



Key Issue Summary - Economic Development

Public Engagement Support document

Municipality of Annapolis County

February/March 2025



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Introduction

C+D Community Design, a local consulting firm, was brought on by the County of Annapolis to help the Bridgetown Planning Area Advisory Committee review their Secondary Planning Strategy (SPS) and the related Land Use By-Law (LUB). The current strategy and by-laws were developed in 1990 and updated in 2012.

Our company has partnered with the Bridgetown Area Advisory Committee to conduct a thorough background study of the area. This involves reviewing the latest County Municipal Planning Strategy, new Provincial guidance on planning policies, and land use best practices tailored for rural regions.

Additionally, we have collaborated with the Committee to create a public engagement plan, ensuring that everyone has a voice in shaping the future of development in our community.

We are currently in the process of drafting new policies based on the valuable insights we've received from the Bridgetown Area Advisory Committee. [As part of this effort, we are reaching out to the community to gather feedback through surveys and conversations.](#) Your input is essential in crafting regulations that truly reflect the needs of our community.

Your voice matters in this process! Feedback collected from focus groups, open houses, pop-up events, and online surveys will directly influence our new visionary strategy for the community. [What you say truly counts!](#)

This summary report is a result of the discussions and direction received from the Bridgetown Area Advisory Committee on Economic Development.

