



# Town Council Meeting

February 21, 2023

6:30 p.m.

Council Chambers, Town Hall

359 Main Street

## Agenda

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### Call to Order

#### 1. Approval of Agenda

#### 2. Approval of Minutes

- a. Town Council Meeting, January 24, 2023
- b. Special Town Council In Camera Meeting, January 30, 2023

#### 3. Comments from the Mayor

#### 4. Public Input / Question Period

PLEASE NOTE:

- Public Participation is limited to 30 minutes
- Each Person is limited to 3 minutes and may return to speak once, for 1 minute, if time permits within the total 30-minute period
- Questions or comments are to be directed to the Chair
- Comments and questions that relate to personnel, current or potential litigation issues, or planning issues for which a public hearing has already occurred, but no decision has been made by Council, will not be answered.

#### 5. Motions/Recommendations from Special Committee of the Whole, November 15, 2022:



- a. RFD 071-2022 Business Licensing, Short Term Rentals and Single Room Occupancies

**6. Motions/Recommendations from Committee of the Whole, February 7, 2023:**

- a. Wolfville Children's Centre
- b. RFD 003-2023: Transfer from Operating Reserve
- c. RFD 004: Debt Guarantee - Valley Waste Resource Management Authority
- d. Request for Agenda Item Discussion: R1 – Review Rental Related Policies
- e. Request for Agenda Item Discussion: Committees of Council
- f. Appointment of Planning Advisory Committee Member

**7. Adjournment to In-Camera under the Municipal Government Act Section 22(2)(e):**

- a. Contract Negotiations

**8. Adjournment of In-Camera**

**9. Regular Meeting Reconvenes**

**10. Regular Meeting Adjourned**

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

Title: Business Licensing By-law, Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals

Date: 2022-01-11

Department: Planning & Economic Development

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## SUMMARY

### Stakeholder Engagement: Business Licensing Bylaw, Short Term Rentals, Single Room Occupancies

Following direction from Council to explore a Business Licensing Program, short-term rental regulations and single room occupancies, Staff have conducted one-on-one interviews and launched a survey, both for landlords, tenants, and neighbours of rental properties in the Town. The need to explore these items is largely in response to the housing crisis as well as complaints received by the Town regarding single room occupancies, noise, nuisance parties and parking. These issues tie into several existing projects including the Policing Review, Alcohol Strategy, Compliance, Fire Inspections, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database work and overall Community Harmony efforts.

This report provides Council with the outcomes of the community engagement work and recommendations related to Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals and Business licensing (and related issues). There are no silver bullets to these issues. Council motions that got us to this point are as follows:

- |  |  |                |
|--|--|----------------|
| <b>c. RFD 052-2021:<br/>SHORT TERM<br/>RENTALS</b>           | <b>15-10-21 THAT COUNCIL ADOPT THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE, FOCUSED ON IMPROVING THE HOUSING SITUATION IN THE TOWN, AND DIRECT STAFF TO WORK ON AND BRING BACK POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO SHORT-TERM RENTALS,</b>      | <b>CARRIED</b> |
| <b>d. RFD 052-2021:<br/>SINGLE ROOM<br/>OCCUPANCIES</b>      | <b>16-10-21 THAT COUNCIL ADOPT THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE, FOCUSED ON IMPROVING THE HOUSING SITUATION IN THE TOWN, AND DIRECT STAFF TO WORK ON AND BRING BACK POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCIES.</b> | <b>CARRIED</b> |
| <b>b. RFD 003-2022:<br/>Business<br/>Licensing<br/>Bylaw</b> | <b>25-01-22 IT WAS REGULARLY MOVED AND SECONDED THAT COUNCIL DIRECT STAFF TO MOVE FORWARD WITH EXPLORING A BUSINESS LICENSING PROGRAM IN THE TOWN, AS OUTLINED IN THIS REPORT (RFD 003-2022).</b>  | <b>CARRIED</b> |

**REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022**

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---



**DRAFT MOTION:**

That the Committee of the Whole provide a positive recommendation to Council to continue with pursuing a Business Licensing Bylaw for traditional businesses who are members of the Wolfville Business Development Corporation.

Note: If endorsed, Staff would work on updating this proposed by-law (see RFD 003-2022 and draft by-law attached) and bring back a separate RFD for Council to consider moving through the by-law adoption process.

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

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---



### 1. CAO COMMENTS

The CAO supports the recommendations of staff.

### 2. LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) grants Council the authority to control land use and require permits / licensing.

### 3. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff are recommending the following (see discussion section for more information):

- **Staffing and Capacity** - Through the budget process, consider compliance staffing levels to achieve desired levels of service. Capacity discussions related to other areas of this report may also be warranted.
- **Residential Rental Business Licensing Bylaw** - Not recommending the Town pursue a Residential Rental Business Licensing Bylaw at this time.

Related recommendation: That the Town continue with pursuing a Business Licensing Bylaw for traditional businesses (those paying commercial taxes/members of the WBDC), as outlined in Attachment 3.

Related recommendation: Encourage the Landlords in Town to start an association or organized group to help each other, mitigate issues, and have a common point of contact.

- **Single Room Occupancies** - not recommending any changes to the LUB for Single Room Occupancies at this time.

Related recommendation: Continue to enforce regulations for parking and property minimum standards, as well as examining the capacity of existing Compliance Officers and Building Inspectors to manage the properties in Town and considering additional staff as part of the budget process.

- **Short-Term Rentals** - Not recommending changes to the STR regulations at this time and are recommending to continue enforcing the LUB and continue work on the existing database of STRs in Town.

### 4. REFERENCES AND ATTACHMENTS

1. Summary Report of Interviews and Surveys
2. What We Heard Reports:

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

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---



- a. Landlords
  - b. Tenants
  - c. Neighbours of Tenants
  - d. Survey Responses
3. Draft Business Licensing Bylaw (from RFD 003-2022) for Traditional Business
  4. Reference: [RFD 003-2022](#) Business Licensing Bylaw Request for Decision

## 5. DISCUSSION

### Background

The Town has a number of existing tools and ongoing initiatives related to “community harmony” (see summary figure to the right). These efforts are an ongoing challenge that must be taken seriously by all stakeholders. We feel this report and associated engagement contributes to moving things forward.

There are issues brought up through this work that are outside the Town’s control and our ability to influence those are limited (e.g. Acadia, drinking age, tenancy legislation).

The engagement work completed as part of formulating this report for Council can hopefully contribute to building more empathy between different demographics and lifestyles that co-exist in our neighbourhoods.



### Community Engagement

The engagement summaries that have informed this report are attached. The engagement process began in May 2022, and concluded in October 2022. During this time, 38 interviews took place: 14 with landlords, 12 with homeowners, and 9 with tenants. Overall, the interviews took 39.2 hours to complete. The survey was launched in July 2022 and concluded in October 2022. 107 people responded to the survey, 69% of which were tenants. The contrast in lower participation in interviews with Staff from tenants and the high proportion of tenant survey respondents suggests that this group is looking

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

Title: Business Licensing By-law, Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals

Date: 2022-01-11

Department: Planning & Economic Development

---



for an outlet to share their experiences and perspectives on housing issues but may have lower trust or confidence in voicing their concerns directly to Town Staff.

### Residential Rental Business Bylaw (RRBB)

This issue goes back to at least 2016 and numerous reports have been brought to Council on the topic. During the January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Council meeting, Council directed Staff to explore a Business Licensing Bylaw for both traditional businesses and for residential rental properties. Following this direction, Staff explored how a residential rental license could provide a tool to better regulate residential rental properties.

**b. RFD 003-2022:**

**Business  
Licensing  
Bylaw**

**25-01-22 IT WAS REGULARLY MOVED AND SECONDED THAT COUNCIL DIRECT STAFF TO MOVE FORWARD WITH EXPLORING A BUSINESS LICENSING PROGRAM IN THE TOWN, AS OUTLINED IN THIS REPORT (RFD 003-2022).**

**CARRIED**

Following stakeholder engagement, Staff are not recommending the Town pursue a Residential Rental Business Licensing Bylaw (RRBB), at this time. With 1050 renter households and 930 owner occupied households (2016 StatsCan), the capacity required would be immense. The intent of the original RRBB (2017) has been placed in the current Land Use By-law and is the basis for the requirements for Single Room Occupancies. Further, in any given year, there are no more than 15-20 “problem properties” in the town from a compliance perspective. The actual properties may change but generally, they have been in the areas shown below in near-University neighbourhoods:

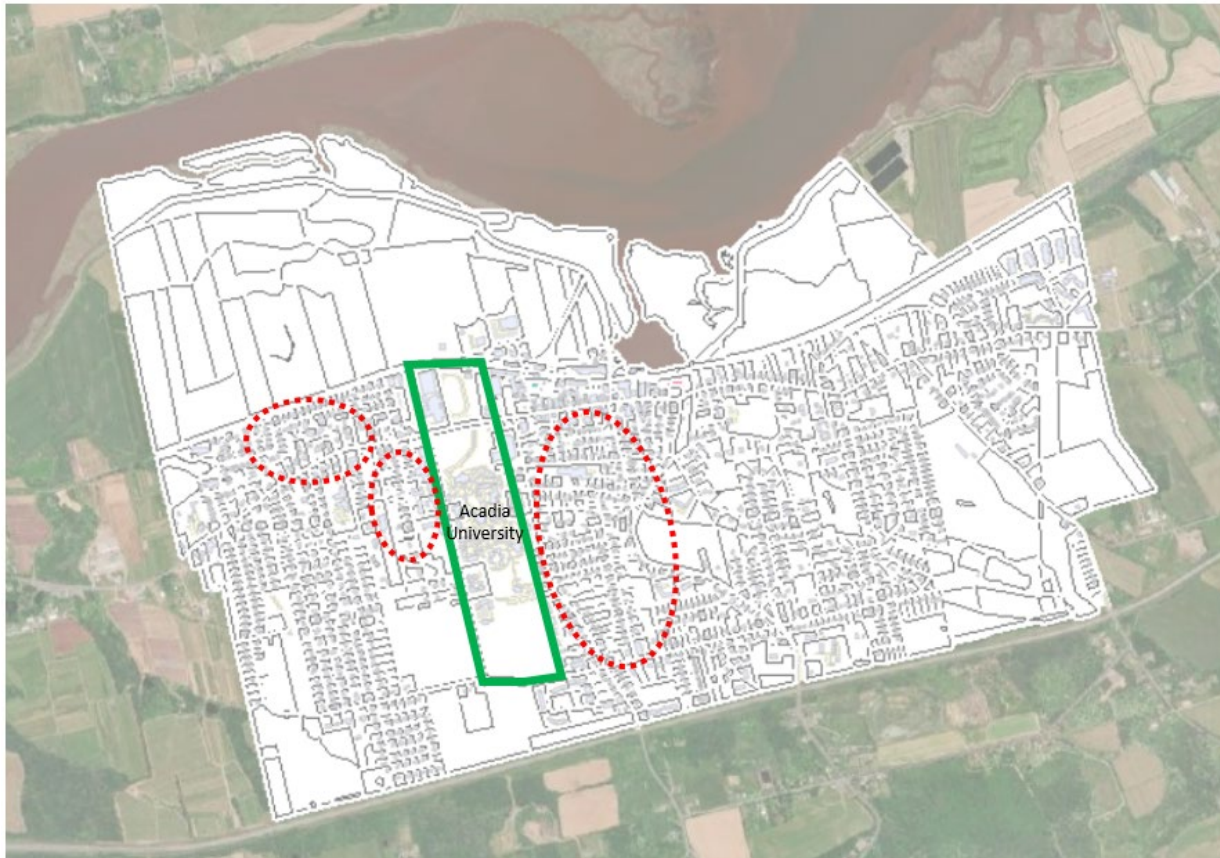
## REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

Title: Business Licensing By-law, Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals

Date: 2022-01-11

Department: Planning & Economic Development

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In place of the RRBB, Staff will continue to develop the Rental Property and Landlord Database and will continue efforts to streamline the data collection and entry process through existing processes such as compliance and inspection entries. The stakeholder engagement process led Staff to collect information on rental dwelling units, contributing to the Town's database of 294 rental households. This has been helpful in building a grasp on the overall picture. Staff have not had time to work extensively with our new Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Enterprise software that allows us to much better track and display data we are collecting. Dashboards for Compliance, Permitting, Fire Inspections and other areas are all being actively worked on. An example is provided below of dashboards Staff are working on and a screenshot of compliance tracking:

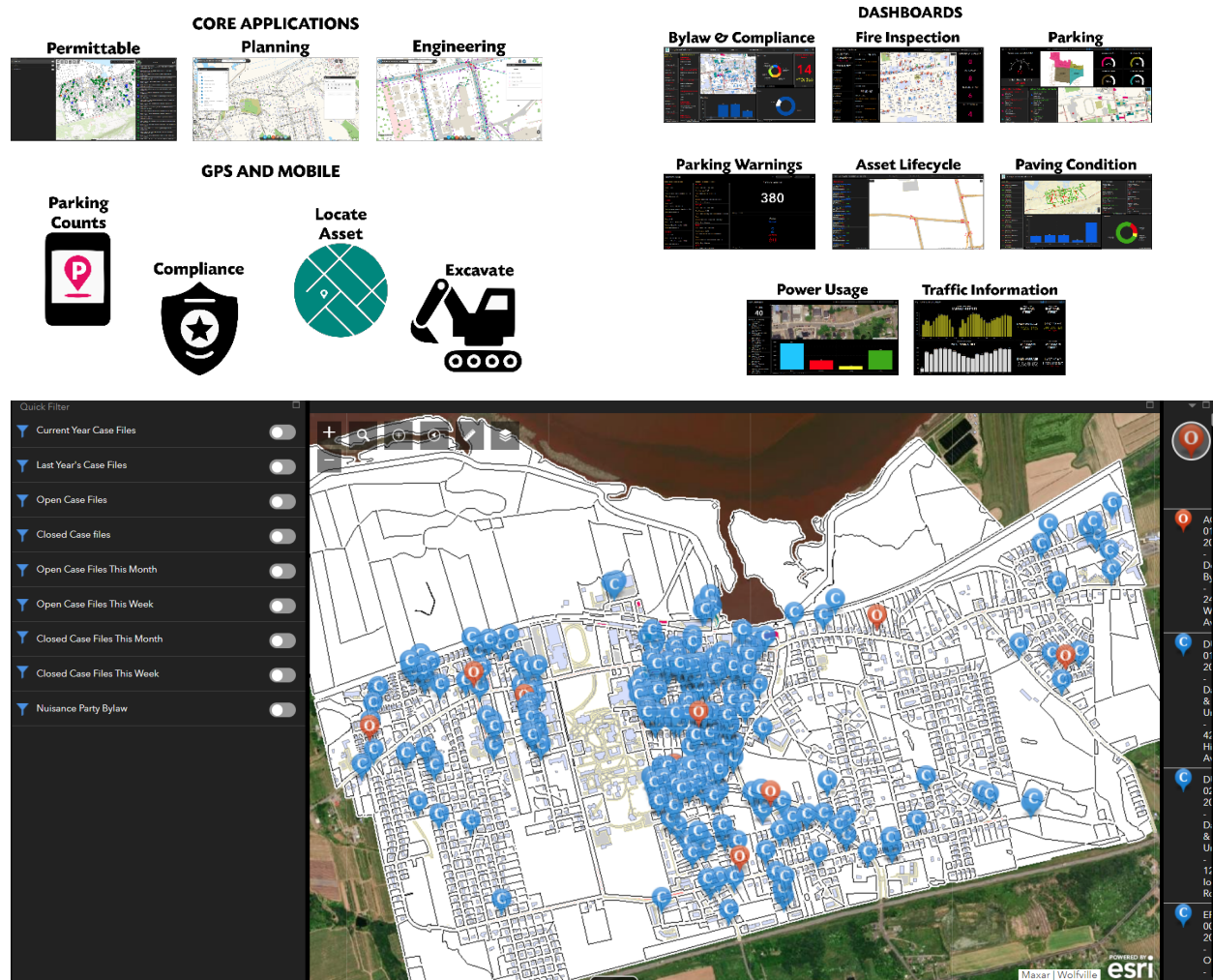


# REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

Title: Business Licensing By-law, Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals

Date: 2022-01-11

Department: Planning & Economic Development



In an effort to mitigate complaints directed towards some rental properties in Town, Staff through the Compliance Officers (with the RCMP) will continue to enforce the Nuisance Party Bylaw, Noise Bylaw and Property Minimum Standards Bylaw to the best of our ability given the staff resources and available hours. Coupled with this are efforts to increase Fire Inspections capacity and our ability to inspect rental units. This again is an ongoing effort that requires training of Staff and time to implement properly.

### Related recommendations:

1. Staff are recommending, however, that the Town continue with pursuing a Business Licensing Bylaw for traditional businesses. This effort has been endorsed by the Wolfville Business Development Corporation and should move forward to ensure we can tie our business registry to our website and have a better mechanism to welcome businesses to the Town. If endorsed, Staff would work on updating this (see RFD 003-

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

Title: Business Licensing By-law, Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals

Date: 2022-01-11

Department: Planning & Economic Development

---



2022) and bring back a separate RFD for Council to consider moving through the by-law adoption process.

2. Encourage the Landlords in Town to start an association or organized group to help each other and mitigate issues. This could also be helpful for Council in having a consistent contact/voice to deal with (similar to the WBDC).

