
Annapolis Royal Strategic Plan
Final Report



Updated November 2023

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 – TOWN’S 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

- o Heritage: who we are and where we came from o
- o Caring environment
- o New residents
- o Seniors
- o Youth

- o Town employees
- o Volunteers
- o Strong community spirit
- o Rich and diverse artistic community

Our Way of life

- o Greens spaces and trails
- o Safe and clean environment
- o Infrastructure and resources

Our Environment

- o Nature
- o Clean air and water
- o Beauty
- o Rural
- o Rich agricultural local produce

Our Economy

- o Business, products, and services
- o Tourism
- o Sustainable development
- o 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 improve our community.*
Objectivity – *The Town will approach all work from an objective viewpoint, free from bias or favouritism.*

6 – SWOT ANALYSIS

6.1 Strengths

- **Services:** high speed 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, public library with innovation lab, volunteer fire department, well maintained sidewalks, public washrooms, community-based policing
- **Recreation:** public recreational facilities: gym with fitness classes, pickle ball, climbing wall, basketball, etc., walking trails, tennis courts, pool, playground, skate park, soccer fields, nearby golf course. Access to water for recreational use.
- **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 registered 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 displays, 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, 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. The IMSA group with Kings and Annapolis County (the Annapolis County Inter-Municipal Working Group was established in 2023).
- **Infrastructure:** Almost 85% of the water utility infrastructure is new and good for the next 50 years. 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, language clubs, online communities, , annual Canada Day and Natal Day Weekend celebrations, Paint the Town annual outdoor arts event, annual Annapolis Basin Community Band Festival, MapAnnapolis: 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), 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 local retail stores, two grocery stores, natural food store, art galleries and artisan shops, microbrewery, restaurants, wine bar, NSLC, hardware/building supplies stores, pharmacy, two banks (although plans have been announced for the Scotiabank branch to close by March 2024).
- **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, As of March 31, 2023, the Annapolis Royal Water Utility had just over ¾ of a million dollars in reserves including the depreciation reserve.

- **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, duplexes, homes with more than 1 housing unit, condos, apartments, seniors' housing, potential for tiny homes. Proximity of MacLeod Annapolis Royal Nursing Home (66 beds).
- **Population Growth:** population is growing over three censuses
- **Recreation:** public recreational facilities: gym with fitness classes, pickle ball, climbing wall, basketball, etc., walking/biking trails, tennis courts, accessible outdoor pool, playground, skate park, soccer fields, nearby golf course.
- **Population:** diversity with a high level of education of population.
- **Catchment:** population is estimated at 10,000.

6.2 Weaknesses

- **Financial:** reliance on a single ratepayer for 16.3% of Town revenues (FCI¹² Indicator), policing costs account for 16.3% 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 (530 people)⁴ great gain in the last two censuses.
- **Planning:** risk management plans, succession plans, and a comprehensive marketing plan for the Town.
- **Funding for Recreation:** funding levels for Town recreation facilities and programs are not reflective of usage.
- **Infrastructure:** the Town is dependent on the County for water supply, ongoing maintenance and misuse of leaf and yard waste area, lack of sidewalks on Chapel and School streets, dependence on single water line across the causeway, lack of accessibility to some stores in Town.
- **Limited Land Area** (2.04 square kilometres)³
- **Seasonal businesses**
- **Potential for Lost Opportunities:** (including investment money) as a result of not being part of the REN⁴ network.
- **Responsiveness:** perceived lack of responsiveness and two-way communication, consultation and collaboration by the Town Council and staff (e.g., with the business community⁵).

¹ Financial Condition Indicators

² [Census](#)

³ Ibid

⁴ Regional Enterprise Network

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

- **Red Tape:** amount of red tape associated with compliance with many sections of the LUB re land use/changes in land use.
- **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 Definition of Town’s Marketing and Economic Development Committee mandate, roles, and responsibilities**
- **Lack of Enforcement of By-Laws:** 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.
- **Housing:** As of the end of 2022, there was a gap between housing demand and the available supply of about 60 units, including both market and non-market housing. Projections suggest that to keep pace with demand, the Town will need 120 new units by 2027 (including the existing shortage of 60) and 155 by 2032. About 5 new units could be completed annually based on historical construction trends. If that pace continues, it will leave a remaining gap of 95 units by 2027 and 105 by 2032.⁶ Coincidentally, a concept plan was recently received from the Annapolis Basin Conference Centre for the development of lands it owns in Annapolis Royal that, in its view, would have the potential of yielding 61 residential units.⁷
- **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.
- **Staffing:** with the cost of living, work life balance, living wage of Annapolis Valley.
- **Accessibility:** due to the historic nature of the Town, it is challenging for businesses to be accessible on St George Street with the sidewalks and the current road conditions.