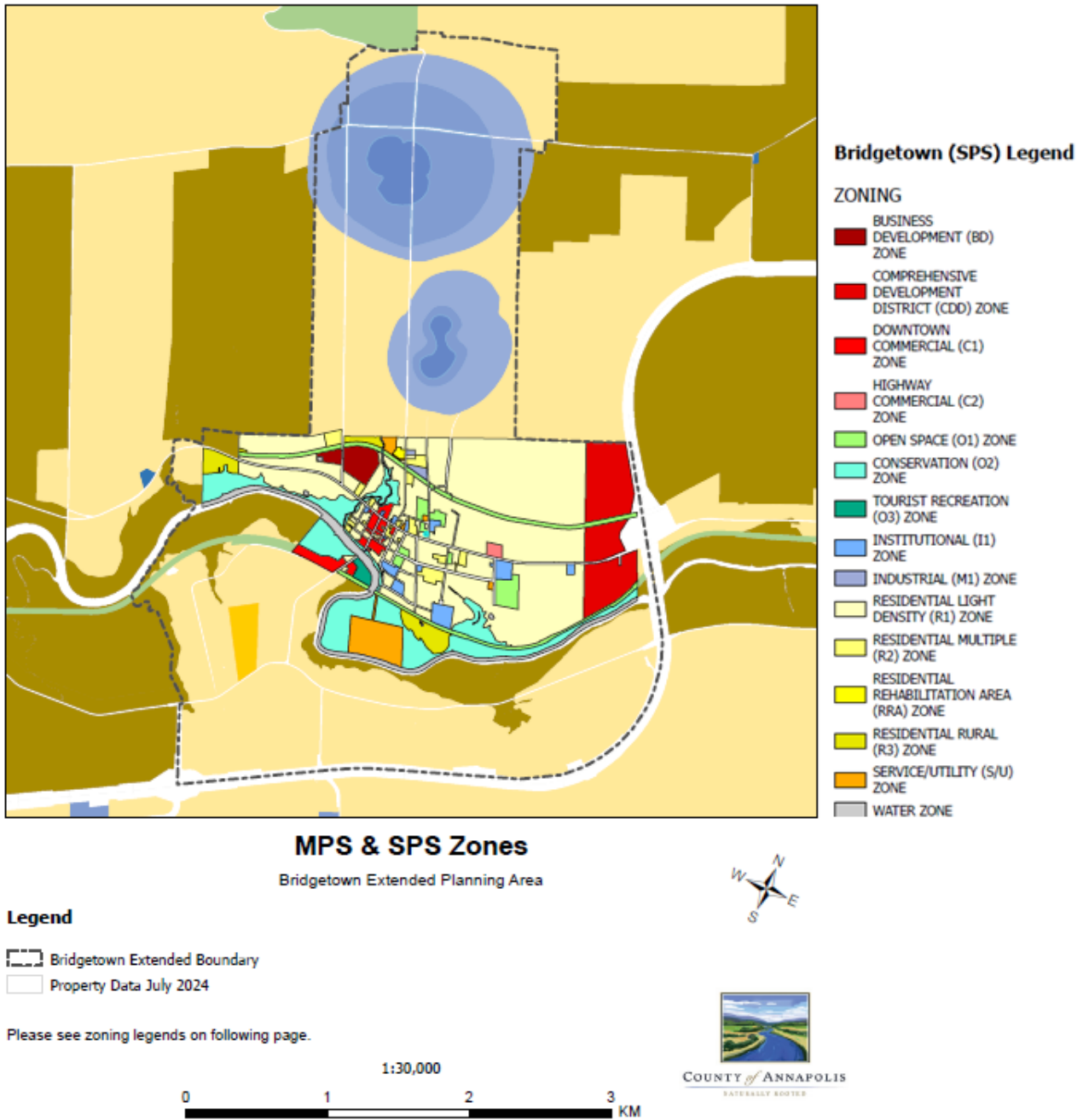


Figure 1 Bridgetown Planning Area Zoning Map

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we live and work. More people started working from home because high-speed internet spread across Nova Scotia. Many families left big cities to live in rural areas for a better quality of life, less expensive housing, and business opportunities. While growth was slow between 2016 and 2021, Annapolis County is now expecting a 7.5% population increase by 2031, with Bridgetown Planning Area projected to grow by 2.2%.

Bridgetown Planning Area plays a key role in the region, with 54.6% of its population aged 15 to 64 and serving as an important hub for services in Annapolis County. The local economy relies heavily on sales and services (26.3% of jobs), followed by trades and transportation (20%). While agriculture and manufacturing only account for 2.1% and 3.2% of jobs, they still have a meaningful impact on the town's identity and landscape¹.

Context

County-Wide Municipal Planning Strategy

The Annapolis County Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) is made to keep the County's rural charm, bring in new residents and business opportunities, guide how land is used, and support well-planned economic growth.

A newly created Mixed-Use Zone, permitting a variety of uses, works well in rural settings. A Commercial Zone allows shops, services, and community spaces, while a Highway Commercial Zone is for bigger businesses that serve the whole county or region. There's also an Industrial Zone and a zone for industrial business parks.

The MPS supports mixed-use and commercial projects near Highway 101 interchanges. It also focuses on creating better transportation across the County, with improvements to transit and options like walking and biking where needed.

Bridgetown Planning Area Response

To support this growth, Bridgetown Planning Area needs to update its Secondary Planning Strategy. This plan should focus on policies that tap into the area's economic strengths and meeting the needs of a growing population. Council aims to encourage steady economic development by:

¹ <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

- **Promoting mixed-use development:** Combine residential, commercial, and light industrial areas, especially near key locations like Highway 101 interchanges.
- **Building along transit routes:** Focus on areas around the two highway interchanges within the Bridgetown Planning Area Planning Area, already connected to existing essential services and public transportation.
- **Exploring non-traditional land uses:** Think creatively about how to use land and the historic areas to support a dynamic, adaptable community.

By aligning with Council's priorities, Bridgetown Planning Area can ensure its growth benefits both current residents and newcomers. Encouraging development in strategic areas will support job creation and make the community more resilient and adaptable to future changes. This approach supports economic growth and enhances the community's adaptability and resilience in the face of demographic changes.

A Balanced Approach: Build on Our Strengths

Business Potential in Historic Homes

The Victorian era homes prevalent in the Bridgetown Planning Area are costly to maintain and restore. The Bridgetown Planning Area Advisory Committee (AAC) is exploring tools to balance home-based business opportunities with maintaining the charm of the historic areas.

The AAC is **seeking input on the types of businesses** people may like to see in these buildings, and what **rules and regulations** needed to protect the character of the area.

Rental Housing

Along with questions about accessory suites (e.g. basement suites) and secondary dwellings (e.g. backyard cottage), the AAC is looking for **feedback on the level of support for rental of secondary suites and/or dwellings.**

Another important business and community topic is short-term rentals (e.g. Airbnb, Vrbo, Bookings.com). While representing an income opportunity, these short-term rentals often have a negative impact on the rental housing market, leading to the province requiring short-term rentals be registered and regulated. The AAC is **seeking input on the level of support for short-term rentals** in the Bridgetown Planning Area.

Businesses Outside the Box

Non-traditional businesses have proven to be some of the more resilient during economic downturns. These types of businesses diversify the local economy, reduce reliance on traditional industries - which are already changing – and can enhance the vibrancy of community by attracting creative professionals

and a younger demographic. The AAC is **seeking feedback on whether any of these types of businesses would be considered desirable** in the Bridgetown Planning Area.