### **Short Term Rentals (STRs)**

The Land Use Bylaw contains the following regulations for STRs:

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

Title: Business Licensing By-law, Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals

Date: 2022-01-11

Department: Planning & Economic Development

---



### 4.30 SHORT TERM RENTALS

Short Term Rentals shall be permitted in any zone that permits residential uses, except the Low Density Residential Restricted (R-1) zone, subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Short-term rentals shall only be permitted where proof of primary residence is provided to the Development Officer;
- (2) No more than three rental rooms are permitted;
- (3) Notwithstanding 4.30(2), a whole unit may be rented not more than 150 days per year. A record of rental days shall be provided to the Development Officer upon request.
- (4) In the case of a rental situation, written confirmation from the Landlord shall be provided;
- (5) A Fire and Life Safety Inspection shall be conducted on the premises before any Development Permit is issued;
- (6) Proof of any required licensing from the Province, or other regulatory bodies shall be provided to the Development Officer;
- (7) Proof of insurance shall be provided to the Development Officer;
- (8) A fee shall be provided as per the Municipal Fees Policy;
- (9) Short Term Rentals (e.g. Bed and Breakfast) shall not be subject to the size restrictions specified in section 4.16.7;
- (10) Must meet the parking requirements of Part 6.
- (11) Sections 4.30(1-3) do not apply to the Core Commercial (C-1) zone.

While these regulations state requirements for zones and fees, no STR operators have contacted Town Staff to register their STR to date (we estimate there are about 50 STRs in Town, varying in the type of stay room/stay offered). Staff have been monitoring STRs in Wolfville over the past 13 months and have noticed an increase of the number of STRs in Town during that time. Staff have attempted to share

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

Title: Business Licensing By-law, Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals

Date: 2022-01-11

Department: Planning & Economic Development

---



information on STRs with all residents through <https://wolfvilleblooms.ca/shorttermrentals>, have mailed out brochures with water bills, and have messaged STR operators through the [www.airbnb.ca](http://www.airbnb.ca) website (we were subsequently kicked-off of AirBnB). Following these actions, no STR owners or operators have contacted the Town to register their STR. Staff have enforced some STRs that were operating in the R-1 zone, and those STRs have since shut down operations.

Staff believe the Town has sufficient regulations for STRs in the LUB. Combined with the existing and upcoming provincial regulations for STRs, Staff are not recommending changes to the STR regulations at this time and are recommending the Town continue enforcing the LUB and developing the existing database of STRs in Town. Staff capacity to carry out this work, similar to the RRBB, is also limited.

As work progresses on this topic, it may be warranted to look at an increased fee for a Development Permit to operate a STR. This would involve updating the Town's [fees policy](#). Currently the fee for a Short-Term Rental is \$150, with renewal required every 4 years.

### **Single Room Occupancies (SROs)**

The Town's LUB also contains regulations for SROs:

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

Title: Business Licensing By-law, Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals

Date: 2022-01-11

Department: Planning & Economic Development

---



### 4.32 SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY

Single Room Occupancies are a housing type where one or two people are housed in single rooms where tenants may share bathrooms and a kitchen in a dwelling unit.

Single Room Occupancies do not include Short Term Rentals or dwelling units with up to 3 rental rooms.

Dwellings with four or more rooms used for single room occupancies are permitted in the R-2, R-3, R-4, I-2 and C-2 zones, subject to the following:

- (1) A Fire and Life Safety Inspection shall be conducted on the premises before any Development Permit is issued;
- (2) The maximum number of single room occupancies shall correspond to the underlying zone:
  - a) R-2 - max 4 bedrooms
  - b) R-3 - max 6 bedrooms
  - c) R-4 - max 8 bedrooms
  - d) C-2 - max 6 bedrooms
- (3) fee shall be provided as per the Town's Fees Policy.
- (4) In addition to the normal parking requirements for the dwelling, one parking space shall be provided for each bedroom, in excess of three, being used for rental purposes.
- (5) Existing single room occupancies may be subject to some or all of the requirements of this section, subject to context and the development history of the property.

This engagement process underscored the importance of SROs as part of Wolfville's overall housing stock, particularly for those with lower incomes. Staff are not recommending any changes to the LUB for SROs. This housing type may be the primary "low hanging fruit" of affordable housing in the community.

To reduce the number of complaints targeted at these properties, improved and proactive compliance and education efforts are needed. In order to provide improved and proactive compliance, however, more compliance and building inspection staff may be required.

Related Recommendation: Parking and Property Minimum Standards Bylaw

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 071-2022

Title: Business Licensing By-law, Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals

Date: 2022-01-11

Department: Planning & Economic Development

---



Staff are recommending that the Town continues to enforce regulations for parking and property minimum standards, as well as examining the capacity of existing Compliance Officers and Building Inspectors to manage the properties in Town with Bylaw Infractions and considering additional staff so that these properties can be addressed in a proactive and timely manner.

### 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If additional Staff are being considered by Council, this would be done through the annual Budget process.

### 7. REFERENCES TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN AND TOWN REPORTS

From the 2021-2025 Council Strategic Plan, this RFD is related to the strategic directions of:

- Economic Prosperity
- Social Equity
- Community Wellness

From the 2021-2025 Council Strategic Plan, this RFD links to the Council Priority Initiatives of:

- Economic sector growth and support for businesses (retention and attraction)

The Town's [Municipal Planning Strategy](#) and [Land Use By-law](#) are also relevant (see references above).

### 8. COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

Key message: Staff have gathered information from Landlords, Tenants, and Homeowners related to Short term rentals, single room occupancies and business licensing. Opinions and perspectives were varied. Council are considering the information and related recommendations.

### 9. ALTERNATIVES

Council may wish to pursue other directions on these topics and as such, Staff would require specific direction to do so.



## What We Heard Summary: Residential Rental Business Bylaw, Single Room Occupancies, and Short-Term Rentals

May – October 2022

With six months of community engagement on the topics of Single Room Occupancies, Short-Term Rentals and Residential Rental Business Licensing Bylaw complete, a better picture of community wants, and needs is emerging because of the insights, experiences and opinions shared. The information presented in this report, although brief, should help guide and support Council as we navigate the next steps related to these items.

The data gathered to date is fairly extensive and the intent of this report is to provide Council with a high-level overview to inspire both further questions and on-going dialogue. The intent of this What We Heard report is to share information from engagement related to the Residential Rental Business Bylaw, Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals and related items that arose during engagement.

### Background

This work began in light of the housing crisis felt both in Wolfville and throughout the province. Wolfville's rental households make up 53% of the overall 2,585 households in Town (2016). That means there are approximately 1,370 rental households in Wolfville. This engagement process led to the data collection of 258 apartments across 128 properties in Town.

Staff have created a database for rental properties in Town that includes information such as the addresses, number of units per building, number of bedrooms per unit, and contact information for the landlord and/or property manager. This database has information on 294 rental households suggesting that there remain 1,076 rental households for which Staff do not have data on or which data has not yet been entered. Staff also have a database of the properties in Town with bylaw infractions. Much of this work hinges on Staff capacity, however, our GIS enterprise software is helping us to better organize data and this is a work in progress.

This work relates to several other projects at the Town including Community Harmony, the Policing Review, and the Alcohol Strategy.



## Goals

The goals of this engagement process are:

- To engage with Wolfville residents and landlords to collect insights, experiences, opinions, and data to provide Council with information to assist the decision-making process for Single Room Occupancies, Short Term Rentals, Compliance, and the Residential Rental Business Bylaw.
- To collect insights, experiences, opinions, and data through both online data collection and in-person, one-on-one interviews with Staff.

## Process

In May of 2022 one-on-one in-person or virtual interviews with landlords and Staff began. In July, Staff began one-on-one interviews with tenants and homeowners neighboring rental properties in Town. A digital survey was launched on [www.wolfvilleblooms.ca/livinginwolfville](http://www.wolfvilleblooms.ca/livinginwolfville) in July 2022 to allow data collection from a greater number of individuals. Both the interviews and digital survey were promoted through the Town's Facebook and Instagram page.

Staff have completed 35 stakeholder interviews over 39.2 hours, and have received 107 quality responses to the digital survey. While interview respondents were not asked demographic details, the digital surveys provided an opportunity to collect demographic data in addition to narrative details.

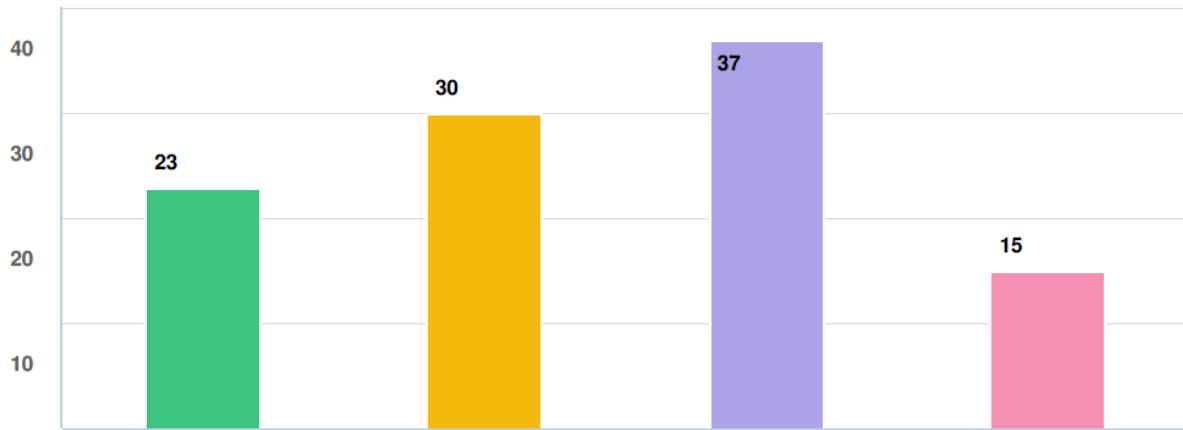
## Respondents

Most respondents to the survey were in the age group of 41-65, followed by 25-40. 23 of the 107 respondents were in the age group of 18-24, and 15 were 65 years or older.





### What is your age range?

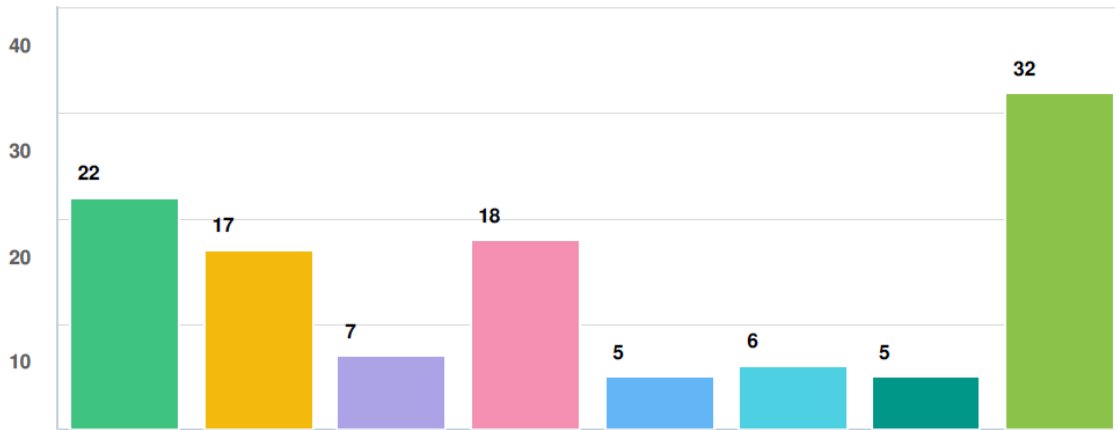


#### Question options

- 18-24
- 25-40
- 41-65
- 65+

Respondents were asked to select any the groups they identify with. 80 people responded to this question, and 27 skipped this question. Of those who did respond, 32 (40%) indicated “other”.

### Which of the following groups do you identify with?



#### Question options

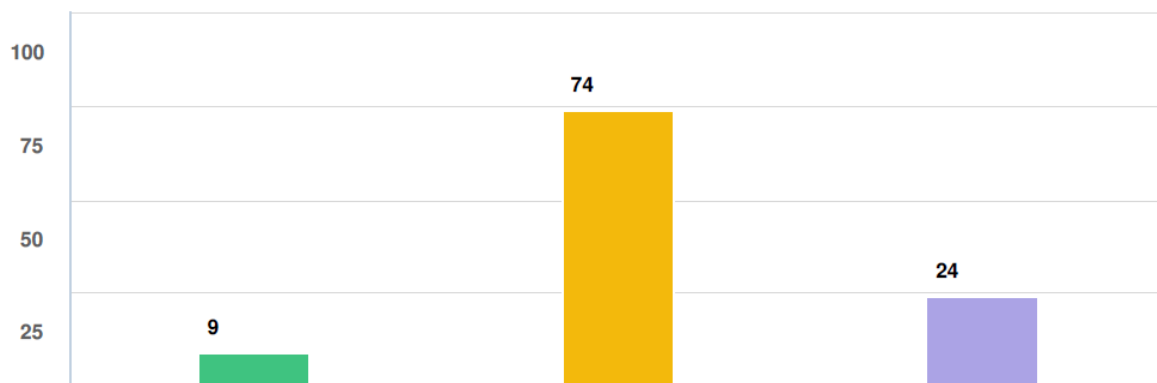
- LGBTQIA2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and Two-Spirit)
- Living with a disability
- Visible minority
- Student
- English as a second language
- New Canadian
- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour)
- Other (please specify)



Those who indicated “other” were asked to provide an explanation. Some of the “other” demographic responses collected include Caucasian or white, seniors, neurodivergent, retired, currently seeking employment, pet owner, widowed single parent, long-term permanent homeowner, and retired homeowner. Interestingly, only 18 (16.8%) of respondents identified as a student. Furthermore, only 23 of the 107 respondents selected the age group 18-24 which is the age of most undergraduate university students, suggesting that there are tenants in Wolfville in many different age groups. During the interviews, only 2 of the 9 tenants interviewed were enrolled in university at the time of the interview.

All survey respondents were required to indicate if they were a tenant, landlord, or neighbour of a rental property.

**Please describe the option that best describes you**



**Question options**

- I am a landlord of one or more rental properties in Wolfville
- I am a tenant living in Wolfville
- I live next to a rental property in Wolfville

69% of respondents were tenants, 8.4% were landlords, and 22.4% were neighbours of a rental property.



## Residential Business Licensing Bylaw

Following 5-6 years of discussion, Wolfville Town Council directed Staff to explore a business licensing program for both traditional businesses as well as residential rental properties in January 2022. The overarching goal of the Residential Rental Business Bylaw is to better regulate these properties by ensuring the Town has a current inventory/database of businesses in the Town. A licensing system also acts as another enforcement tool, if required. Collectively, residential rental properties are one of the Town's largest business operations.

If the Town adopts the Residential Rental Business Bylaw, the license could only be issued if all Town by-laws are complied with (e.g. Land Use By-law, Minimum Property Standards, Nuisance Party Bylaw, Property Minimum Standards) – see the draft by-law in Attachment A). Below are the opinions of the participating landlords on the Residential Rental Business Bylaw.

### **Feedback from landlords:**

In general, landlords were not in favour of a Residential Rental Business Bylaw as it was perceived as an unnecessary layer of complexity to running business in Wolfville, and many felt they would be paying a fee to help the Town deal with the management of landlords and properties with bylaw infractions, providing no benefit to their operations. It is important to note that some of the landlords who participated in the interviews are on the Town's database of properties with one or more bylaw infractions.

Some landlords cited concerns regarding the creation of additional costs to the rising costs of building material and heating fuel, while other landlords stated they would pay a fee if required to continue their business in Wolfville. Many felt as though the Town has existing tools to address Property Minimum Standards, Nuisance Parties and Parking and suggested that these tools should be adequately enforced before the introduction of a new tool. Further, some landlords suggested that Staff should continue to build the existing rental property database instead. Some reasons provided by landlords as to why a Residential Rental Business Bylaw could be beneficial include having a new tool to motivate landlords to maintain their properties with greater attention and to ensure greater safety among rental properties in Town.

### **Feedback from tenants:**

Tenants were undecided as to whether a Residential Rental Business Bylaw would be beneficial to them. Some tenants viewed the Residential Rental Business Bylaw as a tool to ensure Property Minimum Standards and Nuisance Parties were under control in rental properties, and as a tool to empower them when addressing concerns regarding their rental unit or landlord behaviour to their landlord or tenancy board, while others stated that their rental situation is comfortable and the Residential Rental Business Bylaw would produce no tangible benefit to them. Most tenants expressed concern that a fee for running the Residential Rental Business Bylaw would result in rent increases for tenants, and some suggested having the Residential Rental Business Bylaw apply only to properties with bylaw infractions.



### **Feedback from homeowners:**

Homeowners were generally in favour of the Residential Rental Business Bylaw, with many stating that this is something they have been advocating for. In contrast to landlords, homeowners felt as though a database or inventory in place of a Residential Rental Business Bylaw would be useless unless it was accompanied by requirements to maintain a license. Some homeowners stated that the Residential Rental Business Bylaw would only be applicable to student rentals and would be a tool to improve enforcement efforts in Town. Homeowners also discussed how the Residential Rental Business Bylaw could improve off-campus behaviour of Acadia students by providing Acadia with information on students' home addresses in Wolfville to allow Acadia staff to contact and follow up with students with bylaw infractions.

### **Nuisance Party Bylaw**

The Nuisance Party Bylaw is a tool the Town uses to enforce nuisance parties. When interviews with landlords began, there were no questions targeted at the Nuisance Party Bylaw. During interviews, however, every landlord spoken to was keen to discuss the Nuisance Party Bylaw, leading to its inclusion in the interview and survey questions. Participants were asked whether they feel the Nuisance Party Bylaw is effective, and if not, what suggestions they have for reducing nuisance parties in Town.

### **Feedback from landlords:**

In general, landlords were frustrated with the Nuisance Party Bylaw. Some landlords felt that it is reasonable to issue a Nuisance Party Order to tenants or occupants of a dwelling where a nuisance party is occurring, but unreasonable to issue a Nuisance Party Order to an off-site landlord. Some landlords stated that the Nuisance Party Bylaw may be effective for landlords who do not proactively engage with their tenants to encourage good behaviour but creates an unfair cost to landlords who do communicate behavioural expectations with tenants. Some of the landlords interviewed indicated that they include Town bylaws and behavioural requirements in their lease agreements.

