



Housing

Public Engagement Support Document

Municipality of Annapolis County

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Background	3
Context	6
Municipal Planning Strategy for Annapolis County.....	6
The Bridgetown Planning Area Response	6
Diverse Housing	8
Vary Types of Housing	8
Accessory Suites and Secondary Dwellings	8
Maintaining Historic Character.....	8
Housing for Workers.....	9
Recreational Vehicles as Homes.....	9
Livestock in Residential Zones	9
Public Survey Questions	9
Public Survey Residential Property Questions	9

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 Housing Diversity and Affordability.

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 and less expensive housing. But this caused problems. Rural towns got more people and housing demand went up. This made housing prices higher, and many people are struggling to find affordable homes.

Over the past two years, only a few permits were given for building homes in Bridgetown. Most of these permits (11) were for fixing or adding to existing homes. The rest included two for single detached family homes, one for multi-family homes, and six for smaller residential additions. An analysis of Table 1, found below, shows that most of the housing work in the area has been focused on changes and upgrades to existing homes, with very few new homes being built.

HOUSING

Type	Number of Permits
New/SFU	2
New/MFU*	1
Add/Alt/Res	11
Res. Accessory	6
Commercial	3
Industrial	0
Institutional	0
Agricultural	0
Demolitions	1
Other*	3
TOTAL	27
* 2 units in total	
** Development Permits/Signs	

Table 1 Development permits issued in the past two years

Nova Scotia is seeing more people move from other provinces because they like the East Coast’s lifestyle. While this growth is positive, it has put pressure on the housing market. Many towns in Nova Scotia, including Annapolis County, are adapting their Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) to meet these new challenges. Annapolis County is working on a new plan to increase housing options while keeping its unique charm, especially in the Bridgetown Planning Area.

Around 83.6% of homes in Annapolis County are single-family houses, which is much higher than the provincial average¹. The cost of these homes has gone up a lot, making it clear that more affordable housing options are needed. The lack of different types of housing makes it hard for new residents to find places to live. Rural homeless is also a problem and is difficult to assess, often showing up as couch surfing, living in tents, or staying in vehicles. Forest fires in Nova Scotia have made things worse, with many people losing their homes and waiting more than a year for a new one to be built. This has increased demand for alternatives like manufactured homes, quick-build solutions, and even RVs as temporary housing.

To solve these issues, it’s important to create housing that is affordable and diverse. Simplifying land-use rules and encouraging creative housing solutions can help communities respond to these urgent needs.

The Annapolis County Accessibility Plan points to a lack of affordable housing as a major issue². The Bridgetown Planning Area is a great spot for high-density and mixed-use developments. It has large, low-cost

¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810024001&geocode=A00031205>

²

https://annapoliscounty.ca/images/stories/Forms_And_Documents/AccessibilityPlan/AnnapolisCountyAccessibilityPlan2022-Approved%202022-02-16.pdf

HOUSING

properties, existing infrastructure, and easy access to two highway interchanges on Highway 101, which makes it perfect for new housing growth.

Focusing on development in this area will help build an inclusive and sustainable community. This plan matches the municipality's larger goals, providing housing choices for people with different needs, preferences, and incomes. This approach promotes fairness, boosts the local economy, and improves the quality of life for everyone.

An important part of this initiative is your feedback! Your input will help shape this strategy and make sure it meets the community's needs now and into the future. Contributions from focus groups, open houses, pop-up events, and [online surveys](#) will shape a visionary strategy for the community. Your voice matters!

Context

Municipal Planning Strategy for Annapolis County

The County-Wide Municipal Planning Strategy aims to maintain the County's rural charm while welcoming new residents and fostering economic growth. To achieve this, the County is divided into smaller planning areas, each with its own tailored strategy to address local needs. The strategy tackles housing challenges by:

- **Low-Density Areas:** Allowing a maximum of two homes per lot to preserve open spaces.
- **Secondary Residences:** Permitting in-law suites, accessory dwelling units (e.g., backyard cottages), and secondary structures for added housing flexibility. Accessory dwelling units in sensitive areas like Lake Cady Residential Zone must go through a development agreement
- **Multi-Unit Residential Zones:** Offering a range of housing types based on lot size and yard requirements.
- **Land-leased communities and supports reusing spaces** such as former places of worship for residential purposes, subject to criteria through site plan approval.
- **Livestock in Residential Zones:** This unique provision supports rural living while blending agriculture and residential needs.