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 Lake property on the outskirts of the Town which is owned by the Town, to examine the possibility of a marina (but only if its creation can be part of a larger

⁶ Town of Annapolis Royal Municipal Housing Needs Report, p. 2

⁷ Cornwallis Park Development Association Cornwallis Park & Annapolis Royal Master Plans June 29 2023 - Annapolis Royal Concept Plan by Fathom, Section 3.3, p. 26

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 work with the 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, to 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 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 amenities could be used more fully (tennis court, Harvest Moon Trail, skatepark, etc.). The lack of year-round facilities for youth and seniors (covered pool, skating, or curling rink) could be addressed with the County.
- **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.
- Grants come with reporting requirements and extra effort from staff who have to manage and account for everything.
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 18.05% of the operating budget). However, this is offset by a provincial grant of \$100,000 (the future of which is uncertain), \$60,000 in revenues from police checks and \$9,000 in fines. So, the cost to ratepayers is actually 12.03%. The Department is subject to poaching of staff as it is the smallest Police Department in the Province and the Province is currently reviewing different policing options for the Province. All municipal units are also awaiting the Mass Casualty Report which is anticipated to impact service delivery and policing standards,
- **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:** Wildlife around the French Basin Trail are threatening the trail system as well as the wastewater filtration system and costly repairs are required. Decisions will have to be made about wildlife management in this area
- **Communications:** listening to dissenting voices.

- **Decision Making:** It should be noted that decisions need to be made for the Town as a whole and cannot be based on individual opinions.⁸.
 - **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**
 - **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. Changes are expected with the introduction of Bill 340.
- Needs Versus Wants:** there is a need to distinguish between what people need and what they want.
- **Negotiations:** The Town is currently in negotiations with both of its bargaining units. Challenges include turnover, recruitment and retention of qualified staff, reflecting the provincial labour situation.

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
2021		530	7.9%	39

⁸ See Code of Conduct for Elected Officials

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 530 people. Overall, the population of Annapolis Royal, NS is declining at a rate of 0.72% per year over the past 20 years from 2001 to 2021. In the last two censuses, its population grew by 49 people, an average growth rate of 1.58% per year from 2016 to 2021. With the development of Fortier Mills and the condominium development at the Academy in recent years, it is anticipated that the next census will also show steady growth.

With a land area of right around two square kilometres, the Town has a population density of 268.3 per square kilometre. The median age of Town residents is 65.5 compared to 45.6 for Nova Scotia. The average age is 59.9 years. 49% of the population (260 people) are between the ages of 0 and 64 years. This leaves 58.6% who older than 65. An older population means more jobs for young people in terms of supporting the needs of those over 65.

Enrolment for the 2023-24 school year is 395 at Annapolis West Education Centre.

The median income per household after taxes is \$44,800 compared to \$62,400 for Nova Scotia. The average household income in 2020(\$) is \$61,800 and \$53,200 after tax. The next Census will take place in May 2026.

7.2 Social

The COVID-19 pandemic no longer places restrictions on municipalities, businesses, organizations, residents, and visitors. Individuals may choose to continue implementing personal protection measures in a safe and supportive community. While there are no mandatory restrictions or regulations, in certain health providers and facilities, restrictions and regulations remain in place.

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 and funded 19 community projects. The organization is now winding up and will be a loss to the community.

As of March 31, 2022, 9 building permits were issued for a total value of \$2,515,500.

As of March 31, 2023, 8 building permits were issued for a total value of \$2,593,000.

7.4 Political

Legislation was introduced in October 2021 that would establish fixed dates for Provincial General Elections (PGE). According to the proposed legislation, July 15, 2025 will be the 42nd PGE with all subsequent PGEs to be held on the third Tuesday of July. A federal election will be held on or before October 25, 2025. The next municipal election will be in October 2024.

7.5 Environmental

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.⁹ The provincial government is beginning to implement Extended Producer Liability (EPR)⁹This should have the effect of reducing what municipal units pay for residential waste.

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.

⁹ 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.

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 32 by-laws and 85 policies 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 16.3% of operating revenues add elements of uncertainty.

⁹ <https://www.saltwire.com/news/local/research-scientists-maps-show-how-sea-level-rise-will-affect-novascotia-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

7.8 Boundary Review

Every eight years the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board has a requirement for Councils to review the polling district and the number of Councillors. Completed in 2022, next application will be in 2030.

8 – PROPOSED STRATEGIES

1. Continue to 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. Continue to encourage collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and thinking outside the box to solve problems and overcome challenges.
4. Continue to 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. Continue to 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.