Furthermore, some landlords viewed the Nuisance Party Bylaw as redundant while the Prevention of Excessive Noise Bylaw exists and suggested greater enforcement of the Prevention of Excessive Noise Bylaw could replace the need for the Nuisance Party Bylaw.

### **Feedback from tenants:**



Tenants provided a range of feedback regarding the Nuisance Party Bylaw. Some tenants felt as though the Nuisance Party Bylaw would provide an adequate deterrent for nuisance parties if there was a broader knowledge of the Nuisance Party Bylaw and the associated fines. Other tenants stated that they would continue to party regardless of the fines. Few of the tenants interviewed stated that their landlords include information on Town bylaws in their lease agreements or have shared information with them during their tenancy. Similarly, tenants stated that they do not recall information sharing of the bylaws from Acadia University.

Some tenants felt that their actions are often demonized by other residents and the Town and stated that off-campus rental homes have become important common spaces for socialization, something that they indicated Acadia has gradually removed over time and something that is lacking in the Town otherwise. Additionally, some tenants felt it would be more effective to have a compliance officer and/or landlord visit their unit the day following a nuisance party so that the bylaw could be explained, and expectations set in a calm setting rather than during a party where the tenant may be intoxicated.

#### **Feedback from homeowners:**

Most homeowners felt that the Nuisance Party Bylaw would be an effective tool if it was enforced more regularly. Some homeowners suggested a more proactive compliance approach could provide a solution to low enforcement of the Nuisance Party Bylaw in which the Town Compliance Officer and/or RCMP cruise the Town seeking out nuisance parties rather than waiting for residents to make complaints. Some homeowners expressed confusion regarding the availability and contact information of the Town's Compliance Staff stating that it is unclear if compliance is available after 4:30pm or on the weekends.

Furthermore, homeowners stated concerns regarding the role of the RCMP, arguing that they have not been as effective as expected in managing nuisance parties, with some homeowners also stating concern regarding the working relationship between the RCMP and Town Compliance Staff. Some homeowners stated that they have noticed an improvement in noise and nuisance party reductions since the hiring of Town Compliance Officers this year.

#### **Solutions to ongoing nuisance parties:**

The desire for greater enforcement of Acadia's off-campus code of conduct was indicated by several participants, along with the need for long-term education focused on a cultural shift away from alcohol and drug use for students and a greater provision of on-campus common spaces for students to gather safely. Many stated that reduced restrictions around alcohol use on campus could reduce the number of parties that occur off-campus, as well as allowing bars in Town to stay open until 3AM to allow guests to leave at staggered times and tire themselves out before heading home to residential areas where currently many return around 1AM, seeking out parties.

Suggestions around improving and nurturing relationships between the Town, Acadia, ASU, tenants, students, homeowners and RCMP were also frequently mentioned. Many participants expressed feeling

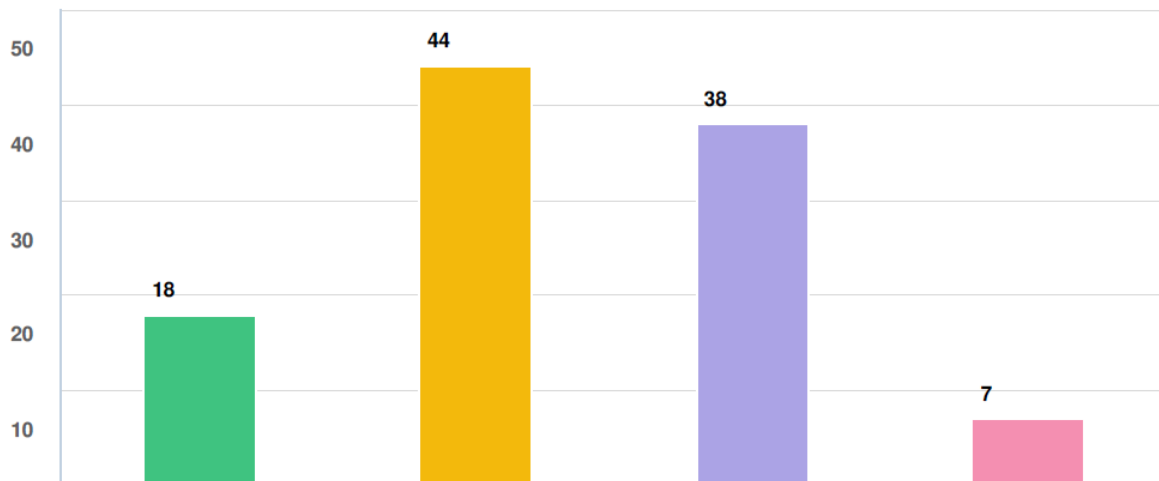


demonized by one or more groups, some despite efforts to build relationships across groups. Some ideas for relationship building include providing opportunities for meaningful engagement of youth in Town decision making and directly inviting all community members to Town-hosted community events such as barbecues.

Further suggestions include access to more “dry” third places in Town such as coffee shops that are open late, focusing the Town’s brand less on wine and alcohol, and encouraging through land use planning a greater mix of housing types throughout all neighbourhood zones to allow a diversity of residents on any given street rather than concentrating groups with specific incomes, for example, in one area. Finally, a cultural shift away from an “experiential” model to an academic model at Acadia was recommended, along with consideration for how the Town supports Acadia, whether through events promotion or academic achievement recognition.

Survey responses show that most respondents are at least somewhat aware of the Nuisance Party Bylaw:

**How aware are you of the Nuisance Party Bylaw?**



**Question options**

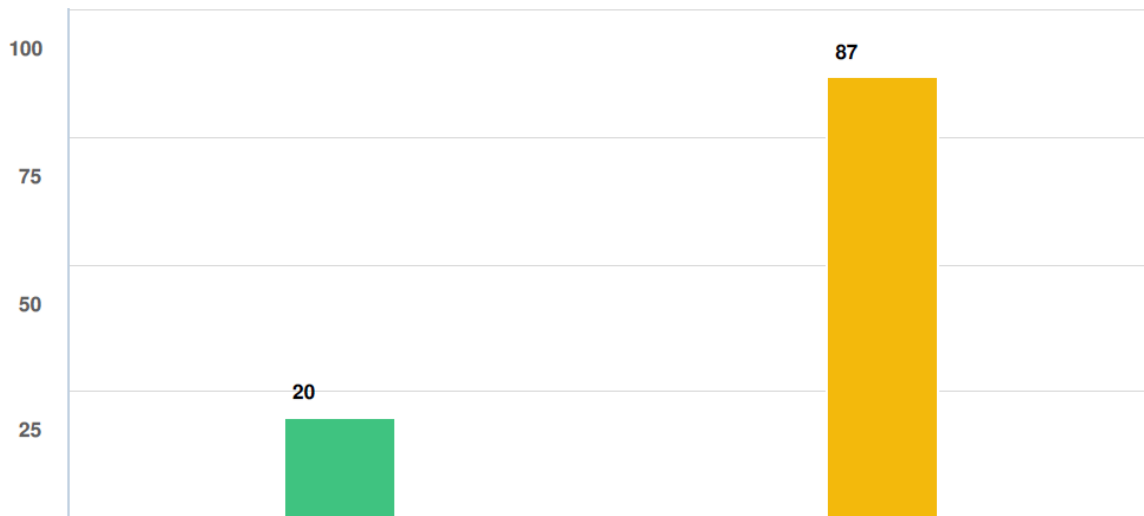
● I unaware of this bylaw   ● I am somewhat aware of this bylaw   ● I am aware of this bylaw

● I have been effected by this bylaw

Only 18.7% of survey respondents find the Nuisance Party Bylaw effective at deterring nuisance parties:



Do you find the Nuisance Party Bylaw effective at deterring nuisance parties?



Question options

● Yes ● No

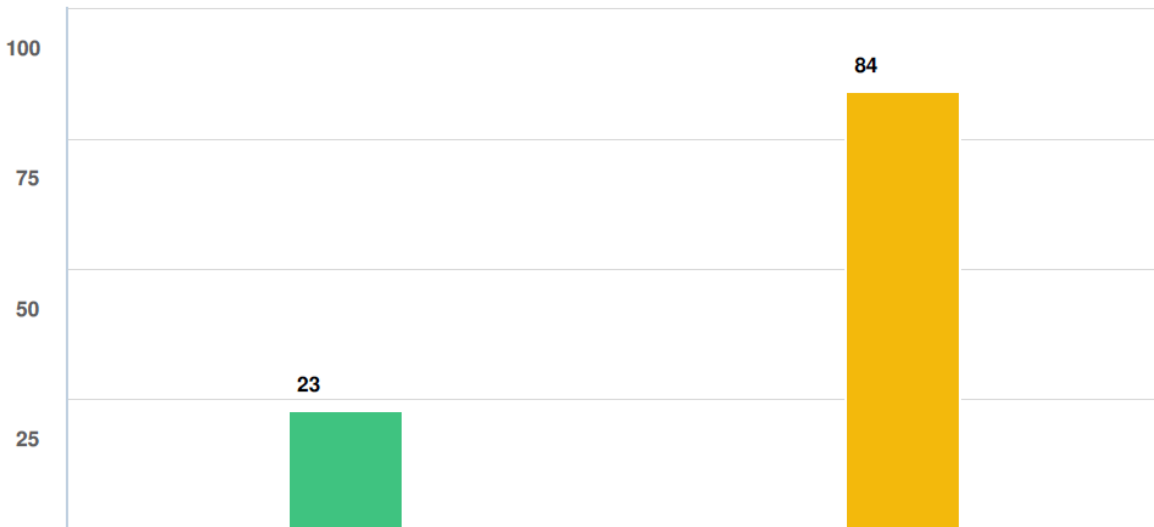
## Single Room Occupancies

The current planning documents, which include regulations for single room occupancies and short-term rentals were adopted in December, 2020. Due to the recent adoption of these bylaws, Staff sought to gauge the level of knowledge of these regulations in the community and understand how the regulations are playing out in practice. Staff have posted information on Single Room Occupancies and Short Term Rental regulations on two separate Wolfville Blooms pages: <https://wolfvilleblooms.ca/landlordtenant> and <https://wolfvilleblooms.ca/shorttermrentals> to help spread awareness of these regulations and have mailed out pamphlets to all property owners in Town as well. In light of some misinformation regarding Single Room Occupancies being shared among community members in Town, Staff took this engagement process as an opportunity to clarify the regulations and obtain feedback on the concerns regarding Single Room Occupancies in Town.

Survey results show a low understanding of the regulations for Single Room Occupancies:



### Are you aware of the Town's regulations on Single Room Occupancies?



#### Question options

● Yes ● No

#### Feedback from landlords:

Most of the landlords interviewed stated that Single Room Occupancies or rental units with more than 3 bedrooms are more likely to see noise, nuisance parties, and property maintenance issues than 1-to-2-bedroom rentals. Some landlords who own Single Room Occupancies or rental homes with 5 or more bedrooms stated that they would consider dividing their buildings into 1-2 bedroom apartments if the process to do so was streamlined, citing a lengthy planning process as a deterrent. Some landlords stated that land use bylaw regulations on the number of dwelling units per lot creates a barrier to subdividing these dwellings as well. Some landlords felt as though Single Room Occupancies should not be allowed in Town in any zone, while others argued that they are a key component to the overall housing stock in Wolfville.

#### Feedback from tenants:

Many tenants stated that regardless of their personal preferences for housing types, that Single Room Occupancies are an important part of the rental housing stock, and often one of the most affordable housing options available. Some tenants feel as though Single Room Occupancies, which are usually located in former single-family homes, have reduced the opportunity for families to buy homes in Wolfville and feel that they should not be permitted. Many tenants stated that Single Room Occupancies become “party houses” because they offer larger spaces for gathering, something that is otherwise lacking in the Town. Similar to landlords, some tenants stated that they typically notice





poorer building and property maintenance at Single Room Occupancies than they do in rental units with fewer bedrooms.

**Feedback from homeowners:**

Most homeowners stated that Single Room Occupancies should not be permitted in Town. Many homeowners argued that the Low Density Residential – Restricted (R-1) zoning exacerbates the issues of Single Room Occupancies because it forces diverse housing types to be concentrated in the R-2, R-3 and R-4 zones, while R-1 zones consist of a single housing type and low noise, nuisance party and property minimum standards complaints. Some homeowners also stated that a shortage of on-campus housing results in more students seeking off-campus housing.

Furthermore, homeowners stated that Single Room Occupancies often result in parking issues where occupants are parking on lawns and cars line residential streets due to the disproportionate number of tenants with vehicles to the number of parking spaces available.

**4.32 SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY**

Single Room Occupancies are a housing type where one or two people are housed in single rooms where tenants may share bathrooms and a kitchen in a dwelling unit.

Single Room Occupancies do not include Short Term Rentals or dwelling units with up to 3 rental rooms.

Dwellings with four or more rooms used for single room occupancies are permitted in the R-2, R-3, R-4, I-2 and C-2 zones, subject to the following:

- (1) A Fire and Life Safety Inspection shall be conducted on the premises before any Development Permit is issued;
- (2) The maximum number of single room occupancies shall correspond to the underlying zone:
  - a) R-2 - max 4 bedrooms
  - b) R-3 - max 6 bedrooms
  - c) R-4 - max 8 bedrooms
  - d) C-2 - max 6 bedrooms
- (3) fee shall be provided as per the Town's Fees Policy.
- (4) In addition to the normal parking requirements for the dwelling, one parking space shall be provided for each bedroom, in excess of three, being used for rental purposes.
- (5) Existing single room occupancies may be subject to some or all of the requirements of this section, subject to context and the development history of the property.



## Short-Term Rentals

Short Term Rentals are regulated under the Town's Land Use Bylaw. In many jurisdictions across Canada, Short Term Rentals have contributed to the shortage of long-term rental housing options available. To understand if the current regulations are sufficient, Staff asked participants if they have any concerns about Short Term Rentals in Wolfville, whether they should be permitted in the R-1 zone with conditions, or if they could provide a solution to challenges with summer sublet leases.

### **Feedback from landlords:**

Most landlords did not feel that converting their rentals to Short Term Rentals in the summer would provide a solution to challenges with subleases with most indicating the lack of time to manage a Short Term Rental as the main reason why this would not be a feasible solution for them. Some landlords stated that there is a need for more Short Term Rentals in Wolfville, particularly in the summer months, and believe that allowing Short Term Rentals during the summer could provide a solution to this issue. One landlord stated that they had previously run a Short Term Rental from their home in Wolfville which supplemented their income, ultimately allowing them to live in Wolfville.

### **Feedback from tenants:**

Many student tenants are seeking lease agreements for the academic year (October to May) and returning home for the summer. Allowing Short Term Rentals in situations where an October to May lease is preferred, could provide a solution to finding sublets for these tenants, some of whom stated that securing a subletter can be challenging, and young tenants do not always have the experience to select a reliable subletter. Tenants who thought summer Short Term Rentals could be a solution questioned where they would store their belongings, and would want to be certain that they could return to their rental in September.

Some tenants do not wish to see more Short Term Rentals in Town, with some stating they have noticed a reduction in long-term rentals due to Short Term Rentals, with some who have needed to move out after being notified that their long-term rental was being converted into a Short Term Rental. Concern for noise from Short Term Rentals was raised by tenants, with one stating they neighbour a Short Term Rental where noise and parking issues occur regularly.

### **Feedback from homeowners:**

Homeowners expressed concern for rising home prices due to Short Term Rental investors purchasing homes and cutting into the available housing stock, noise disturbances, and increased traffic and

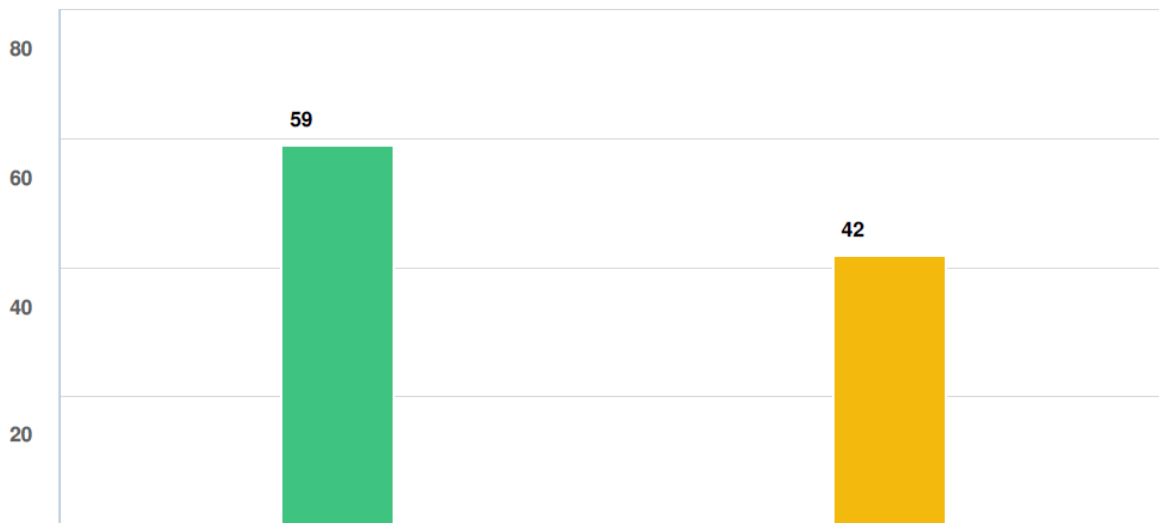


parking. Similar to concerns for Single Room Occupancies, some homeowners felt as though Short Term Rentals are reducing the number of single-family homes available for new families to move into and are taking away the opportunity for those who want to live and work in Wolfville to do so, specifically at retail and food and beverage service establishments. Some homeowners felt it is unfair that Short Term Rental operators are profiting from their rentals while traditional inns, hotels and bed and breakfasts are required to pay fees, licensing and inspection costs to operate.