By focusing on housing design and form rather than strict unit counts, the strategy allows for more flexible growth while preserving the area's rural lifestyle. This balanced approach ensures Annapolis County can grow sustainably, offering diverse housing options and economic opportunities without losing its unique character.

The Bridgetown Planning Area Response

The Bridgetown Area Advisory Committee (AAC) reviewed research and suggestions about water quality, housing, and economic growth. They developed new ideas and requested policies to balance development while protecting, water, community character, and natural resources.

The Committee has decided to involve the community in discussions about Housing, Environmental Protection, and Economic Development. Updates, like this one, will be shared as references for the [public survey](#) and upcoming Open Houses.

Community feedback will guide the AAC in creating policies and land-use rules to present to the Council of the County of Annapolis for adoption. There will be more opportunities for public participation in the next steps of this process.

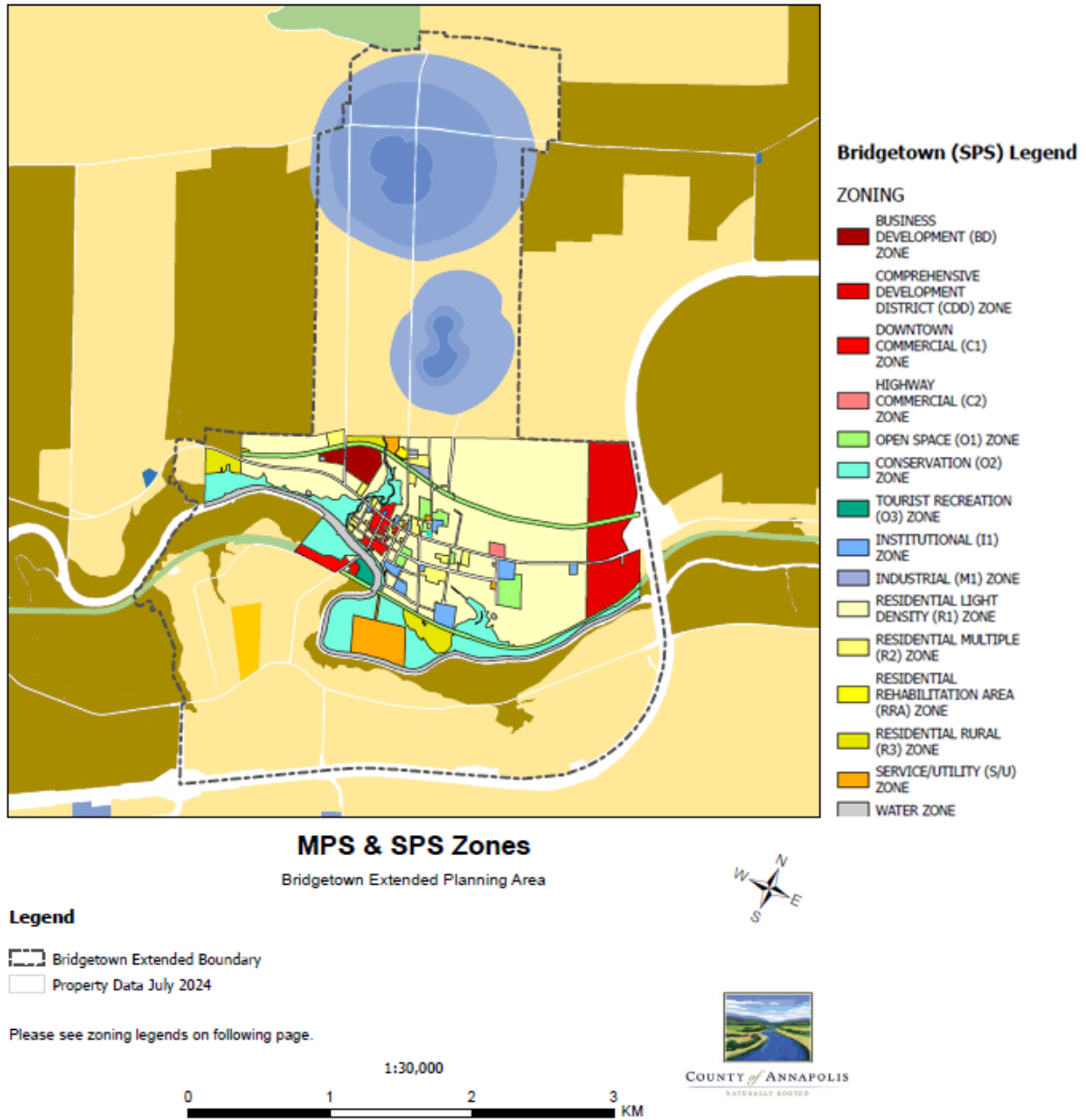


Figure 1 Bridgetown Planning Area Zoning Map

Diverse Housing

Diverse housing means offering a mix of homes that fit different people's needs and budgets. It includes:

- **Variety:** Single-family homes, apartments, townhouses, and accessory units to cater to different people and lifestyles.
- **Affordability:** Homes at a range of prices for all income levels.
- **Rental & Ownership:** Options for renting or buying to meet different financial situations and needs.
- **Accessibility:** Housing that works for people with mobility issues and differing abilities.
- **Community Needs:** Supporting different family and cultural arrangements.

Having different types of housing helps create strong, lively communities where people from all walks of life can find homes they can afford and enjoy.

Vary Types of Housing

Building higher-density housing, such as rowhouses, apartments, and multi-plexes of two or more units, in areas where municipal services already exist will help address the affordable and rental housing markets. The Area Advisory Committee is considering developing a Multi-unit Residential Zone permitting residential homes of maximum of 16 units. Any developments of a certain size will be required to develop an approved stormwater management plan and abide by any restrictions meant to protect environment, maintain community character and create a safe and connected neighbourhood. The Advisory Committee is **asking for community input** into the types of rules and tools that would be useful and important to residents.

Likewise, there are opportunities to create niche housing opportunities in lower density area. The Advisory Committee is considering a Low-Density Residential Zone that permits up to two residential units per lot.

Accessory Suites and Secondary Dwellings

Accessory suites are smaller living spaces within or attached to the main home, such as basement suites or living space above a garage. Secondary dwellings are separate but smaller structures on the property, such as tiny homes or backyard cottages.

