operations at Town Hall including access to Council Chambers and location of Police Department, the Town does not have its own water supply, ongoing maintenance and misuse of leaf and yard waste area, odours from green bins in downtown core in summer due to bi-weekly collection, lack of sidewalks on Chapel and School streets, the Town is dependent on a single provider for internet service, dependence on single water line across the causeway, lack of accessibility to some stores in Town.
- **Limited Land Area** (2.04 square kilometres)⁵

³ Financial Condition Indicators

⁴ Ibid

⁵ 2016 Census

- **Vacant Real Estate:** Too much real estate is vacant for a significant part of the year. This jeopardizes the viability of many businesses and reduces the vitality of Town life.
- **Potential for Lost Opportunities:** (including investment money) as a result of not being part of the REN⁶ network.
- **Responsiveness:** perceived lack of responsiveness and two-way communication, consultation and collaboration by the Town Council and staff (e.g., with the business community⁷).
- **Red Tape:** amount of red tape associated with compliance with many sections of the LUB re land use/changes in land use.
- **Speeding in Town**
- **Beautification:** lack of appreciation for the importance of consistent beautification efforts in public areas.
- **Communications:** lack of awareness of what is available for people new to the Town, communication to citizens without Internet access, perceived lack of communication to involve the public.
- **Lack of an Effective Records Management System**
- **Lack of Definition of Town's Marketing and Economic Development Committee mandate, roles, and responsibilities**
- **Lack of Enforcement of By-Laws:** speeding in Town, lack of jurisdiction over what takes place on the water, maintenance of vacant lots and properties.
- **Affordable Rental Properties:** lack of affordable rental properties and rental properties designed specifically for an aging population. Potential employees cannot find local, affordable, and suitable accommodations.
- **Fibre Network for Internet:** access to fiber network will be needed sooner rather than later and Annapolis Royal businesses and citizens cannot afford to be left behind.

Business Hours: some businesses are not open with regular coordinated hours and there is a perceived lack of promotion outside of the community to attract visitors. Particularly in winter, it is hit or miss whether a restaurant or business will be open on any day.

6.3 Opportunities

- **Economic Development:** to examine available land in the Town for development (including lands currently occupied that may be vacated in the not so distant future), to look at the potential for appropriate development of the First Pond property on the outskirts of the Town which is owned by the Town, to

⁶ Regional Enterprise Network

⁷ 13 Ways to Kill Your Community by David Griffiths, Chapters 5 & 7

examine the possibility of a marina (but only if its creation can be part of a larger plan for the downtown that addresses rising sea levels), to pursue tourism season extension, to support the redevelopment/repurposing of NSPI property, to examine possibilities for further waterfront development, to assist local restaurants by allowing outdoor tables, set up of food stands at special events, etc., to encourage boating tourism with slack tide access through the causeway such as a lock, to follow up on tiny home development within the Town and follow up on the zoning opportunity it already has.

- **Relationships:** to meet and work with the new Council at the Municipality of the County of Annapolis, to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones, to engage the schools and to encourage youth participation and community involvement, to enhance the twinning with Royan (e.g., student exchange), to fully engage new residents. .
- **Environmental:** to encourage more people to “park and walk”, to enable solar energy capture at the community pool, to consider more green sustainable industry, to improve/enhance the Town streetscape with additional flower, herb or veggie beds and tree planting.
- **Communications:** to include Town communications with Town invoices, to publish a monthly beefed up Town Crier, to develop a package or guide with information on local family resources, daycares, schools, recreational and Town programs, rentals at other sites. To engage citizens on an individual basis when changes that may affect them occur.
- **Planning:** to develop effective risk management plans, to investigate a freshwater gravity fed system from Lequille Canal at Junction Hill owned by NSPI.
- **Project Management:** to adopt effective project management principles.
- **Financial:** to examine Town fee structures to increase revenues. Reducing expenditures on policing to have additional funds for other priorities. The police force could do more positive community-based work to build relationships/PR and proactively prevent problems both with the youth/schools and with the community.
- **Governance:** to improve Town governance
- **Recreation:** the Recreation Department could be more proactive and offer more active events, workshops, programs, initiatives etc. Increased presence on social media/promotion of physically active lifestyles and local opportunities is needed. The facilities and outdoor advantages we have could be used more fully (tennis court, Harvest Moon Trail, skatepark, etc.). The lack of year-round facilities for youth and seniors (indoor pool, skating or curling rink) could be addressed with the County, to work on the development of an ATV free trail from Annapolis Royal to Digby.