### Survey findings

58% of survey respondents stated that they are concerned that Short Term Rentals are or may impact the availability of long-term rentals in Wolfville.

**Are you concerned that Short Term Rentals (like Airbnb) are or may impact the availability of long term rentals in Wolfville?**



**Question options**

- yes
- no



#### 4.30 SHORT TERM RENTALS

Short Term Rentals shall be permitted in any zone that permits residential uses, except the Low Density Residential Restricted (R-1) zone, subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Short-term rentals shall only be permitted where proof of primary residence is provided to the Development Officer;
- (2) No more than three rental rooms are permitted;
- (3) Notwithstanding 4.30(2), a whole unit may be rented not more than 150 days per year. A record of rental days shall be provided to the Development Officer upon request.
- (4) In the case of a rental situation, written confirmation from the Landlord shall be provided;
- (5) A Fire and Life Safety Inspection shall be conducted on the premises before any Development Permit is issued;
- (6) Proof of any required licensing from the Province, or

other regulatory bodies shall be provided to the Development Officer;

- (7) Proof of insurance shall be provided to the Development Officer;
- (8) A fee shall be provided as per the Municipal Fees Policy;
- (9) Short Term Rentals (e.g. Bed and Breakfast) shall not be subject to the size restrictions specified in section 4.16.7;
- (10) Must meet the parking requirements of Part 6.
- (11) Sections 4.30(1-3) do not apply to the Core Commercial (C-1) zone.

### Parking and Property Minimum Standards Bylaw

Staff are aware of parking complaints in Town such as cars parked on lawns, a high number of vehicles per dwelling unit, and a high number of vehicles parking along residential streets. Staff are also aware of complaints regarding property maintenance including waste issues, lawn care and interior furniture and other belongings being left on lawns and front verandahs. Town Staff asked respondents if they had any suggestions for how the town better handle the parking situation and property minimum standards infractions.



**Parking:**

Some respondents suggested a new, paved parking lot is required in the Downtown Core area, others suggested removing parking spaces and to reduce parking requirements to reduce the likelihood that community members will use their car for in-town trips and to discontinue nurturing a car-dominant culture. Many respondents stated that Acadia needs to play a bigger role in the provision of parking and to allow overnight use of all Acadia parking lots. Some respondents suggested limiting parking to one side of the street in areas where street parking has become an issue such as along Hillside Avenue, and some stated that permit parking for specific streets would help to cut down on the number of cars parking outside of dwellings where the driver does not live.

Furthermore, some respondents suggested that landlords could clearly mark designated parking spaces for their tenants so that tenants knew that their parking space would be available for them when they return home, and that the Town's Compliance Officers continue to enforce regulations for parking, particularly in instances where cars are parked on lawns.

**Property Minimum Standards Bylaw:**

Many homeowners expressed frustration with the enforcement process of the Property Minimum Standards Bylaw, some stating they have made several complaints for specific properties; however, the issues tend to persist with no long-term solution and some stated that it is unclear if the Town, RCMP or Valley Waste-Resource Management deals with specific Property Minimum Standards infractions. A lack of clarity on who is responsible for specific items such as garbage leads to confusion and frustration, and many participants suggested that a more proactive approach from the Town's Compliance Officers would provide a solution to these issues, rather than relying on complaints to act.



What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

## Part 1. What We Heard Report: Landlords

### Responses from Landlord Interviews

Staff held one-on-one interviews with landlords who own and operate rental properties in the Town of Wolfville from May 2022 to August 2022. During this time, Staff reached out to 16 landlords, 14 of which agreed to engage in an interview. All interviews followed the same set of questions and encouraged a conversation style approach. The interviews took 17 hours to complete. A survey for landlords, tenants, and neighbours of rental properties was also posted to [www.wolfvilleblooms.ca/livinginwolfville](http://www.wolfvilleblooms.ca/livinginwolfville) to gather input from more community members from July 28<sup>th</sup> to October 17<sup>th</sup>. 107 users responded to the survey, including 9 landlords. The survey questions and responses are included in Attachment F.

This draft report is intended to showcase the responses provided by landlords and will include quotes to validate observations. A summary report of key themes from all three respondent groups has also been drafted that will be sent to all Town Council to review prior to November 2022 Committee of the Whole.

### Residential Rental Business Bylaw:

Following 5-6 years of discussion, Wolfville Town Council directed Staff to explore a business licensing program for both traditional businesses as well as residential rental properties in January 2022. The overarching goal of the residential rental business bylaw (RRBB) is to better regulate these properties by ensuring the Town has a current inventory/database of businesses in the Town. A licensing system also acts as another enforcement tool, if required. Collectively, residential rental properties are one of the Town's largest business operations.

If the Town adopts the RRBB, the license could only be issued if all Town by-laws are complied with (e.g. Land Use By-law, Minimum Property Standards, Nuisance Party Bylaw, Property Minimum Standards) – see the draft by-law in Attachment A). Below are the opinions of the participating landlords on the RRBB.

### Potential Benefits of a Residential Rental Business Licensing Bylaw

While landlords noted few benefits of a RRBB, it was suggested that the bylaw could motivate some owners of illegal or poorly maintained properties to make repairs or changes to their rental properties



What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

to comply with Town regulations. Furthermore, it was suggested that the RRBB could provide a tool to allow the Town's Compliance Officer into specific properties where the landlord and/or property manager is absent and not responsive to complaints or to Orders from the Town.

*"Being able to use the RRBB if there is a problem property would be helpful, like if we had a compliance issue it would allow Compliance Officers to enter the building, it would allow the Town to focus on problem properties".*

Most landlords struggled to identify benefits of a RRBB for themselves, however a few indicated that while they see no benefit for themselves, they also see no drawbacks to the license. Some suggested that any measure that could increase tenant safety is a good idea.

*"There are no negatives to a RRBB. If you have nothing to hide, there's nothing to lose."*

*"Any measure that improves safety and quality is a good idea".*

Many landlords viewed the idea of a landlord database or registry as preferable to a license, as a database would provide the Town with contact information for property owners and managers and would allow the Town's Compliance Officer to contact them and hold them accountable for events specific to each property. A registry could also assist with fire and life safety inspections and provide the Town with a more accurate understanding of the rental situation in Town.

As part of this process, Staff have begun compiling landlord and rental property information into a spreadsheet from landlords who provided these details following the interviews. While all landlords interviewed indicated they would provide the requested information, only 10 of the 14 landlords provided this information after Staff followed up with requests. The 10 landlords who did provide this information are responsible for a total of 253 apartments across 128 properties.

### **Cons of Residential Rental Business Licensing Bylaw:**

Most landlords spoken to did not believe that the license would benefit them. The two main reasons indicated were:

- 1) The Town should enforce existing bylaws more rigorously before introducing a new bylaw.
- 2) A license would unfairly create an expense for all landlords to help address the few poorly managed rentals.

Many landlords stated that the Town should enforce existing tools such as the Noise Bylaw, Nuisance Party Bylaw and Property Minimum Standards before creating another bylaw to address similar issues.

*"There's no benefit. The town should enforce the bylaws we already have, the noise bylaw, minimum standards, waste and enforce them for renters and owners. A business license for*



## What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

*residential landlords is not a good move as it will be another cost passed on to tenants. There's no point in making life more expensive for everybody just to deal with a few bad apples".*

While some landlords stated that the existing bylaws are not enforced adequately, others stated that the Town enforces bylaws too often and in inappropriate circumstances. Landlords provided details about tenants being issued Summary Offense Tickets for listening to music and playing video games during the daytime. Landlords told Staff that these tenants ended up moving out of Wolfville, claiming that the tenants felt unwelcome and villainized by the Town. Compliance Staff have not been able to confirm whether these cases are accurate, and have stated that typically in these cases, if the noise was loud enough, the officer would give a warning. The same landlord who provided this information, also asked whether the Town tracks who is making complaints in addition to where the complaints are directed at:

*"We log complaints to each property, but are we logging where they come from? I know of one person who made 32 complaints in a single month, another who made 20 or so complaints to RCMP or Town. Usually, they are very minor things they complain about, and they make false accusations about thefts. Some residents are being very unreasonable... I know of 2 students, one who was playing a video game, the other listening to music while doing yoga, who were fined for nuisance, I don't know if it was by RCMP or Town, but both students left town shortly after because they felt alienated and told by the officer that the Mayor wants the Town to ticket them. Instead of pushing people away, we need to bring them together. Soon it will be students versus the Mayor. I want to be the canary in the coal mine. We are pushing students out of Wolfville. Is this what Council wants? Acadia is the heartbeat of this town."*

Many landlords stated that they take good care of their rental properties and tenants and believe they would be paying a licensing fee to support the Town's efforts to address a few rental properties belonging to someone else and therefore creating more work and expenses for cooperative landlords. Furthermore, landlords questioned whether the "bad" landlords would ultimately register for the license and raised questions regarding who would be required to register and how this would be monitored:

*"Good landlords would pay because they do what they're told, but the bad ones wouldn't, so how do we make this fair? What about a professor who goes on sabbatical and wants to rent out their home for a year? Do they have to register"?*

*"We'd likely run into complexity regarding what should be registered under the RRBB, like what about people renting out just one bedroom in their house versus a full house rental? There is too much bureaucracy for this to pan out the way it's intended".*





## What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

While there are many landlords and property managers in Town that are responsive to Town Orders or complaints, 3 of the 14 landlords interviewed own 1 of 20 properties identified by the Compliance Officer as those receiving the greatest amount of complaints related to property minimum standards, nuisance parties and parking. 1 landlord owns 2 of these properties, and another is the owner of 1 of the top 3 properties in Town where complaints are frequently made.

Some landlords stated that there is already a housing crisis province-wide and questioned whether the license would create barriers for those seeking to provide housing. Some landlords expressed feeling villainized by the Town and community members and believe a license may cause some landlords to sell or to begin investing in areas without a RRBB:

*“There’s no benefit to the bylaw... Landlords are providing housing, not doing something bad for the Town. Landlords also want to help to make the community clean and quiet, they want that too”.*

*“There is so much division in the Town between Mayor and Council and landlords, the Town needs to find a way to support landlords and stop villainizing them. I’ve already sold one of my homes and intend to sell the rest because I don’t want to do business in Wolfville anymore”.*

## Feedback on the RRBB Fee:

The license would likely have a fee attached to it. Landlords were asked for input on what the fee should cost, and what the revenue from the fee might be used for. While no dollar amount was suggested, landlords provided varying responses, with some stating that a fee would not be a hindrance to doing business in Wolfville, while others felt they were being squeezed by rising costs of building materials, appliances, and the current rent cap, and felt that any additional cost would be a burden.

*“The fee would be a hindrance. The cost and shipping delays for building materials and appliances is up 20-30%, the 2% rent cap and 100% heat fuel cost increase have created major issues for landlords. If there was a fee, it could be used for more compliance or policing but it would be a hindrance to landlords.”*

A fee that could generate revenue to tackle issues like parking was viewed favorably by some, while others reiterated that they felt the fee would help pay for someone else’s poor rental management and suggested that the Town has adequate bylaws to address issues such as noise and parking and should first increase compliance with these bylaws and continue building a rental property database before considering a license.

*“If the fee helps to get things like parking and noise issues dealt with, it’s all good. I’m happy to pay whatever the cost is. Parking is a huge issue.”*



What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

Some suggested that funds generated through the license fee could be used to provide more compliance during major events such as Acadia's Home Coming or Apple Blossom Festival. Others questioned how the Town would ensure all residential rental property owners are paying the fee to make the RRBB fair for those paying.

## **Noise Bylaw and Nuisance Party Bylaw:**

While there were no questions targeted at the Nuisance Party Bylaw (NPB), every landlord spoken to was keen to discuss this topic. In general, landlords were frustrated with the NPB, stating that it is unreasonable to be held responsible and punished for someone else's behaviour. Many indicated that the Town has sufficient bylaws in place to address noise issues and that the Town should first increase the use of the Noise Bylaw before creating another similar bylaw, and many questioned the legal integrity of the NPB.

*"The nuisance party bylaw is only good for scaring the bad landlords, but it hurts the good ones. Fine landlords for tenant's bad behaviour. Really?... It may work as a bluff but will not stand in court if challenged. Just fine misbehaving individuals under existing bylaws. Public drinking, mischief, vandalism? Arrest and charge as necessary. Name and shame them. Urinating on someone's yard? Landlords or the Town can take a video and post on social media, you [homeowners] can install motion sensing cameras, lights, irrigation to keep people away".*

*"My opinion on the Nuisance party law is that it's unfair to have the landlord fined as well, because the landlord does not live in the same building as the tenants and probably the landlord lives quite far away from the tenants, and so it is out of the control of the landlord, and it is unfair to make the landlord responsible for something that they cannot control".*

One landlord mentioned that they like the escalation feature of the NPB, and that it does give both tenants and landlords time to make behavioural changes to avoid a ticket, though they argue the landlord should never be ticketed for tenant behaviour.

*"People are motivated by money, so punish bad behaviours financially. I like the idea of the escalation of the nuisance part bylaw because it gives the landlord time to act, but fining the landlords isn't smart".*

## **Single Room Occupancies:**

The current planning documents, which include regulations for single room occupancies (SROs) and short-term rentals (STRs), were adopted in December, 2020. Due to the recent adoption of these bylaws, Staff sought to gauge the level of knowledge landlords have of these regulations, to understand what level of education may be required. Staff have posted information for SRO and STR regulations on two separate Wolfville Blooms pages: <https://wolfvilleblooms.ca/landlordtenant> and



What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

<https://wolfvilleblooms.ca/shorttermrentals> to help spread awareness of these regulations. Pamphlets have also been mailed out everyone who owns a property in Town.

During interviews, 7 of the 14 landlords stated they were not aware of the regulations for SROs, with 3 stating they were at least somewhat aware. 7 landlords were also unaware of the regulations for STRs at the time of the interview, with 3 at least somewhat aware. STRs are discussed in the following section.

While a decision is not currently on the table, one landlord cautioned against any potential decision to shutting down SROs:

*“Shutting down SROs is a move in the wrong direction. Given the past 2 years stress on the housing crisis, this is an unfair move across the board.”*

Many noise, nuisance party and parking complaints received by the Town are made for large family homes that have been converted into rental properties with several bedrooms, rather than for purpose-built rentals. While not all of these dwelling units are SROs, Staff asked landlords their opinions on these large by-the-bedroom rental homes, and if they think converting them into more, smaller apartments could resolve some of the issues associated with these dwelling types. It was indicated by some landlords that subdividing SROs into smaller units could reduce the likelihood of parties, but would not address the parking issues:

*“Parties happen at houses with large common rooms. We need to get rid of the 5-6 bed houses and convert them to bachelor, 1 and 2 bedroom houses. Houses with 4 or more beds are usually trouble properties. We also need to limit parking to 3 cars per house and explore a permit system near Acadia on Prospect Street. Converting a 7-bedroom house into 2 4-bedroom units won’t help much”.*

Another landlord indicated that they encounter the fewest issues at rentals with 1 to 2 bedrooms, and see an increase in issues as the bedroom count increases:

*“SRO’s shouldn’t be allowed. The more bedrooms you have, the more problems you get. 1 or 2 bedroom units are the best. When you get into three or more beds, that’s where 90% of the problems arise”.*

Other landlords remarked on the demand for housing types and what Town-provided incentives might encourage landlords to convert multiple bedroom rentals into smaller units:

*“People don’t want large, 8 bedroom homes anymore. Most of the demand is for 1-2 bedroom units. A timeline incentive is enough for people to do this, make it a short, streamlined process that is intuitive. The Town needs to fix its website. You need to make it easy for people to subdivide their homes”.*

Town-provided incentives were not appropriate measures to all landlords, however, with one landlord stating that changes to rental properties should be paid in full by the landlord:



## What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

*“Don’t provide subsidies. The town shouldn’t play the game, it should be the referee. The LUB needs to permit more dwelling units per acre or lot so homes can be divided up. We only rent out under one lease for the full house and require the tenants all know each other. Our largest unit is 5 bedrooms and isn’t a problem. Breaking down large units into smaller ones is fine as long as it is fully paid by the landlord. Otherwise, it subsidizes slum landlords at the expense of responsible landlords and tax-paying citizens”.*

It was suggested by some that zoning and land use regulations restricting the number of units per lot is the only barrier to providing more rental units per lot, and one landlord indicated that SROs are a valuable piece of the rental housing stock in Wolfville and not something the Town should strive to reduce the availability of:

*“Shutting down SROs is a move in the wrong direction. Given the past 2 years’ stress on the housing crisis, this is an unfair move across the board”.*

## Short Term Rentals

Landlords were also asked for opinions on STRs and whether they would like to be able to rent out student rentals as STRs during summer months. Some landlords stated that there is a need for more STRs in the summer months, citing low vacancies at existing inns, bed and breakfasts and hotels, and that using student rentals for STRs in the summer could alleviate some issues that tend to arise when subletters move into their rentals:

*“STRs are a possible solution to subletting because sublets often cause problems, the subletters make messes and party a lot. On Airbnb you can rate guests so there is a vetting process for who stays in your house so it is less likely that you’ll have a rowdy or disrespectful guest”.*

One landlord had previously used Airbnb during the summer months as their tenants only wanted to sign September to April leases:

*“I used to run 3 STRs from May to August, until the pandemic, and then I found out they were not permitted, and I think the bylaws are regressive. My STRs helped with student leases that end in April rather than doing a sublease. My STRs were busy, I only had 10 empty nights across all 3 STRs over the 4 months. I hear from tenants that students don’t want yearlong leases, they want September to April. There’s a shortage of STRs here and we need more of them because of the wine industry”.*

Another landlord stated that running a STR out of their home helped subsidized their mortgage and be able to live in Wolfville:

*“I used to do Airbnb at the home that I live in to subsidize my mortgage. I had good communication with the neighbours if there were any issues, I had renters all through the year,*



## What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

*even in February, so the STR was very successful. It's now my primary home and using it as an STR made it possible for me to live in Wolfville”.*

None of the landlords stated concern that STRs could negatively impact long-term housing availability, and most of the landlords stated they were not interested in pursuing STRs at their rental properties.