The Area Advisory Committee is **seeking community input** on the types of rules and regulations that would be required to balance the community character with increasing housing options and income opportunities for landowners in the Bridgetown Planning Area.

Maintaining Historic Character

Bridgetown Area's historic, Victorian-style houses contribute to the charm and attract visitors. Recognizing the economic potential of these unique neighbourhoods, the Advisory Committee is exploring tools to preserve the character while supporting new economic opportunities.

One such tool is known as an Architecturally Sensitive (A-S) Area, an area using specific rules and regulations focused on maintaining the character of a neighbourhood while still allowing some business development. Within these A-S areas, additional restrictions could be applied to ensure new developments meet the character of the community and define the types and size of home-based businesses that could operate within these historic buildings. The Advisory Committee is **seeking community input** about the types of rules that would be needed and wanted.

Housing for Workers

In communities lacking comprehensive public transportation, housing for workers can become problematic; a stable, available, and happy workforce is essential to the success and long-term viability of industries. The Advisory Committee is exploring tools and rules to guide the development of housing accessory to agricultural, industrial, or commercial operations, while minimizing the impact on neighbours.

Recreational Vehicles as Homes

In response to the ongoing and increasing housing challenges, many people are turning to Recreational Vehicles (RVs) as homes across Nova Scotia and beyond. The Area Advisory Committee is **asking for public input** on the potential allowance of RVs as homes, along with identifying concerns that may need to be addressed through policy development.

****NOTE:** RVs refer to motorized campers, fifth wheel trailers, and travel trailers.

Livestock in Residential Zones

For many, one of the main appeals of rural living is the opportunity to garden and keep livestock on their residential properties. The Advisory Committee is **seeking input from the community** about concerns or opinions related to the types of animals permitted in residential areas, and how to address any issues.

****NOTE:** Any potential policy regarding livestock in residential zones will explicitly prohibit the killing, processing, or commercial exporting of these animals.

Public Survey Questions

The East End Planning Advisory Committee identified that certain housing policies needed further community engagement. They made recommendations for the C + D Community Design Engagement Coordinator on advancing discussions on these topics.

Public Survey Residential Property Questions

Building More Homes in Serviced Areas

Nova Scotia is facing a housing crisis, and the County of Annapolis is working to be a part of the solution. There are not enough different types of homes, and many people are finding it hard to find affordable places to live.