- **Land Use By-Law and Municipal Planning Strategy:** these documents could be amended to demonstrate that the Town is open for business and development, that it supports affordable housing, and that it intends to reduce red tape and costs, all without jeopardizing heritage preservation, environmental controls, and small-town appeal. The Town could have a waterfront development plan that extends from the NSP site into the existing Fortier trail and boardwalk, the waterfront of Fort Anne, all the way to the old rail bridge and ending at the dyke.
- **Cultural Enterprise:** encouraging cultural enterprises such as artist studios, community art workshops, galleries and similar activities that operate year-round in Town.
- **Pursue UNESCO World Heritage Site Status**

6.4 Challenges

- **Financial:** adapting to and/or replacing anticipated loss of/reduction in the NSPI grant in lieu of taxes.
- **Climate Change:** dealing with the impacts of climate change (and especially sea level rise) on the Town and develop an effective response in collaboration with others.
- **Accessibility:** making Town owned buildings and properties accessible and supporting businesses in their accessibility efforts.
- **Fragmentation of Marketing and Economic Development Effort:** working towards reducing the fragmentation of marketing and economic development efforts across the community and the region.
- **Rising Policing Costs:** Dealing with the fact that the Town, like many municipalities in Nova Scotia, is struggling to contain policing costs (policing costs for the Town represent approximately 18% of the operating budget).
- **Incentives for Businesses to Close:** dealing with the fact that the Province has designated a number of seasonal tourist business categories which may receive a reduced tax rate on the municipal tax bill. This provides certain businesses with an incentive to close for at least four months of the taxation year rather than to remain open and discourages the economic growth that would come from year-round opening.
- **Living with Wildlife**
- **Communications:** listening to dissenting voices.
- **Sewage Treatment Plant:** dealing with the periodic odour issues at the sewage treatment plant.
- **Dealing with Expensive House Prices and Affordable Housing**
- **Supporting Avoidance of Volunteer Burn-Out**

- **COVID-19:** continuing to effectively respond to COVID-19, supporting local businesses and organizations through COVID-19.
- **Governance:** improving the governance of shared service agreements.
- **Pet Management:** promoting responsible pet ownership.
- **Nondiscretionary Costs** dealing with the fact that non-discretionary costs are between 9 and 10 % of the total budget and include School Board contributions, Property Assessment Services, Housing contributions and corrections.
- **Needs Versus Wants:** there is a need to distinguish between what people need and what they want.

7 – ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

7.1 Demographics

Year	Pop.	±%	Population Gain/Loss
1981	631	—	
1986	631	0.00%	0
1991	633	0.30%	2
1996	583	-7.9%	-50
2001	550	-5.7%	-33
2006	444	-19.3%	-106
2011	481	8.30%	37
2016	491	2.10%	10

Since its heyday when it reached a population of 1,000, Annapolis Royal had been steadily losing population until sometime between 2006 and 2011 when it not only reversed the population decline but started to modestly grow again.⁸

At present, Annapolis Royal, NS has a population of 491 people. Overall, the population of Annapolis Royal, NS is declining at a rate of 0.72% per year over the past 15 years from 2001 to 2016. In the last two censuses, its populations grew by 10 people, an average growth rate of 0.42% per year from 2011 to 2016. With the development of

⁸ ["I:\ecstats\Agency\BRIAN\census2" \(PDF\)](#). Archived from [the original](#) (PDF) on 2013-10-05. Retrieved 2010-01-20

Fortier Mills and the condominium development at the Academy in recent years, it is anticipated that the next census will also show steady growth.