## Compliance and Residential Rental Database

Throughout this process, Staff have been collecting information related to compliance. One gap in compliance efforts is the lack of a database for rental properties in town. By asking landlords for information on their rental properties, personal and/or property management contact information, Staff are able to create a database of landlord and rental property information. Many landlords indicated that the database currently being created through the interview process replaces the need for a RRBB.

Other gaps identified by landlords include the regulations that prohibit the RCMP from telling landlords which of their properties they have attended to, something the Town's compliance officer is enabled to do through the Nuisance Party Bylaw.

*“The RCMP never discloses what address they visited if they are called. Is the compliance officer allowed to inform people of this”?*

As stated previously, only 10 of the 14 landlords interviewed provided information for the database at the time of the writing of this report. The information requested includes the civic address of all rental properties in Town, the number of units per building, and the number of bedrooms per unit. Staff also requested the phone number and email address of the property owner or manager and asked for the landlord to indicate whether they would prefer to be contacted as soon as a complaint is made, the following day, or the next business day. This information has been recorded into the database to allow a streamlined approach for the Town's compliance officers to follow.

## Solutions to Ongoing Noise and Property Minimum Standards Issues:

There are some properties in Town to which complaints are made relatively consistently. This consistency may suggest that the occupants are not aware and/or do not care to comply with the Town's existing Noise Bylaw, Nuisance Party Bylaw and/or the Property Minimum Standards requirements. It may also suggest that the landlord or property manager is not taking adequate steps to vet tenants and encourage behaviour that aligns with the above bylaws. In light of these persistent issues, Staff asked landlords if they have ideas to help improve compliance with Town bylaws and create greater harmony in residential neighbourhoods.



## What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

Some of the major themes arising from this discussion include Acadia University's role in students off-campus behaviour and provision of events and activities, the Provincial drinking age and closure times of bars in Town, and the inclusion and revision of Town bylaws in lease agreements.

### **Acadia:**

Many landlords suggested that Acadia could hold more events for students both on and off campus to reduce the number of parties and noise issues occurring within residential neighbourhoods. Some landlords referenced the success of the CFL game in providing a contained event:

*"Acadia pushes students off campus. The CFL game showed that it's possible to have events for students. There needs to be education for young people around making good decisions regarding drugs and alcohol".*

The desire for education around safe consumption of substances was also discussed with some landlords stating that regular and continuous education could result in a cultural shift around drug and alcohol use. The role of the Town providing more opportunities to engage with and welcome students and young people to Wolfville was also discussed:

*"Suppression doesn't work. They're [young people] going to make risky decisions, at least make it safer for them. My tenants told me they feel ostracized for partying and drinking. A lot of students come to Acadia because their parents did, and their parents partied".*

*"Drinking issues won't change if there are more events because people like to go to events to get drunk. Acadia needs to do regular workshop type events to help change the culture around drinking. It can't just be a one-time event but a consistent, long-term effort. Town should hold events early in September and early May. The Town needs to stop villainizing them [young people], and get to know their names".*

*"Acadia should hire a couple full time staff in addition to RAs to do education, awareness, and support for students because they are going to drink and do drugs".*

While many suggested there is low involvement from Acadia in relation to off-campus behaviour, one landlord described how staff at Acadia had addressed a noise complaint made to students off-campus previously:

*"I had a complaint at [address] and the tenants got a warning and then they talked to Olivia Lynch at Acadia who works in student affairs or conduct. The students were warned and ticketed by RCMP, then Olivia was made aware and had them come to her office to have a talk with them, make sure they were OK, and see how she could support them".*

It was also suggested that Acadia could provide a greater number and range of activities and events for students, with many landlords recalling times when there were more on-campus events, and landlords stating that a lack of activities combined with a dry campus leads to high levels of substance use in off-campus areas.



## What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

*“Acadia needs to provide activities and parties on Campus. Years ago they would do the Super sub, there were concerts, they had wet/dry events”.*

*“Acadia needs to be part of this discussion. They need to permit alcohol consumption on campus and provide safe spaces for students, otherwise they are drinking in our community in less safe spaces. There is a lot of drug use. I had a tenant have a stroke due to cocaine use”.*

### **Drinking Age**

Landlords also discussed how lowering the Provincial drinking age to 18 could alleviate off-campus alcohol use as more first-year students would be permitted into bars.

*“The town needs to stop trying to enforce and give people something to do instead. Lower the drinking age, let the Anvil and Joes stay open until 3AM, encourage events at Acadia that are wet/dry”.*

In addition, many landlords suggested that local bars could be open later to allow customers to leave at staggered times, and when they are tired and ready to head home to sleep.

*“The Anvil should be open late to help reduce the number of house parties”.*

*“Keep the Anvil open until 3 or 4AM. That should have been done before the security cameras were put up”.*

### **Including Bylaws in Lease Agreements**

Many landlords acknowledged that they often rent to tenants who are living on their own for the first time and therefore their tenants may require more education as they adjust to a new lifestyle. Some ways landlords approach this situation in a proactive manner is by having parents co-sign a lease with tenants so their parents can be contacted in the event of an issue. Many also include relevant Town Bylaws in their lease agreements and review these bylaws with tenants prior to signing the lease.

*“I use a standard form of lease with statutory conditions including a section on good behaviour which I really push. If I know there’s a big event coming up, I put a notice out to tenants ahead of time, like for Apple Blossom festival to remind tenants to be on good behaviour... If people break the bad behaviour rule, they get a 15-day eviction notice”.*

*“I write up my own “Schedule B” and it includes the Nuisance Party Bylaw and fine amounts. I have my tenants read and sign it. I’ve never had a call regarding the Nuisance Party Bylaw but I’ve had other tenants in the building complain of noise from some of the other tenants in the building. I gave those tenants a warning, and told them if there’s no improvement, you’ll get an eviction notice”.*

Other suggestions include permitting more, smaller units per lot to potentially reduce noise issues, creating an Open Data source to encourage compliance with Property Minimum Standards in a timely



What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

fashion, and hiring a Town property manager to carry out work where Property Minimum Standards issues are not resolved within a certain timeframe and billing the property owner.

## Rental Housing Demand

Landlords were asked if they have noticed a change in the demand for rental housing over the past few years. Overwhelmingly, landlords stated that the demand for rental housing in Wolfville is unprecedented. Landlords reported frequent inquiries for rental vacancies from low-income workers, seniors, students, families, pet owners, and being flooded with requests when a rental vacancy is posted to Facebook or Kijiji:

*"I've never seen such high demand. I had 300 responses to an ad for a bachelor in 12 hours, it didn't used to be like that".*

*"There is a high level of demand, my units are always rented out by October for the following June and I'm always getting calls from people looking for a place".*

*"There's very high demand. Probably twice as much as normal. People have been working from home or studying from home over the pandemic and that made a change. Normally it would take about 3 months to fill all 23 of our units, now it takes a couple of weeks.*

One landlord described how they encounter people who have accepted jobs in Wolfville, but are unable to find a place to live"

*"I know someone who recently accepted a job at [local restaurant] but they couldn't find a place to live. Rents are higher now too due to increased cost of materials and everything".*

Many landlords stated that because of such high demand, they are no longer finding it necessary to post advertisements for vacancies:

*"I can't remember the last time I advertised for a rental. They get filled up automatically, the demand is very high". I*

*"I haven't advertised a rental in a few years. Typically April rentals are filled by October and by word of mouth".*

*"I'm seeing a much higher request for rentals from students who don't yet have a place to live. Demand is way higher now than when I first started out. The goal used to be rent in fall for May, now the inquiries never stop".*

Landlords were asked if there is greater demand for certain types of housing. Some landlords stated that Acadia students are having a hard time finding housing, and while some are seeking 5-6 bedroom





#### What We Heard: Landlords

November 7, 2022

rentals, most are interested in 1-2 bedroom apartments. Other landlords stated the greatest need is for family housing with 3-4 bedrooms.

*"I only offer rentals to students and the demand is unprecedented. Most demand is for 1-2 beds, even for students"*

*"The biggest need I'm seeing, is for family housing with 3-4 bedrooms".*

While the high demand may allow for landlords to be more selective of their tenants, one landlord stated this can leave those with children or pets at a disadvantage:

*"The demand allows landlords to pick their tenants more carefully, so people with kids and dogs are getting picked last".*

#### **Other:**

During these conversations, it became apparent that many Landlords feel that the Town and some community members have a negative attitude or negative feelings towards them. Some suggested that the increase in complaints to their rental properties could be due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the number of community members spending more time at home observing their community. It was suggested that the Town needs to make more efforts to bring the community together, rather than pushing some groups away. Some landlords suggested that the Town should find ways to support landlords to ensure they feel valued in the Town and don't sell their properties and invest elsewhere.

While landlords were not asked directly about a Landlord Association, the idea was raised by several landlords. Many landlords stated that attempts have been made to start an association, though there currently is no one available to coordinate and chair meetings. Many landlords stated that an association would be a tool for landlords to share best practices, such as including and reviewing Town bylaws with tenants when going over lease agreements, and to provide updates to Town Council when needed.



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

## Part 2. What We Heard Report: Tenants

### Tenant Interview Responses

Tenants were also invited to participate in 1-on-1 interviews with Town Staff in order to provide a well-rounded perspective of some of the issues being brought to Council's attention that are related to some rental properties. Five posts were made on social media (Facebook and Instagram) with details on how to participate in the interviews. 14 tenants contacted Staff to participate in an interview, however only 9 responded to follow ups. A digital survey was launched shortly after the social media posts were created, and 74 of the 107 (69%) respondents to the survey were tenants.

Tenants were asked a similar set of questions as landlords and homeowners with slight variation. Survey questions and responses are located in Attachment F. The tenants who participated in the surveys include university students, working professionals and seniors. Together they have been renting in Wolfville for a collective 40 years.

### 1. Residential Rental Business Licensing Bylaw:

In contrast to responses from landlords, many tenants interviewed felt that a RRBB would be beneficial, though most cautioned that a fee should not be associated with it as it could result in an additional cost for tenants. Some of the reasons provided as to why the RRBB would be beneficial include having an extra tool for compliance efforts related to nuisance parties, noise and property minimum standards, as well as assisting Acadia University in knowing where off-campus students are living:

*"It would be a great move forward to have this adopted for compliance purposes. It would help the university too because they claim they don't know where the rentals are. If adopted, it should help with property minimum standards adherence and compliance".*

*"It would be beneficial for compliance to be able to identify owners of short-term rentals and long-term as well".*

The main concern expressed by tenants regarding the RRBB was the potential for the licensing fee to be filtered down as a cost for renters.

*"A con would be the cost of the registry filtering down to tenants".*

*"I'd be concerned of the fee going to tenants because rent is already high".*

One tenant suggested a tiered approach to the fee, so that landlords who own properties that do not receive complaints could pay less, while those with frequent complaints would pay more:



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

*“A fee is no big deal because landlords make a tonne of money. There’s a small number of properties that generate most of the problems so it would be problematic to charge good landlords to help with issues with the bad ones. You could build something into the bylaw so that people who abide by the bylaws pay less and those who don’t pay higher”.*

Some tenants expressed feeling disempowered to stand up to landlords given the current strain on the rental housing supply. One tenant mentioned that the RRBB could be a tool to help hold landlords accountable for the maintenance of their rental properties, and could empower tenants to stand up to their landlords if needed:

*“It would help hold landlords accountable for the state of their rental units and behaviours, that could help renters stand up to their landlords outside of the Tenancy Act. It would be empowering”.*

Finally, one tenant felt as though the RRBB would not result in any benefit for them, and could result in an additional expense for tenants:

*“That wouldn’t be necessary... it wouldn’t change anything for my rental situation. If there’s a fee it would be sent down to tenants which just creates more expenses for us”.*

## **2. Feedback on Nuisance Party Bylaw, Noise Bylaw and Property Minimum Standards Bylaw:**

Tenants were asked to share their level of awareness of the NPB, Noise Bylaw and Property Minimum Standards Bylaw and if they believe they are effective tools for achieving community harmony. All but one tenant was at least somewhat aware of one more of these Bylaws, with the NPB being the most commonly known of the three. Tenants provided contrasting opinions to this question, with some stating that more ticketing for nuisance parties is required, with others stating that parties will continue regardless of the fines, and some suggesting that major parties could be avoided if there was a dedicated space available in Town or on campus for such events.

### **Nuisance Party Bylaw:**

Some tenants stated that while they have heard about the NPB, few stated that their landlords include information on Town bylaws in their lease agreements. Some tenants also stated that they are not aware of any efforts from Acadia to educate students on Town bylaws.

*“I’ve heard about these bylaws, but my landlord hasn’t communicated any of them to me. I’ve never lived in the “party areas” and as an Acadia alumni, I’ve also never had or heard of Acadia communicate Town bylaws to students. I feel like Acadia is somewhat responsible for off-campus partying because they don’t allow partying on campus”.*



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

Those who stated that their landlords include the bylaws and strict rules for parties in their lease agreements said they find doing so effective and are not likely to host parties, unless given permission from their landlord. One tenant describes how open communication regarding parties and expectations can help build a respectful relationship:

*“Our landlord asks for a heads up if there will be a party and asks us to shut it down by a specific time if we do have one. Having that open communication was helpful and encouraged a respectful relationship... Students are used to being scolded, so having that preexisting relationship can be very helpful”.*

Some tenants suggested the landlord and/or compliance officer visiting houses the morning following a nuisance party may be more effective than during the night of, when occupants are often using substances

*“Having the landlord come talk to you the next day would be effective but have both [compliance officer and landlord] show up because the tenant might lie saying it wasn’t that bad. Any complaint should go to the landlord straight away”.*

*“If compliance officers showed up to a party, the guests would leave and go elsewhere. If the landlord shows up... it would more effective to have a warning from the landlord the next day than the compliance officer. Usually the officer shows up when people are drinking and they are less likely to care”.*

*“It’s more effective to have the landlord hold a conversation more so than being ticketed first. A landlord chat makes a good first warning... Other people would ignore the warning because they want to have a good time, especially in the SROs. If it’s one fine per house, the tenants and friends might just split the fine especially during homecoming type events”.*

Many tenants expressed that they believe those who want to have large parties will continue to do so, however, regardless of the fines they may be issued:

*“Overall, I think the Bylaws can be helpful but many people will violate them and pay the fine so they can have a good time”.*

*“It [NPB] would make the tenants more fearful although I know from experience that if tenants want to party, they will do it anyway knowing there is a fine”.*

*“I’m pretty aware of the Noise and Nuisance Party Bylaw because during COVID I saw a lot of friends getting ticketed for having parties... they were collecting tickets and hanging them on the wall... It was a trend in wolfville to collect those tickets during COVID. Even with the Nuisance Party Bylaw, people will do what they want anyway regardless of tickets. Many students are wealthy enough to continually get tickets no problem”.*



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

One tenant stated that for the NPB to be effective, tickets must be issued rather than warnings and/or education, stating that tenants are aware of how to behave appropriately and must face consequences for bad behaviour:

*"I've made a complaint under the Nuisance Party Bylaw and the bylaw officer said our first approach is education, so they showed up at the huge party... people were defecating in my backyard... The RCMP should have been called. The bylaw officer said they talked to tenants and tried to educate them. Tenants know the bylaws exist; it is in their lease, but they use this as an excuse. It's not about education, it's about consequence. Nuisance bylaw is only as effective as enforcement is. Enforcement does not exist in my opinion in Wolfville unless for building applications".*

One tenant stated that while the NPB may be effective for regular nuisances parties, controlling parties on major event nights such as Homecoming will continue to be a challenge due to the number of parties, guests, and the absence of a dedicated space for such events:

*"Bylaws are effective to an extent to help discourage regular partying but in cases of big events like homecoming they are not effective because there is so much going on and large groups gathering. During big events if there was a space like other schools have where gatherings could occur it might deter people from hanging out in the residential areas – but at Acadia they have nowhere to go. Especially because of drinking age, I don't think Acadia would make a place where everyone can go and have drinks and party".*

In terms of solutions, tenants suggested that a better understanding of the role and interplay of Town Compliance Staff and the RCMP is required, and that all community members (Town, Acadia, RCMP, residents and students) need to work together. Some tenants stated that parties learn what they can get away with if they are not met with stringent regulations and consequences upon their first offense and therefore repeatedly host nuisance parties.

*"The intention [of the NPB] is good and there seems to be a significant improvement since the hiring of the 2 compliance officers, but there is still a major issue with the RCMP... You can have all the bylaws you want but if there's no compliance there's no point... This year it is vital the RCMP speak to students and issue tickets because last year Linden had a huge party and there were no tickets given so now, they [partiers] know they can get away with it".*

*"The bylaws are a good starting point but there should be more RCMP involvement with the problem properties".*



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

Furthermore, some tenants discussed feeling unsafe in certain areas of Town where parties occur frequently and where people are intoxicated and wandering around outdoors, and sharing this feeling with others in the Town:

*"It can be scary and intimidating in certain areas, we saw people rocking a car on Linden Ave. Twice, while walking alone, we saw students trying to lift up a car on the street, we told RCMP we didn't feel safe, but RCMP didn't do much. There are students who also don't want to be subject to this kind of behaviour too. Young families also feel unsafe".*

In general, tenants expressed that to establish a respectful relationship early on, landlords should provide clear guidelines and expectations for noise, parties and behaviour, and that to improve adherence to the NPB, the landlord and compliance officer could visit the party host the morning when the host is sober and guests have dispersed.