Another type of business development being explored by the AAC is around opportunities for **outdoor-focused developments**. These are business activities on mostly undeveloped land. Often recreational in nature, some of these types of (open-land) developments require very little infrastructure. The AAC is **asking for public opinion on a variety of development ideas**.

Highway Interchange Potential

Encouraging commercial and housing development near the Highway 101 interchanges is another important area for growth. These underdeveloped areas with existing municipal services are identified as a priority for development and are being considered for mixed-use designations.

One possible use of these areas includes higher-density housing options such as row houses, apartments, and multiplexes. The AAC is seeking feedback on a variety of housing types, rules and regulations to guide their development, and suggestions on community areas where such housing would be appropriate. These questions are asked in the housing section of the survey.

The AAC is also **seeking input on the types of business opportunities** that community would support around the **Highway 101 interchanges at Exit 20 and 21**.

Solar Energy Potential

Recognizing the rising energy needs of an increasing population, combined with the energy load created by electric vehicles and heat pumps, the AAC is **asking for input on whether industrial scale solar projects should be considered** in the Bridgetown Planning Area.

Public Survey Questions

Public engagement is a crucial element of the planning process. The Bridgetown Planning Area Advisory Committee (AAC) cannot recommend the adoption of final documents to the Planning Advisory or Council without justifying the proposed policies through research and public feedback. Recognizing the need for further dialogue, the Bridgetown AAC has asked the Community Design Engagement Coordinator to engage with the public on specific topics related to economic development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SURVEY QUESTIONS

Celebrating our Culture and Heritage

This section is about what makes the Bridgetown Planning Area special to you. We want to know what cultural, historical, or community features you feel define the area and make it unique.

1. It is important to invest in or change these parts of the Bridgetown Planning Area. (rate level of agreement/disagreement)

- a. Extension of municipal services
- b. Housing options
- c. Business opportunities
- d. Downtown parking capacity
- e. Agriculture and farming

Historic Homes and Community Character

Some parts of the Bridgetown Planning Area have homes that are over 100 years old, which add to the unique charm of the community. However, these homes are expensive to maintain, making it hard for owners to keep them in good shape.

These questions focus on how to help homeowners create ways to make money to help cover maintenance costs, while preserving the character of the area.

2. Do you agree with allowing a part of an historic home, that is mainly used as a residence, to be used for more types of home-based businesses? (rate level of agreement or disagreement)
3. Do you agree there should be rules for home-based businesses in historic homes, such as limiting amount of space used, requiring on-site parking, ore restricting signage? (rate level of agreement or disagreement)
4. What of the following uses do you think fit well with the look and cultural importance of historic homes with notable architectural features? (select all that apply)
 - a. Coffee and tea shops
 - b. Antique stores
 - c. Art galleries
 - d. Inns
 - e. Doctor’s office and medical clinic
 - f. Professional offices
 - g. Instruction studio
 - h. Workshops and retail
 - i. Bed and breakfast operations
 - j. Funeral homes
 - k. All of the above
 - l. None of the above
 - m. Other
5. Would you agree with allowing businesses to operate in historic area without requiring someone to live on the premises? (rate level of agreement or disagreement)
6. If businesses were allowed in historic areas, what rules would you like to see? (select all that apply)
 - a. Limit on building height
 - b. Restrictions on building size
 - c. Maintaining a look and feel that matches the area
 - d. Specific location requirements within the area
 - e. On-site parking requirements

- f. Rules for signage
 - g. Other
7. Do you think businesses in historic areas should be allowed to:
- a. Construct new buildings
 - b. Only re-develop existing residential buildings with restrictions
 - c. Both options are acceptable
 - d. Neither option is acceptable
8. Comments on policies and uses concerning historic homes.

Accessory Suites and Secondary Dwellings

Accessory suites are smaller living spaces within or attached to a home, such as basement apartments or a unit above the garage.

Secondary dwellings are completely separate homes on the same property as the main house, such as tiny homes or a cottage.

9. Would you support allowing secondary dwellings for rent in residential areas? (rate your level of support or opposition)

Building Opportunities Around Highway Interchanges (Exits 20 and 21, Hwy 101)

This section looks at ways to encourage growth and investment around the two Highway 101 interchanges in the Bridgetown Planning Area. By supporting housing, business, and light industrial developments, we want to create lively spaces that meet the community's needs while supporting economic growth.