The median age of Town residents is 63.4 compared to 45.5 for Nova Scotia. The average age is 63 years. 60% of the population (295 people) are between the ages of 0 and 64 years. This leaves 40% who older than 65. An older population means more jobs for young people in terms of supporting the needs of those over 65.

In September 2020, Champlain Elementary welcomed between 30 and 35 new pupils. Bridgetown also recorded record student enrolment for the 2020-2021 year.

The median income per household after taxes is \$40,021 compared to \$53,129 for Nova Scotia. The average household income in 2015(\$) is \$57,793 and \$48,844 after tax.

The next Census will take place in May 2021.

7.2 Social

The current COVID-19 pandemic places a number of restrictions on municipalities, businesses, organizations, residents and visitors. These include mandatory mask wearing, social distancing, travel restrictions, self-isolating and quarantine depending on the situation.

The Town's safe but sophisticated rural lifestyle means that the Town can and does attract young families.

7.3 Economic

Since June of 2016, a local private community and business investment organization has directly invested \$656,547 into businesses in the Town and the surrounding communities in Annapolis County. It has received 146 applications for assistance and has funded 81 of them, including helping 39 new businesses start-up and 24 existing businesses expand their operations. This organization's initiatives have also created 171 jobs since its inception. It has also funded 19 community projects. The current COVID-19 pandemic is a global phenomenon affecting all economies. Despite this, there have been at least six new businesses start-ups since March of 2020, four of which are in town.

As of March 31, 2021, 10 building permits were issued for a total value \$ 1,034,410.00. This includes 7 residential properties with a value \$720,790.00 and 3 commercial properties with a value \$313,620.00. This shows continued growth and there has strong commercial growth over the last two years.

7.4 Political

According to Elections Nova Scotia, the spring of 2022 is the latest possible time the 41st provincial general election occurs.⁹ A federal election will be held on or before October 16, 2023. The next municipal election will be in October 2024.

7.5 Environmental

⁹ <https://electionsnovascotia.ca/41PGEPending>

It is expected that much of the Town will be below the annual peak flood levels, meaning that we can expect more frequent annual flooding of both low-lying and sea-level areas, by 2050, the Town is at risk of being permanently inundated.¹⁰

Nova Scotia municipalities are lobbying the provincial government to implement Extended Producer Liability (EPR)¹¹ s which is already benefiting 80% of Canadians across the country, is being moved forward in our neighbouring Province of New Brunswick and is being paid into by Nova Scotians as we shop today.

7.6 Legal

The Town operates within a highly regulated environment which includes the Municipal Government Act, the Police Act, the Environment Act, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Trade Union Act, the Assessment Act, the Property Valuation Services Corporation Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Utility and Review Board Act, the Municipal Elections Act, the Climate Protection Act and pending Regulations, and other relevant legislation. The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act requires compliance with the Province's Accessibility Plan to make Nova Scotia accessible by 2030.

In February 2021, the Town was notified that the Province is considering introducing legislation to limit the possession and circulation of police articles and police uniforms by non-police.

The Town currently administers 31 by-laws covering a wide variety of areas of municipal interests.

7.7 Operating Environment

The Town's operating environment can be described as positive and stable, but the pandemic and the threat of the loss of 18% of operating revenues add elements of uncertainty.