#### **Property Minimum standards:**

Parking on lawns, furniture on verandahs and lawns, lawn care and waste are common complaints related to the Property Minimum Standards Bylaw (MSB). In many cases, the properties where Property Minimum Standards are violated repeatedly are rental properties. Some tenants described frustration with their landlord's compliance with the MSB, such as lease agreements stating the landlord will perform lawn care, and failing to do so in a timely matter:

*"We've had issues with lawn mowing. Our landlord was supposed to take care of mowing the lawn but never did it. My roommate and I had to track down our landlords to do it".*

One tenant, who called in a complaint to the Town's Compliance Officer regarding parking on lawns described the process of having the issue dealt with frustrating and confusing:

*"I've phoned in complaints for a bylaw officer to visit my neighbours who had a dozen cars parked on the lawns. The compliance officer said to call the RCMP but it is actually under the minimum standards this happened about 3-4 years ago".*

### **3. Single Room Occupancies**

Tenants were asked how important they believe SROs are and to describe what type of rental housing they are most interested in living in. This question sparked some contrasting opinions with some tenants stating they are a very important housing option, and others stating that they have destroyed the opportunity for young families to buy homes in Wolfville:

*"They're very important. As a student, the more people you live with, the less you have to pay, so a lot of people want to live with 5 roommates rather than 2 so they can save money on rent".*



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

*“SROs have destroyed the opportunity for young families to buy homes in wolfville”.*

Some issues tenants described with SROs include the number of bathrooms per dwelling unit, which can become an issue during house parties as guests require use of the bathroom:

*“Often there’s only one bathroom and people pee outdoors”.*

Some tenants described issues they have experienced while living in SROs including poor building maintenance, issues with snow removal, and a feeling of being less safe if all of the tenants did not already know each other prior to moving in, which often results when tenants are struggling to find more preferable options:

*“Often SROs are the last places available to rent or a group of students want to all live together, it can feel unsafe to live with a bunch of people you don’t know”.*

Similarly to comments from landlords, a tenant describes how building maintenance and nuisances are improved in rentals with 1-2 bedrooms rather than 3 or more bedrooms:

*“I’ve lived in one house with 3 apartments, 3 beds each, and the house maintenance was poor. People move into these apartments though because there is nowhere else for people to go. They are often the more affordable option. Where I live there are 4 units, 3 are bachelors and 1 is a 2 bedroom and they are very affordable and quiet compared to SROs. SROs are less safe because there are so many occupants and that can cause issues with keeping up with maintenance including snow removal”.*

Other tenants explained that while SROs used to provide more affordable rental options, landlords are now renting out single bedrooms for \$1000. One tenant stated they paid \$420 for a bedroom in a 6-bedroom SRO in 2020 and explained that the same bedroom now rents for \$1100. Overall, most tenants stated that they are not currently seeking to live in SROs but stated that this dwelling type is important as it can provide lower cost options to students and can provide a positive and desirable living situation for students and younger tenants. Some senior tenants stated that other lower-cost rental options need to be available in Wolfville aside from SROs, as these dwelling types are not as desirable to seniors as 1- and 2-bedroom apartments:

*“I’m looking for something that would allow me to stay in wolfville. A single person on a fixed pension is not able to live in Wolfville away from student housing”.*

#### **4. Solutions to Ongoing Noise in Residential Neighbourhoods:**

Tenants were asked if they had any ideas for solutions that could help improve community harmony in Wolfville. Many tenants felt that while there are plenty of activities for people of all ages in Wolfville,



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

while some remarked upon the limited activities available for students on campus outside of athletics. The major themes arising from this discussion include the lack of common spaces on campus, the focus on the wine industry, mixed neighbourhoods and later closing times at local bars and cafes.

### **Lack of common spaces on campus**

Tenants expressed frustration with the lack of common spaces available on campus for parties and major events. Some tenants recalled initiatives at other universities, and one suggest that SROs have become the only common place left:

*“Acadia has a long history of removing common spaces on campus, so there is nothing to do on campus. The SROs become this place”.*

*“Acadia policy does not cater to what students want these days. It's far more restrictive on campus than off so problems are in the community”*

*“Ottawau blocks off a part of the street to allow students to gather during homecoming so they don't spill out into residential areas. That provides a more controlled environment. I think there's enough stuff to do in Wolfville and I like going to trivia and karaoke on campus but the Axe closes around 1 so keeping it open might help”.*

### **Wine-focused tourism**

Wolfville and the region's wine industry bring a lot of visitors to the area. Some tenants stated that there is little to do in Wolfville aside from drink, and suggested that having spaces that are not alcohol-focused such as coffee shops open late would provide a needed space for people to socialize without substances:

*“Wolfville encourages with its tourism a higher use of alcohol than other towns and that contributes to the problem. Everything is about wine and drinking so that's what you get and it's easy to see why there is excessive drinking here among guests and students. The rec dept is doing great work with the concerts and bike rides, yoga in concept, but more people are going to choose drinking related activities before rec. We need more coffee shop hangouts in the evening”.*

*“The town has very little outside of wine bars and bars. We are a place where people come to drink”.*

One tenant suggested that more meaningful involvement of young people at the Town could be helpful:

*“We need to get young people to be on an advisory board around community harmony. Find new ways to get young people involved with the Town and community”.*





What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

### **Mixed neighbourhoods**

Some tenants described how living in neighbourhoods with mixed incomes and housing types results in community of various demographics, which can help create a respectful neighbourhood and allows different demographics to get to know one another and form respectful relationships:

*“On my street, there is a mix of single family, duplexes, apartment, affordable housing and senior housing. This mix creates a quiet, respectful atmosphere”.*

*“It would be nice to have housing types that are for seniors and young families, for people who want to live in a peaceful atmosphere”.*

Others stated that it would be difficult to achieve community harmony given the attitudes many community members share of students, though Town-hosted events for all groups could form part of the solution:

*“It will be difficult to tackle because students get a bad rap from residents. Some residents think poorly of students and make a lot of complaints... A big BBQ with the town could be effective”.*

### **Later closing hours at bars**

Similar to landlords, some tenants felt that later closing hours at bars could reduce the frequency of parties in residential areas:

*“With COVID, bars closed very early and that made a huge difference because people wanted to go to house parties and go earlier. In the summer, people stay at bars later, and things are open later. The bars open until 1 is good, but 3 would be better. People would be tired”.*

*“Most popular events at Acadia are at the bar on campus and they end early so if they stayed open later it might be better”.*

Furthermore, tenants identified the lack of code of conduct for Acadia students off-campus as a barrier to harmony:

*“Acadia doesn’t have a code of conduct for off campus behaviour, they can do anything off campus with no consequence. Acadia doesn’t acknowledge the problem and nothing ever changes. I’ve lived here since 2004 and it has been the same the whole time. No consequence. The town continues to spend money but the problem is never solved”.*



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

## 5. Short Term Rentals

Staff have been collecting information on STRs in Wolfville since August 2021. Given the impact that STRs have had on the housing market in other jurisdictions, Staff want to know if impacts of STRs are being felt locally. Tenants were asked whether they have any concerns regarding STRs in Wolfville and if they think allowing STRs in student rentals during the summer months would be helpful if they were looking for September to April leases.

Some tenants stated that they have noticed an increase in STRs in Wolfville and noted that many places that used to provide long-term rentals are now exclusively providing STRs and are concerned that STRs are removing long-term housing supply from those in need. Others stated that some student rentals already become STRs during the summer months:

*"I know several landlords who have changed their leasing to a 9-month lease for students and are Airbnb'ing over summer so tenants don't need to sublet, and the landlord can make a lot of money over the summer. That creates a shortage only in the student rental market. My old house is being converted to an Airbnb exclusively, the owners live in [outside of Wolfville]. That took a single-family home off the market, driving up scarcity of single-family houses".*

Some tenants expressed concern for noise and disturbances from STRs, while one tenant shared their negative experience dealing with neighbouring a STR in Wolfville:

*"Other than the housing crisis and the fact that they remove long-term rentals from people who want to invest in the town they live in, they also create a parking issue. I live next to an Airbnb that causes parking issues because people park in my parking spot. There are often dogs that stay at the Airbnb and guests don't clean up after them. It shows a lack of care for the long-term residents who are paying rent on the same property of an Airbnb. There is a dog staying there for 2 weeks that has been barking all night every night".*

A common concern tenants shared for converting student rentals to Airbnb during the summer was where students would store their belongings during this time. Other tenants stated that some landlords are not managing long-term renters well, and question how they would manage short-term guests:

*"Yes I'm worried that STRs will reduce the availability of long-term housing and rentals. I'm worried if an Airbnb opened near me that it would cause a lot of disruptions from noise, partying, people coming and going all the time and bringing their vehicles. Subletting in the summer would be a nightmare and would drive me out of wolfville immediately. If the landlord can't manage students who are there every day, how can they manage guests who are there for one weekend? A better model is the micro boutique which is run as a hotel during summer. Roselawn Cottages is another good idea".*

*"My only concern would be furniture and belongings and where the tenants would have to put it or store it. It would be great not to have to pay rent over summer. Airbnb sublets would be a*



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

*great option especially if the tenant could be guaranteed they could return again the following September”.*

Some tenants stated they believe visitors are typically seeking STRs that are better maintained than student rentals but cautioned that the amount of money generated through STR operations could result in the conversion of more long-term rentals into STRs:

*“I imagine people who rent Airbnbs for a weekend are looking for a nicer unit whereas student housing is not as appealing or what vacationers are looking for. I do think it could affect the people looking for yearlong rentals though. Landlords could make a lot more money with Airbnb so there is concern that it could impact long term renters”.*

*“I know many single-family homes are now working as Airbnb”.*

One tenant explained that not all student rentals are subleased over the summer and stated that many remain unoccupied during these months, which can be attributed in part to challenges in finding a suitable subletter:

*“Subletting Airbnbs would be great because a lot of the sublet rooms are actually empty all summer”.*

*“It’s a good idea to let landlords do Airbnb over summer. Subleases can be challenging because it’s students and sometimes they don’t know what makes a good tenant. In my apartment, there are 4 renters, we were supposed to have 3 subletters, but only 2 actually worked out”.*

Some tenants expressed frustration over the apparent ease with which STRs operate in Town compared to traditional inns and bed and breakfasts:

*“I’m frustrated about the imbalance of people who own a real B&B and who register, pay commercial taxes, and next door there is an Airbnb with no extra fees, inspections, safety inspections, and so on. It’s often middle- and upper-income people who are doing this who know there is a loophole they are taking advantage of. STRs should be regulated in Wolfville and we need to support the local businesses first”.*

*“I used to work in tourism and knew of two inns that were going to convert to Airbnb because Airbnb was competing with traditional inns”.*

## **6. Demand for Housing**

Tenants were asked to describe their sense of demand for housing in Wolfville, whether they find it challenging to find a rental unit and to explain any barriers they have encountered to finding housing.



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

Every tenant interviewed remarked on the increased rental prices per unit or bedroom, with some noting rent increases of more than double in just a few years:

*"I used to rent a bedroom in a 6-bedroom house for \$420 in 2019. The same bedroom is now \$1100".*

Tenants also discussed the rent cap and looming rent increases they are anticipating. One tenant describes that despite having what should be a good pension, the need to cut back on expenses and leave their current rental, but being faced with few desirable options available, claiming that single people on fixed incomes cannot afford to live in Wolfville:

*"I love my apartment, but can't afford to stay in it and there's nothing affordable for me to move into. I have a 2 bedroom plus den or office. Right now my rent is \$1,515 and it will go up to \$2,500 when I move out. When I moved in there was nothing else available though there were cheaper units and now when the cheaper units become available, they are increasing rent by \$500-\$600 and now those smaller units are more expensive than my current unit so I can't move. **I won't be able to stay in the Town of Wolfville.** I would love to find a 2 bed away from students that is affordable. My rent is half of my pension cheque. It will be more than half in a year or so. I've given up my Acadia fitness membership because I can't afford it or the parking. It's unfair to have to give up fitness. **A single person on a fixed pension is not able to live in wolfville away from student housing**".*

Another tenant described the rent increases anticipated for their unit, and how high rents will reduce young people's ability to purchase homes:

*"I can afford my current place but if the 2% cap is lifted, my apartment will go up \$8000 a year. If I move out, the rent goes up \$700 a month. The barriers are affordability. There's nothing in Wolfville not even in Windsor. Young people aren't going to be able to afford to buy housing so more apartments will be needed".*

One tenant described advertisements created by people seeking rental housing at their church, reflecting the number of inquiries landlords stated they receive from young families seeking housing:

*"There are often ads at our church for young families, mature students with kids, searching for housing in Wolfville. It's very difficult to find anything, and the rents are very high. How do retail workers afford to live in Wolfville? We worry what our rent will be increased once the rent cap is lifted, and that will also affect many others in Town."*

Another tenant described how some landlords refuse to rent to specific groups of people, creating barriers to housing:

*"Overtime it's getting harder to find a place. My male friends have a hard time finding rentals because landlords won't rent to a house with all guys".*



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

Many tenants interviewed are looking to move but struggling to find a suitable rental that they can afford, with current and former Acadia students remarking on the need to secure a rental at least 7 months in advance, an issue that has only increased in recent years as rental vacancies decrease:

*"I'm concerned about the rent cap lifting in April. I've been trying to move for 2 years but I feel trapped in my current place by the limited options and high rent prices".*

*"If you don't find a rental in Wolfville for May 2023 by October 2022, you're out of luck. There used to be enough places that you'd still be able to find something, but now it's very unlikely".*

*"It's really hard to find a place after October for September of the next year."*

Some tenants noted that they would prefer to live in lower elevation areas of Town for ease of mobility, and in some cases outside of student-dominant neighbourhoods; preferences which create further barriers to finding suitable housing:

*Location can be an issue, not everyone wants to walk up the hills, or wants to be neighbours with student housing.*

Some are accepting poor or less favourable conditions because they are faced with limited alternatives, an issue that has increased notably in recent years:

*"We have had a really bad pest problem with mice that the landlords ignored, so we had to call the pest control company ourselves and the landlord got angry with us that we did that. We also had a really bad mould problem. My roommate had to throw out all of her clothes because they were ruined by mould... The landlord bought one dehumidifier, but made us buy another one. Rather than deal with it properly, they told us we have to leave to windows open at all times, even in winter. **We also pay the energy and heating bills so that means we have to live in these conditions and also pay to run the dehumidifier and heating while the windows are open**".*

*"Demand has absolutely changed. 4-5 years ago it was easy to get housing and it's gotten worse over time. **I struggled to find the place I live in and I don't even like it but I don't know where else I could possibly go.** People who are on a strict budget are forced into 5-bedroom apartments with people they don't even know. The population has grown and so has inflation".*

*"People are settling for what's available".*

***It is much more difficult, orders of magnitude more difficult, to find a rental today than it was in 2004.** In 2004 I contacted McKay real-estate looking for a single-family home to rent, and within 2 months I had signed a lease for a unit we liked that we could afford and that met our needs. Today, I see emails often through [work] of [staff] seeking housing. There are no family homes, no 2-3 bedrooms suitable for a [professional] and family. I'm subletting a room from someone I know and I think otherwise it would be impossible. Today it would be very hard to find something that would tick the boxes of our 2004 rental".*



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

## 7. Parking

The high rate of car ownership and dense population in the core neighbourhood area of Wolfville results in issues with parking due in part to the low provision of parking spots relative to the number of owned cars. Often cars in these areas are seen parked on lawns and lining streets. Tenants were asked if they have ideas for improving the parking situation such as a parking permit system, paid parking in specific areas, or improved active and public transportation access.

Some of the contributing factors identified by tenants as to why car ownership is so high in Wolfville is the car dominant culture in the more rural region, the distance required to get to more shops and services in New Minas, the need for international students to access cultural foods at larger grocery stores in New Minas, and the frequency in which people travel to Halifax and the airport. Some tenants stated that bus service offered by Maritime Bus is not efficient enough for most people and stated that bicycles can be difficult to find and afford, resulting in low bicycle use and ownership.

Some reasons identified for why cars are parked along residential streets are that some landlords require tenants to pay an extra fee to use the driveway and overnight closures of some Acadia parking lots.

Solutions to high car ownership and parking issues identified by tenants include reducing the number of parking spots in Town so that people may decide to not bring their car to town, creating a parking pass system so that only residents of a street may park on the street, including a Kings Transit UPass with tuition, offering a microtransit service or improved Kings Transit service between Wolfville and New Minas, and ensuring landlords designate distinct parking spaces on their driveways so that only tenants can park in their designated space. Other suggestions include a paid parking lot in Town that is available 24 hours a day.

*"Landlords should designate parking spaces for their tenants. Often people park at rentals where they don't even live if they don't have parking themselves. Landlords need to be clearer with tenants on where they can/can't park".*

While some encouraged greater enforcement of parking bylaws and the reduction of parking spaces available, others stated the need for more parking:

*"Either we need to limit parking and enforce the bylaws to only allow parking on designated surfaces, or do resident parking by zone, current bylaws for parking are not enforced".*

*"The Town needs more parking. The restaurants struggle to have parking for guests, a lot of people don't like to walk... Paid parking won't solve it, there just needs to be more parking".*

## 8. What Other Information Should the Town be Collecting?



What We Heard: Tenants  
November 7, 2022

Staff have been collecting information such as the addresses, apartment numbers and the number of beds per unit of rental housing as well as landlord and property management contact information in order to understand our housing stock, and to assist with compliance efforts if necessary. Staff asked tenants if there is anything else the Town should be striving to understand regarding rental housing.