The goal is to balance progress with careful planning to make sure these areas stay useful, sustainable, and fit will with the bigger plan for the Bridgetown Planning Area.

10. Which uses do you support at the highway interchanges in the Bridgetown Planning Area? (select all that apply)
- a. Ambulance and emergency services
 - b. Animal hospitals or veterinary establishments
 - c. Automobile sales
 - d. Automobile repair shops/service stations
 - e. Automobile washing establishments
 - f. Boat, trailer, and snowmobile sales and rentals
 - g. Bus and transit service office and depot
 - h. Drive-in businesses where people are served in vehicles
 - i. Dry cleaning establishments
 - j. Existing residential uses
 - k. Farm implement sales, service, or repair
 - l. Fruit, vegetable, and flower sales
 - m. Funeral homes
 - n. Garden nurseries

- o. Heavy equipment maintenance and storage
- p. Hotels and apartment hotels including recreational uses accessory thereto
- q. Indoor commercial recreational establishments including premises for billiards, bowling, curling, dancing, roller-skating, theatre, cinemas
- r. Parks and playgrounds
- s. Place for the sale of large goods from outdoor displays including swimming pools, decorative, fountains, prefabricated cottages, modular homes, and mobile homes
- t. Restaurants and drive-in restaurants
- u. Retail sales of lumber and home improvement supplies
- v. Retail sales within wholly enclosed buildings of the following:
 - i. Arts and crafts objects
 - ii. Antiques
 - iii. Marina and camping accessories and equipment
 - iv. Equipment and machinery for businesses
 - v. Professionals, schools, and educational institutions
 - vi. Tourist trailer parks
- w. Other

Economic Development

A key goal of the Bridgetown Planning Area Secondary Planning Strategy (SPS) is to support economic development that matches the community's character and the desires of its residents.

Questions look at **short-term housing options, non-traditional businesses, and outdoor-focused activities/businesses.** (*Definitions included in survey*)

11. Should short-term rentals at residential properties be allowed everywhere in the community?
 - a. Support
 - b. Support with conditions
 - c. Do not support
 - d. No opinion
12. If you support, do you think there should be any rules for short-term rentals?
 - a. Yes, there should be restrictions
 - b. No, there should not be restrictions
 - c. Do not support
 - d. No opinion
 - e. Please share your thoughts
13. In what parts of the Bridgetown Planning Area would you prefer to see short-term rentals?
(select all that apply)
 - a. List of community areas
14. Please select any of the following non-traditional businesses you would support in any areas of the Bridgetown Planning Area. (select all that apply)
 - a. Animal hospitals
 - b. Adult cabaret (*defined in survey*)

- c. Adult theatre (*defined in survey*)
 - d. Private club and bath houses (*defined in survey*)
 - e. Breweries and wineries
 - f. Cannabis
 - g. All of the above
 - h. None of the above
15. Which of the following outdoor-focused businesses would you support in our community?
- a. Agriculture and nature tours
 - b. Horseback riding
 - c. Mountain bike parks
 - d. Adventure parks
 - e. Campgrounds
 - f. RV Parks
 - g. Sports stadiums
 - h. Bouldering and rock-climbing facilities
 - i. Shooting sports (archery, axe-throwing, gun ranges)
 - j. Racing (horses or vehicles)
 - k. Drive-in movie theatres
 - l. Glamping and nature retreats
 - m. Multi-use trails
 - n. None of the above
 - o. All of the above
 - p. Please share your thoughts
16. In what areas do you think any of the outdoor-focused businesses listed above should be allowed to establish? (select all that apply)
- a. List of community areas
 - b. All of the above
 - c. None of the above
17. What are your thoughts on the suitability of outdoor-focused businesses in our community? Are there any concerns you have regarding their impact, location, or operations? Please share your feedback.

Sustainable Growth with Renewable Energy

This section explains the forward-thinking policies that balance new ideas with protecting the environment. It looks at allowing small-scale solar energy and also considers large-scale projects as light industry.

18. Do you support the development of solar energy projects in the Bridgetown Planning Area?

Note: this does not include already permitted solar panels on private dwellings.

- a. Support
- b. Support with conditions
- c. Do not support
- d. No opinion

19. In which areas would you support such developments? (select all that apply)
- a. List of community areas
 - b. All of the above
 - c. None of the above
 - d. Other