One way to help is by adding more homes in areas that already have services like water and sewer. This makes good use of services we already have, helps fill empty spaces (called infill development), and could lead to more affordable housing. Infill development often uses apartments, rowhouses, and multiplex buildings (buildings with 2, 3, or 4 units).

1. Do you agree with allowing apartments, rowhouses, and multiplexes for this planning area? (Rate level of agreement or disagreement)
2. What areas would be best for these types of housing? (list of community areas)
3. What rules do you think should apply to apartments, rowhouses, and multiplex housing? (select all that apply)
 - a. Minimum distance between building and property lines
 - b. Limits on building height

- c. Restrictions on overall building size
- d. Landscaping or fencing to create privacy for neighbours
- e. On-site parking requirements
- f. Being located near public transit
- g. Connections to sidewalks or trails for easy access to community
- h. Design that fits the character of the area
- i. Space for outdoor amenities (e.g. green space)
- j. No restrictions or rules are necessary
- k. Other

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 a garage.

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

- 4. Would you support allowing accessory suites in residential areas? (rate support or opposition)
- 5. Would you support allowing secondary dwellings for family members (not rental) in residential areas? (rate support or opposition)
- 6. Would you support allowing secondary dwellings for rent in residential areas? (rate support or opposition)
- 7. What rules do you think should apply to Accessory Suites or Secondary Dwellings? (select all that apply)
 - a. Proximity to transit
 - b. Limits on the size of the unit
 - c. Requirements for on-site parking
 - d. Time restrictions for rentals (e.g. no short-term rentals)
 - e. Being close to public transit
 - f. Design that matches the character of the neighbourhood
 - g. No rules or restrictions are needed
 - h. Other

Architecturally Sensitive Areas

An Architecturally Sensitive (A-S) Area is part of the Planning Area where people value the historical or special features of the buildings. These features are important to keep in mind, and maintain, when making plans for developments or renovations.

- 8. Do you think there are areas within the Bridgetown Planning Area that have historical or unique character? (Yes, No, Unsure)
- 9. Which areas of the Bridgetown Planning Area should have regulations to help preserve their historical or unique features? (list of community areas)
- 10. These features are special and should be maintained in the Bridgetown Planning Area. (Rate agreement or disagreement)
 - a. Keeping consistent building placement (distance from building to street)
 - b. Preserving existing trees and greenery
 - c. Ensuring proper screening for trash and waste areas
 - d. Matching the look and style of new buildings with existing ones

Recreational Vehicles as Dwellings

In response to the ongoing and increasing housing crisis, some people are using Recreational Vehicles as dwellings across Nova Scotia.

Recreational vehicles refer to motorized RVs, 5th wheels, travel trailers, and campers, for examples.

11. Do you support allowing people to use Recreational Vehicles as homes within the Bridgetown Planning Area? (Support, Support with conditions, Do not support, No opinion)
12. Do you believe there should be time limits, or other restrictions, on using RVs as homes? (e.g. only during renovation or construction time limits) (Yes, No, Unsure)
13. What could make RVs acceptable to live in as homes? (text answer)

Livestock in Residential Areas

For many people, part of the appeal of rural living is the opportunity to garden and keep some livestock animals, especially chickens.

NOTE: Any policy regarding the keeping of livestock would clearly prohibit killing, processing, or commercial exporting within residential areas.

14. What areas would you consider appropriate for the keeping of residential livestock?
 - a. Properties of minimum lot size
 - b. Areas with good screening from road/neighbours
 - c. Outside downtown core
 - d. I do not support keeping livestock in residential areas
 - e. Other
15. What types of livestock animals would you consider appropriate in residential areas? (select all that apply)
 - a. Chickens, including roosters
 - b. Chickens, excluding roosters
 - c. Bees
 - d. Dog breeding/boardings
 - e. Hobby farm animals such as horses, miniature horses, cows, goats, llamas, pigs
 - f. All of the above
 - g. None of the above
 - h. Other
16. What are your concerns about residential livestock? (select all that apply)
 - a. Safety
 - b. Aesthetics (how it looks)
 - c. How animals are treated (animal care)
 - d. Property value
 - e. Spillover effects (e.g., noise, smells)
 - f. All of the above
 - g. None of the above
 - h. Other