One tenant stated that a fire and life safety inspection cheat sheet for tenants and landlords would be helpful so that both tenants and landlords understand when inspections occur and where, and to provide information on what tenants might look out for in their rentals to ensure they are safely housed. Another tenant shared this sentiment, stating that while they are satisfied with their current housing situation, they felt unsafe in their previous rental and uncertain about how to address their concerns:

*"I'm lucky with my current landlords, but last year I know the unit wasn't up to code and the landlord was not responsive to any complaints we made. I didn't know how to make a complaint to the Town and didn't know that's something that I could even do. It would be helpful for Acadia to hand out information on what to do in a situation like that because a lot of students are living in places that are not safe or not well maintained".*

Another tenant stated that the Town should advocate to the Provincial government to ban renovictions permanently:

*"Make sure than landlords cannot do renovictions. Pressure the Provincial government to ensure that".*

Some tenants stated that there is a need for more rental units in Wolfville and demanded that the East End development project include rentals:

*"We need more rentals in wolfville. In east end development we need more rentals ASAP. Any new development should require rental units, and we need to know who the proper managers are".*



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

## Part 3. What We Heard Report: Homeowners

Homeowners who neighbour one or more rental properties in Wolfville were invited to participate in 1-on-1 interviews and respond to the digital survey. Homeowners were included as it has come to the Town's attention that the presence of some rental properties and issues with their tenants and/or property managers/landlords have been contributing to noise, vandalism and dissatisfaction with the condition and appearance of some rental properties. Staff created 5 social media advertisements asking for up to 15 homeowners to participate in one-on-one interviews with Staff. 11 homeowners agreed to a one-on-one interview. Homeowners were asked a similar set of questions as the landlords and tenants.

Some homeowners, notably those in the Good Neighbours group, have been actively sharing their experiences living among rental properties with Staff and Council. The interviews provided an opportunity to hear a wider range of feedback on some of the issues frequently mentioned by the group.

Participating homeowners were asked to provide a brief description of their living situation including how long they have been a homeowner in Wolfville and what changes they have noticed over time. Six of the homeowners have owned a home in Wolfville for more than 30 years, two between 10 and 15 years, and three for less than 5 years. Together, the homeowners have lived in Wolfville for approximately 306 years. Most of the homeowners interviewed stated that they have noticed an increase in the number of rental units in their neighbourhoods, which are largely comprised of single-family homes, many of which have been converted to rental units.

### 1. Should there be a Residential Rental Business Bylaw in Wolfville?

Most homeowners were in favour of a RRBB in Wolfville. The reasons mentioned by homeowners as to why a RRBB would be beneficial include:

- The creation of a database of rental properties so Town compliance staff can more easily contact landlords and property managers to address behavioural issues as well as property maintenance issues,
- To provide a tool for Acadia University to address off-campus behaviour,
- To provide a means for landlords to return a portion of their revenue through a licensing fee to community improvement through hiring of more compliance staff.
- To provide a tool to withhold a license from a landlord who is not complying with Town bylaws.

*"The license is long overdue. The town doesn't know how many rentals there are, how many cars there are per rental. The town gets contact info for everyone from taxes. If you have a rental property, you should register it and describe it, and this information should be public on*





## What We Heard: Homeowners

November 7, 2022

*[Wolfvilleblooms.ca]. You should be able to see who the manager or landlord is. It could be a tool for residents to let landlords know there are issues at their properties”.*

Some homeowners stated that more frequent and more thorough inspections of rental properties are needed as they shared stories about tenants living in inadequate conditions:

*“Annual inspections of registered properties is a good idea. My niece used to rent in Wolfville and every time she showered the water leaked into living room and landlord wouldn’t do anything about it. There needs to be a way for an independent inspector to come in, take note of problems, and track them”.*

*“A business license for rentals is something I’ve been advocating for a couple of years. I’m concerned students around me are living in decrepit properties. There are landlords and property managers not keeping rentals to livable standards”.*

One homeowner suggests using the RRBB as a tool to hold landlords accountable for the condition of their properties:

*“If the town could withhold the license it would be impactful. We talk about fining students but never landlords. There is currently garbage all over Summer Street, on lawns and there’s furniture on lawns that shouldn’t be. It’s the tenants responsibility but also the landlords and everyone blames the students, not landlords. The license is a good idea.”*

While most homeowners support the idea of a RRBB, some highlighted areas where creating and enforcing a RRBB could create logistical challenges:

*“I fully support the idea but there’s a gray area if the landlord lives on the actual premises, that kind of situation may not require a license”.*

A few homeowners doubted that a RRBB would provide a solution to the issues they are noticing in their neighbourhoods unless there were specific requirements to maintaining a license. One homeowner who is also a landlord argued that their tenants do not cause any disturbances, and therefore a license would be a nuisance. Furthermore, some homeowners stated that the majority of landlords in Town do a good job at maintaining their properties and encouraging good behaviour from their tenants, therefore the license that would affect all landlords would only be providing solutions to a small proportion of rental properties.

*“If the business bylaw is simply a registry it means nothing but if it means you have to do certain things to maintain your status and if you don’t you will be removed it might work. There are many good landlords in town, but there are also bad landlords such as my neighbour and the registry would do nothing about that.”*

*“Neither of my properties have students and I think the license would be a nuisance. There are a lot of out-of-town landlords where we can’t contact them, and we need to find a solution to deal with these properties. Most landlords in town have a pretty good handle on their properties. Less*



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

*than 10% of the properties in town cause a problem, but 90% would be paying the fee to help with those 10%.*

Furthermore, it was questioned whether a RRBB would apply to homeowners who rent out a bedroom or accessory dwelling unit in their primary residence:

*"There's a gray area... if the landlord lives on the actual premises, that kind of situation may not require a license. Same goes for Airbnb, if they live there the chances are higher that it will be run well".*

## **2. Are you aware of bylaws such as the Nuisance Party Bylaw, Noise Bylaw, Property Minimum Standards Bylaw and do you think they are effective for creating community harmony?**

Most homeowners were aware of one or more of these bylaws, though some expressed confusion around the distinction between the Noise Bylaw and the Nuisance Party Bylaw and what type of event would trigger one over the other. In terms of the perceived effectiveness of these bylaws, most homeowners stated that they feel as though they could be effective, however inadequate enforcement of them renders them ineffective. It was noted that education and communication from landlords to tenants is needed to ensure people are aware of the expectations of them in terms of behaviour and property maintenance, and that there are repercussions for violating these bylaws:

*"The first step should be better education. My daughter rented a place on Main Street and the landlord made the rules very clear and explained that there were repercussions for bad behavior and made it clear in writing."*

*"They could be effective if they were enforced. I'm not advocating for a police state. I believe people are good and want to get along but people need to be reminded of what the rules are beyond a slap on the wrist. Landlords and property managers need to be fully aware of the property minimum standards and that they will be enforced".*

One homeowner indicated that they print out the Town bylaws and distribute them to tenants.

Some homeowners stated they did not believe the existing tools are strong enough and that enforcing the bylaws needs to be streamlined to improve their effectiveness:

*"The bylaws aren't being enforced adequately, and even if they were they are not strong enough tools. There is garbage everywhere and minimum standards is too cumbersome, it needs to be streamlined, it can take 2 weeks for a couch to be moved off someone's property. We've called Safeguard to collect garbage at properties over and over, why is it our job to do this? Kaden and Sean need to be available every weekend, not just some".*



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

Some homeowners were unaware that they could contact the Town's compliance officers to make a complaint regarding noise or parties, especially during nighttime and weekends when Town Hall is closed. Instead, some homeowners have called the RCMP to make complaints:

*"When I call the police, I'm not sure if they are enforcing the bylaw or something else. My experience is that I call the police, not the Town because the Town appears to be closed when these things are happening, at night. If I was supposed to call the town I didn't know that, therefore I've never made explicit use of the bylaw".*

The relationship between the Town's compliance staff and RCMP was discussed, with some homeowners remarking upon the lack of cooperation between the two teams, suggesting a more streamlined approach to responding to noise and nuisance complaints is needed. Many homeowners did however state that they have noticed an improvement in compliance efforts following the hiring of two Town compliance officers in 2022:

*"They're useful if they're enforced but the RCMP seems to laugh at the compliance officers. RCMP wants to focus on criminal stuff and not on prevention".*

*"I'm pleased with the Town compliance officers and I can see that they are aiming to enforce compliance. There were a number of parties shut down on Bay Street, but it will take some time to see how effective this is over time, same as the CCTV. I appreciate the presence of RCMP and compliance officers. Enforcement sends a message over time."*

Some suggestions to improve noise and nuisance party issues in residential neighbourhoods identified by homeowners include banning modified mufflers in Town and requiring any gatherings to occur indoors after 11pm to reduce the number of parties occurring on decks, lawns, and other outdoor areas. Further suggestions include identifying the properties that repeatedly receive noise, nuisance and property minimum standards complaints, identifying and contacting the landlords and/or property managers and working to resolve the issues at these sites first. Staff have identified 20 properties where complaints are most frequently made, have noted which types of complaints they receive and who the landlords are. What Staff will do with this information is yet to be determined by Council.

### **3. Are you aware of the Land Use regulations for Single Room Occupancies?**

This question was created in response to some misleading information being shared among the Good Neighbours group, and to provide clarification specifically related to SROs. Staff have attempted to share information on SROs and other Town bylaws through [www.wolfvilleblooms.ca/landlordtenant](http://www.wolfvilleblooms.ca/landlordtenant), brochures that have been mailed out to all residents, and through this interview process.

Many of the SROs in Wolfville are considered Existing Uses, meaning that when they were created, they complied with the Land Use Bylaw in place at that time. Staff have been compiling a list of properties that are suspected to be SROs in Wolfville, and these properties will be verified through Fire and Life



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

Safety inspections at the date of their scheduled inspection. SROs have become a topic of interest among homeowners because they contain a greater amount of bedrooms for rent than other types of housing, resulting in more tenants per dwelling unit. In some cases, SROs are located in large, older homes where landlords fail to maintain the property to a standard expected of others in the neighbourhoods.

The interviews provided an opportunity to further clarify the regulations and to obtain feedback on SROs. Some homeowners attribute the increase of SROs to the restrictions that the Low Density Residential – Restricted (R-1) zoning places on a significant proportion of the Town. Some homeowners stated that the R-1 zoning should be changed to allow a greater range of dwelling types in the R-1 zone so that rental housing is less concentrated in the core neighbourhood area:

*“R-1 should go so we can spread people out, rather than concentrate everyone in r-2 and r-3”.*

*“The zoning is flawed. There are a lot of properties that snuck under the radar and are using and abusing the regulations. R-2 residents are suffering now and feel like second class citizens. In R-1 zones there are single family homes and no one can do anything there or have rental properties, so they get nice and quiet neighbourhoods and don’t have to deal with noise”.*

More on-campus housing was identified as another solution to providing more student rentals:

*“Acadia is losing revenue by pushing students into town. There should be more on campus housing like apartments instead of dorm rooms. The SROs aren’t the problem, there is a broader lack of imagination about what the town and university relationship is”.*

Frustration with allowing existing SROs to continue their use was a common theme among homeowners, with some stating that SROs should have to comply with the current LUB after a certain time period. Others argued they should not be grandfathered in at all:

*“I’m aware of the bylaws and I’m frustrated with them. Allowing SROs is legalizing bad behaviour. There should be a period of time for people to get into compliance”.*

*“I’m aware of the zoning and grandfathering process, but I don’t always agree with grandfathering in. More buildings should be brought into regulation, especially after sale.”*

Greater action from Acadia University was identified as an important role in providing rental housing for students to ensure there is adequate housing available for other demographics in Town as well:

*“It’s also the university’s issue and they need to house more people on campus. The university pushes the problem into Town and residents rather than deal with it themselves. All this does is create more rental properties in residential areas. I’d rather see more single-family homes in*



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

*town. The entire core is full of rentals but we need more housing for young families, professionals and seniors, people who want to stay here and create a life for themselves here”.*

Beyond noise issues, some homeowners stated that parking has become an issue particularly at rental homes that may be SROs due to the high number of occupants relative to the few parking spaces available:

*“The two houses that cause issues near me I believe are SROs and bedrooms are rented out by the room. One doesn’t provide enough parking so people always park on the street.”*

#### **4. Should more units per lot be permitted in residential zones to allow a greater number of units so that all single-family homes are not rented out by the bedroom?**

Many SROs are located within single family homes that are older and much larger than what the average family today is looking to purchase. These housing types can be very expensive to purchase and maintain, and as a result they have become a more attractive option for landlords who are seeking to rent them out by the bedroom. In discussions with landlords, it was frequently mentioned that units with the fewest behavioural issues are those with 1-2 bedrooms. Homeowners were asked if they believe that permitting more dwelling units per lot to allow the conversion of these homes into smaller apartments could result in fewer noise and nuisance issues in their neighbourhood.

Most homeowners did not feel that permitting more units per dwelling would improve their situation. Some identified new multi-unit housing as the solution, citing specifically the development of multi-unit buildings at 215 Gaspereau Avenue as a solution to providing more rental housing. Many homeowners stated that they would prefer to see the single-family homes in their neighbourhoods kept as single-family homes so that young families could move to Wolfville.

*“More units per lot in the R-2 zone is not a solution, new housing and new multi-unit housing is the solution. Travis’ Gaspereau Avenue units are the solution. If these SROs are converted, that diminishes the ability for families to move in. If they are converted, we get even more cars and parking issues.”*

*“You need to have some families who own homes downtown to have a good mix. The bungalow next to me is a great single-family home but it is now 5 apartments. People want to live in walkable towns, once people are several blocks outside of the core, they drive everywhere. Let it be walkable not just for students but for everyone.”*

*“Let SROs be. If you cut larger homes up into smaller apartments, you will get rid of more single-family homes and create more problems.”*

One homeowner stated that converting large homes into multiple units may result in improvements:



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

*"There was an attempt to make Westwood Ave R-3 so you could have more units per lot, I think that would make the situation worse. Our neighbour wanted to change the apartment into 3 apartments or so, I think the tenants might respect the house more if it was split into smaller apartments. In a larger, older home there is usually a gathering space and that creates a problem."*

Another homeowner identified rezoning R-1 lands to R-2 or R-3 as a solution to increasing density throughout Town:

*"It would be good to amend zoning to allow more units per lot. Where I live everything is higher density with students, my house is in C-3 where it used to be R1A. If we could make the R-1s into R-2 or R-3 it would help increase density in R-1 zones. You could have the landlord live in the house as well."*

Once again, homeowners discussed the role they believe Acadia University should be playing in the rental housing situation in Wolfville given the high proportion of renters that are Acadia students. One homeowner stated that Acadia should either cap the number of incoming students or build more residences for them:

*"The elephant in the room is the university. If they have insufficient housing for students, they need to cap the students coming in or build more residences. Acadia is doing an abysmal job of taking care of their students and severely lacks leadership. The Town and Gown Committee is clearly toothless if this problem is still ongoing."*

## **5. What solutions do you have that might improve harmony in wolfville?**

The Town has explored solutions to build community harmony in Wolfville including the "Good Neighbours Make Great Neighbourhoods" signage that was posted in the core neighbourhood area in 2021, the recent installation of security cameras in the core neighbourhood and are now exploring the RRBB. Homeowners were asked if they had ideas for solutions that have not yet been identified.

Some homeowners stressed that they enjoy living near students and aim to build respectful relationships with them. Many homeowners stated that they have held community events such as barbecues so that the homeowners and tenants can meet and begin to build a relationship. To build upon these efforts, the need for improved relationships between the Town, Acadia, Acadia Students Union, the RCMP, landlords, tenants and homeowners was also stated as an important step towards progress.

*"The messaging needs to be that residents are the friends of tenants, that they want to help support them. The Mayor and Peter Ricketts are not aware of what goes on on a Saturday night. We need to promote positive relationships among all stakeholders. If the residents and tenants can resolve issues, we don't need compliance. 25 years ago we invited students and the Acadia*



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

*Students Union over for a bite to eat and talked about how they can improve relationships among students and homeowners”.*

One homeowner stated that Acadia University prioritizes the student experience over the academic experience, arguing that this results in an environment where students are less aligned with academic endeavors and more with athletics and social events. This homeowner recommended that the Town consider how it supports the university, whether through academic scholarships or through experiential events such as the CFL game.

*“The university has to be encouraged to shift away from an “experiential model” into an “academic model.” Students come here because they want to “live their best lives” and that creates a freedom problem. But if students come here because they are passionate about learning, they will do things on campus related to their areas of study. The CFL game made it feel like Acadia is running a sports franchise rather than an academic franchise. The town needs to consider how it supports the university, does it support sports and experiential things or does it support academics? That is a cultural shift that needs to happen”.*

Other homeowners felt as though more events like the CFL are needed so that people in Wolfville have a contained area where the behaviour creating frustration in residential areas is permitted:

*“There needs to be more on-campus events. The CFL game was so successful in containing an event and this type of thing needs to happen more. Acadia needs more on campus residences, and they need to have facilities on campus for students to party rather than forcing them into the Town. Acadia has to step up in many ways to make sure there are things to do for students. There are plenty of things to do for children and older folks at the parks and those kinds of places, but there is a gap for students outside of pubs and drinking”.*

Similarly, some homeowners stated that allowing alcohol and parties on campus could provide a solution:

*“The biggest thing is the university needs to allow alcohol on campus. Banning alcohol pushes students out into the streets. They need to create a place where students can gather and drink but where they can stay on campus”.*

*“It would be nice to create an event space for students. Students like to party a lot and if they had a venue created for them that they could use during Cheaton Cup or Homecoming, similar to like the CFL tailgate party, that would help take people out of the residential areas and put them into a more contained area. It could be done on the university premises.”*

Echoing both tenants and landlords, homeowners also indicated the need for the Town to advocate to the Province for a drinking age of 18, and an on and off-campus code of conduct for Acadia Students as a tool to encourage respectful behaviour in residential areas.