¹⁰ <https://www.saltwire.com/news/local/research-scientists-maps-show-how-sea-level-rise-will-affect-nova-scotia-communities-193782/?location=nova-scotia>,
https://coastal.climatecentral.org/map/14/-65.5091/44.7433/?theme=sea_level_rise&map_type=year&basemap=roadmap&contiguous=true&elevation_model=best_available&forecast_year=2050&pathway=rcp45&percentile=p50&refresh=true&return_level=return_level_1&slr_model=kopp_2014

¹¹ Faced with increasing amounts of waste, many governments have reviewed available policy options and concluded that placing the responsibility for the post-consumer phase of certain goods on producers could be an option. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a policy approach under which producers are given a significant responsibility – financial and/or physical – for the treatment or disposal of post-consumer products. Assigning such responsibility could in principle provide incentives to prevent wastes at the source, promote product design for the environment and support the achievement of public recycling and materials management goals. Within the OECD the trend is towards the extension of EPR to new products, product groups and waste streams such as electrical appliances and electronics.

8 – PROPOSED STRATEGIES

1. Focus on the needs of Town residents, organizations, businesses and other stakeholders in the provision of Town services.
 2. To enhance two-way communication between the Town, residents and all stakeholders.
 3. Encourage collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and thinking outside the box to solve problems and overcome challenges.
 4. Collaborate with others to the greatest extent possible to eliminate duplication of effort, coordinate effort and make the most of what we already have.
 5. Focus on value added activity and elimination of redundant, unnecessary or “busy work”.
 6. Continue to leverage Town assets and money to access other sources of capital and revenues (through grants, etc.) to make the most of what the Town has.
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9 – OBJECTIVES

9.1 Strategic Objectives:

1. Continued focus on monitoring and effectively responding to the current COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Development and implementation of an effective risk management plan to mitigate against the financial impact of the anticipated loss of the NSPI grant in lieu of taxes:
 - a. a dedicated Task Team was appointed on February 16, 2021 and is developing draft plans for Council consideration.
 - b. Council is receptive to hearing about proposals for repurposing of the property and facilities.

3. Development and implementation of a comprehensive climate change plan in collaboration with the federal and provincial governments, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Partners for Climate Protection Program and other agencies, partners, and stakeholders.
4. Documentation and communication of the Town's existing and planned community development efforts in collaboration with community including:
 - Accessibility Plan by March 31, 2022 and Town owned buildings by March 31, 2030.
 - Social inclusion (including youth and seniors)
 - Recreational programs and facilities
 - Consideration of needs and wants expressed by respondents to the January and April Strategic Planning Surveys
5. Development and implementation of a comprehensive Town Marketing Plan in collaboration with all stakeholders including existing business, economic development and marketing organizations, attractions and cultural communities, and Town businesses including:
 - Consideration of needs and wants expressed by respondents to the January and April Strategic Planning Surveys
6. Identification and realization of alternative sources of Police Department revenues to reduce/offset the cost of policing burden for ratepayers.
7. Development and implementation of a multi-year approach to planning and purchasing of essential operational requirements for the Police Department based on best estimates of future value as opposed to present value.
8. Evaluate the effectiveness of the current means of communication and identify and implement enhancements.

9.2 Long-Range Objectives

9. Continuation of long-range Town infrastructure plan:
 - based on 2018 updated plan
 - to include active work to resolve periodic recurring odour issues at sewage treatment plant.
10. Continuation of existing long range Town vehicle replacement program and expansion to include all Town-owned buildings.

- To include Town fire truck

11. Consider whether or not and when a review of the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law and Municipal Planning Strategy are required (for example, 2016 or earlier depending on the need).

9.3 Proposed Medium Range Objectives

12. Development of a succession plan for critical Town positions

9.4 Short-Term Objectives

13. Implementation of an effective project management system for all major Town projects (including post project reviews)

14. Development of a schedule for all contract/agreement/MOU negotiations, and tenders (in progress)

15. Participate with municipal units in King's County in the review of intermunicipal service agreements such as the intermunicipal agreement for Valley Waste.

16. Negotiate new agreement with Annapolis Royal Volunteer Fire Services.

17. Update and renegotiate water, sewer, fire, regional emergency measures and recreation agreements with the Municipality of the County of Annapolis.

18. Plan and implement a new and effective records management system.

19. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed on a yearly basis.