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

*"The drinking age is a challenge because so many first-year students are 18, putting the university and bars in a tight spot trying to accommodate students. They need to permit alcohol on campus. The Town needs to campaign to the Nova Scotia Government to reduce the drinking age to 18 because 18 year olds drink but have no safe places to do so. The Town, university and Provincial Government need to collaborate on drinking age to generate a greater level of safety"*

*"I'd love to see much closer communication between the Town and University so that together we could build a code of conduct for both on and off campus. If Acadia students were subject to a code of conduct regardless of where they are, with the understanding that if their actions were serious enough, they could be kicked out, that could be effective."*

Furthermore it was suggested that there could be a required course for all students at Acadia where Town bylaws and information on how to be a good neighbour could be shared:

*"There could be an Acadia required class on behaviours and bylaws so students can't say they didn't know about the bylaws. You could bring in compliance, some landlords, good neighbours and students to share information".*

Finally, one homeowner stated that the R-1 zoning should be rezoned or amended to permit more units per dwelling so that all rental properties are not concentrated into one area of Town:

*"The zoning is a problem because it concentrates all the rental properties into my neighbourhood adjacent to Acadia. If the rentals were spread out, you could have mixed neighbourhoods which go a long way for keeping things civilized. R-1 people are horrified of rental properties going up in their neighbourhoods, but protecting some people in town from rentals is just making things worse for the neighbourhoods where there are rentals. I have no problem living near rentals as long as they are managed well."*

## **6. Short Term Rentals**

Homeowners were asked whether they had any concerns regarding STRs in Wolfville, and if they think STRs should be permitted in the R-1 zone if the STR was limited to a bedroom or accessory dwelling unit in or on the homeowners primary residence.

Similar to tenants, some homeowners stated that because STR websites like Airbnb contain strict guidelines for behaviour and include a rating system, that they have few concerns about STRs in terms of noise or nuisance parties. Other homeowners stated that STRs have contributed to the rising cost of housing, housing scarcity, and have further contributed to the parking issue:

*"STRs are horrible. They are likely responsible for the inflation of housing prices. People gobble up houses to rent out rather than live in them. People make more money per week than per month. It's bad policy. Therefore, people can't find cheap housing. STRs are also related to the traffic and parking problems because people are constantly moving around. The towns should support businesses that want to set up proper bed and breakfasts. We just shouldn't be*





What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

*squeezing margins out of housing. Housing is a human right and they have reduced housing stock”.*

*“The problem is families can’t move in if houses are Airbnbs and there should be a limit on how many are permitted”.*

*“The house behind me is being used as Airbnb for the summer. It’s owned by a guy in Halifax. Most guests have been fine but sometimes it gets loud. Airbnbs have to be controlled. The Town needs to know the location and owners of Airbnb in town”.*

Many homeowners felt that STRs could be permitted in the R-1 zone with conditions that limit them to bedrooms or accessory dwelling units. One homeowner is currently housing a friend who was unable to continue living in their rental as their landlords turned it into a STR:

*“R1 gets away with too much compared to other R zones. On principle I don’t think SROa should be allowed in R-1 in any circumstance, if people want to rent, they can do long-term rentals. I have someone living with me who was renting a place that is now turned into an Airbnb and now she can’t live there. I’m concerned about Airbnb’s impact on long term housing supply as many of them are in family homes and reducing the availability for families to move here.”*

*“If they are regulated, they should be in R1”.*

One homeowner stated that while STRs may remove long-term housing from the rental market, that student rentals also contribute to this issue:

*“I have no issues with Airbnb and they should be available in R-1. A homeowner who rents a property while they’re away is fine. STRs may impact those looking for rental properties, but so do student rentals. Student rentals end up displacing other long-term renters because they can pay higher rents. If Airbnb isn’t problematic to quality of life, I would rather have that as a neighbour than a student rental.”*

*“R1 should be protected but it’s coming to an end. In Halifax ADUs are permitted in R1 to be rented out. R2 people feel jealous of R1 and all of the protection they get. R1 should allow a greater variety of use while still being controlled. STR in R-1 should be allowed if it’s for a bedroom rental.”*

**“STR can be allowed in R1 zone if homeowner is living there and renting out bedroom.”**

One homeowner stated that STRs should not be permitted in the R-1 zone under any circumstance:

*“R-1 shouldn’t be allowed even if just a bedroom because if we water down the rules we will see more issues like we do in r2 and r3”.*



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

Other comments provided by homeowners related to STR include the need to ensure that there is enough housing in Wolfville so that those who work in food, drink and retail business in Town can afford to live here. A concern that STRs could bring violence to Town was mentioned, as well as the impacts of unregulated STRs on traditional inns and bed and breakfasts:

*"The Town needs to make sure there are places for people who work in Wolfville to live in Wolfville. Some Airbnbs elsewhere turn into brothels and bring violence to town."*

*"Airbnb undermines existing B&Bs, a friend of mine has had to shut his down on Main Street because of Airbnb. I know people in R-1 who are running Airbnb in their homes."*

## **7. Solutions to Parking Issues**

An issue frequently raised by the Good Neighbours group is parking. Residents of the core neighbourhood area specifically have been noticing a greater number of cars per dwelling unit and as a result, more cars parked on lawns and lining the streets. Homeowners were asked if they have any ideas for how parking issues could be resolved.

Some homeowners suggested finding new ways to encourage people to make fewer short trips by car and opting for a micro transit or active transportation mode instead. One homeowner suggested that Acadia University could provide an option for students to register their cars when they register for tuition and be provided with an on-campus parking space. Another suggested that Acadia could explore ways to discourage students from bringing their vehicles to Wolfville. One suggestion provided for discouraging car use was a reduction in tuition costs for not bringing a car to Wolfville.

*"The university should provide more parking. The gym parking lot should have permit parking for students. If you bring a car to university, you should be assigned a space and that's where you leave it. That way you have a reserved parking space and know you aren't going to lose it"*

*"The university should help because all students have cars. We have 10 students next door, and they can only park 4 cars in the driveway. We live across the street from Acadia and if Acadia made parking available to students it could help... Parking on lawns is easy to control, just send compliance around, but students need to have a place to park."*

One homeowner stated that the Town supports the businesses more than is necessary and as a result provides too much parking, which encourages more vehicle use:

*"The business model of Wolfville is wrong. The Town thinks its responsibility is to make local businesses money and bring tourists here, park here, use the splash pad, ride the harvest moon trail. This goes against all of the sustainability talk from Council. We have tourism which is great but Willow Park has been turned into a parking lot for the wine bus. Council puts businesses over*



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

*residents who live in Wolfville... Fireworks and things that the Town puts on to attract out-of-town residents results in people using up Wolfville amenities and the only people benefiting are businesses, not residents, though their property taxes pay for these events. Free parking shouldn't be used as a way to draw people here to go for lunch. Instead, set up as many barriers to free parking as possible, ticket people and the Town benefits."*

Some homeowners stated that parking on both sides of Hillside Avenue creates a hazard for drivers as the remainder of the road is limited:

*"Hillside has parking on both sides of streets and emergency vehicles can't get through."*

One tenant stated that when parking on Fairfield Street was limited to one side there were noticeable improvements. Some homeowners have also noticed an improvement in parking issues since the hiring of Town Compliance Officers:

*"Prospect Street seems to be better managed these days with compliance, and there is a nice driveway being built on Hillside."*

## **8. What else should the Town be looking to understand regarding community harmony?**

To ensure all concerns were addressed during interviews, homeowners were asked if there is anything else the Town should be looking to understand regarding community harmony. This question also provided homeowners with an opportunity to share any thoughts that were not addressed earlier.

Some tenants took this time to express dissatisfaction with the condition and treatment of the core neighbourhood area of Wolfville. Some homeowners claimed that the taxes and real estate prices are high in this area, but that Town investment is being directed elsewhere.

*"The core is beautiful, that's why the prices and taxes are so high, so let's make it worthwhile to pay this much and preserve the town. Fairfield, etc is a shocking disgrace. There's too much of an "us and them" and not enough community, but you can't legislate community. Through education for landlords, renters, and community members, we all need to work harder at getting along but it all boils down to lack of leadership at Acadia. They don't have enough housing for students, and they aren't doing enough for students on campus."*

In addition, one homeowner suggested that if the core neighbourhood area is to become more densely populated over time, that the Town should invest in a level of street beautification and maintenance seen on downtown Main Street:



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

*“If the new planning document is about turning this neighbourhood into the downtown core, the Town has a role in tidying up the street, doing beautification like they do on Main Street. If the Town views it as a densification project, they need to put up more garbage cans, do more street cleaning and sidewalk maintenance. The current situation does not convey that the Town views residents of this neighborhood as valuable residents.”*

Concern for poor mental health outcomes was highlighted by one homeowner who stated that the impacts of the behavioural issues in the core neighbourhood area resulting in anxiety among residents, and that residents of this area not involved in parties should not be responsible for cleaning up after parties:

*“The Town should do a mental health survey of those who neighbour problematic properties. People’s mental health is being impacted and I feel as though other people are dismissive of this. Every weekend we feel anxious knowing that there will be a party and that we will have to clean up afterwards. There is a constant pressure being put on people and it is hard on us mentally. RCMP can be dismissive of our concerns and downplay the impact of parties. After parties, people who weren’t partying are the ones going out to clean up, that’s not something to celebrate, that shows our complacency. We need to know how landlords define “due diligence” as per the letter from November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, what are the best practices landlords can follow?”*

Another homeowner questioned the Town’s values and identity, and whether the Town will continue to hold values such as being a Fair-Trade Town overtime and continue to attract people with shared values:

*“The Town needs to think about its reason for existence, is its purpose to make businesses more money, or is Wolfville livable because you can shop here?... Wolfville used to be seen as a fairtrade town but these values are less apparent over time, and they lend to a particular character. The way the Town is conducting itself now is undermining these things and will make Wolfville disappear. I’m not sure who the ideal demographic is for the Town, is it wealthy seniors? The Town needs to commit to values we used to before. Who do we want to be as a Town? How can the town help support Acadia and make it a successful academic institution rather than an experiential institution.”*

The need for more mixed neighbourhoods was mentioned as a way to build diverse communities where young families, students, seniors and those with low incomes could all live together harmoniously:

*“There is a desperate need to come up with mixed housing so that communities are diverse, and you have young families, students, seniors etc. Students deserve a good place to live but those with lower incomes who want a place to live and raise a family need housing too. There needs to be more affordable housing in Wolfville, how can Wolfville make this happen?”*

Finally, sharing information for waste collection and emergency procedures with tenants was stated as a possible solution to some ongoing issues with waste, and an opportunity to improve tenant safety.



What We Heard: Homeowners  
November 7, 2022

*“Garbage information and emergency procedures need to be posted for tenants to be made aware, so they know the fire route in their building, and who to call for emergencies. Information for tenant insurance and the requirement for insurance under the lease. And ensuring emergency contacts are required.”*

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## INITIAL DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

### 1. Title

This bylaw shall be known as bylaw 109 and may be cited as the *Business Licence Bylaw*.

### 2. References

2.1 Nova Scotia *Municipal Government Act* (NS MGA), sections 172(1)(f) and 172(2)

2.2 Policy 140-015, *Municipal Fees Policy*

### 3. Definitions

3.1 In this Bylaw:

- (1) "**business**" means the carrying on of a commercial or industrial undertaking of any kind or nature or the providing of professional, personal or other services, for the purpose of gain or profit (this includes Short and Long-term residential rentals);
- (2) "**Bylaw Enforcement Officer**" means the Bylaw Enforcement Officer or other persons acting on behalf of the Town properly authorized by law to enforce this Bylaw.
- (3) "**council**" means the Wolfville Town Council;
- (4) "**Inspector**" means the person appointed from time to time by Bylaw or resolution of Council as Inspector of the Town for the purpose of enforcing and carrying out the provisions of this Bylaw and shall include any acting or assistant Licence Inspector, or their delegates.
- (5) "**licence**" means a licence issued pursuant to this Bylaw;
- (6) "**licencee**" means a person which holds a valid licence to operate a business within the Town under this Bylaw;
- (7) "**person**" includes any corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship, party or individual;
- (8) "**premises**" means a building or portion of a building or an area of land occupied, or capable of being occupied, by a business for the purpose of carrying on a business;
- (9) "**Town**" means the Town of Wolfville.

### 4. Licence Required

- 
- (a) Every person who owns or operates a business in the Town shall apply for, obtain and hold a licence for each business.
  - (b) Every person who operates a business at more than one premises shall obtain a separate licence for each premises.
  - (c) No person shall carry on any business for which a licence is required under this bylaw without holding a valid and subsisting licence for the carrying on of such business.
  - (d) Every person who carries on a business in the Town shall comply with all bylaws of the Town and all applicable laws, rules, codes, regulations and orders of all federal or provincial authorities having jurisdiction over such business.

#### **5. Effect of Licence**

- (a) Every licence issued under this Bylaw is personal to the person named in the licence and may not be transferred to another person.
- (b) A person shall not carry on a business in or on any premises other than those identified on the licence without first making an application for and obtaining a new licence.
- (c) The granting of a licence under this Bylaw in no way implies or constitutes a representation or warranty of the Inspector or the Town that the licensee is competent in the business operation for which they are licenced or that the licenced business or the business premises comply with the Town's bylaws or any federal or provincial laws.
- (d) Every operator of a business is responsible for complying with, and is subject to, the requirements of all other Town bylaws and federal and provincial laws applicable to the business.

#### **6. Licence Period and Renewal**

- (a) A licence shall be valid for one year from the date of issuance.
- (b) On or before the expiry of a licence, the licensee must renew the licence for a further one-year period.

#### **7. Licence Application and Fee**

- (a) The applications for a licence and for the renewal of a licence and the licence issued thereafter shall be in the form prescribed in the Town.
- (b) Every person applying for a licence or a licence renewal shall, at the time of making the application, pay to the Town the applicable fee as prescribed in the Town's *Municipal Fees Policy*.

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- (c) Any person applying for a licence or to renew a licence must, at the time of making such application, make a true and correct statement in writing disclosing the nature of and character of such business to be carried on by the applicant, including business name, legal business name if different, contact information, and number of persons employed or otherwise engaged in the business.

#### **8. Licence to be displayed**

- (a) Every licensee shall keep a copy of the licence posted in a conspicuous place on the premises where the business is conducted and for which the licence is issued.

#### **9. Inspector**

- (a) The Council may, by resolution, from time to time, appoint an Inspector for the purposes of administering and enforcing the provisions of this Bylaw.
- (b) An Inspector shall have the authority to grant or refuse a licence or a licence renewal and to suspend or cancel a licence.
- (c) At all reasonable times, an Inspector may enter premises to inspect and determine whether the requirements of this Bylaw are being met.

#### **10. Granting and refusal of licences**

- (a) The Inspector must grant a licence or a licence renewal where the Inspector is satisfied that the applicant has complied with the requirements of this Bylaw and has no reasonable grounds to believe that the applicant and the business do not comply with all other applicable bylaws and provincial and federal laws.
- (b) The Inspector must refuse to grant a licence or licence renewal where the Inspector is satisfied that the applicant has not complied with the requirements of this Bylaw or has reasonable grounds to believe that the applicant and the business do not comply with all other applicable bylaws and provincial and federal laws.
- (c) The Inspector must not unreasonably refuse to grant a licence or licence renewal and, in the case of refusal, upon request, the Inspector must provide written reasons for the refusal.

#### **11. Suspension and cancellation of licences**

- (a) The Inspector may suspend or cancel a licence for failure by a licensee to comply with a term or condition of the licence, with this Bylaw, or with any other Town bylaw or federal or provincial law, and the Inspector must provide written reasons for the suspension or cancellation.

#### **12. Council reconsideration of refusal, suspension or cancellation of licence**



- (a) The refusal, suspension or cancellation of a licence by the Inspector shall be made in writing and sent by regular mail to the applicant or licensee to the address given by the applicant or licensee on the application for the licence.
- (b) If the Inspector cancels, refuses or suspends a licence, the applicant or licensee may appeal the decision to Council.
- (c) An appeal under subsection (b) must be made by written notice provided to the Town Clerk within 10 business days of the date on which the notice under subsection (1) was sent. The notice of the appeal shall state in concise fashion the grounds upon which the appeal is based.
- (d) Upon receiving notice of an appeal, the Town Clerk shall refer the matter to Council to appoint a time and place for the hearing of the appeal.
- (e) The applicant or licensee shall be given notice of the time and place for the appeal, and shall be given an opportunity to be present and to be heard at the appeal.
- (f) Upon hearing an appeal, Council may uphold the Inspector's decision or may make any other decision that the Inspector was entitled to make with respect to the licence.

**13. General**

- (a) Where any federal or provincial laws or any other Town bylaw applies to any matter covered by this Bylaw, the issuance of a licence under this Bylaw shall not relieve the licensee from complying with the provision of such other laws.
- (b) A licence is not assignable or transferable. If ownership of a business, or control of a business entity, changes, the new owner(s) of the business must apply to the Town for a new licence.

**14. Penalty**

- (a) Any person who contravenes any provision of this Bylaw is punishable on summary conviction by a fine of not less than \$\_\_\_\_\_ and not more than \$\_\_\_\_\_ and to imprisonment of not more than three months in default of payment thereof.

**15. Effective Date**

- (a) This Bylaw comes into force and effect on (INSERT DATE).

**Clerk's Annotation for Official Bylaw Book**

Date of first reading:

**Town of Wolfville**  
**Bylaw Ch109**  
**Business Licence Bylaw**



Date of advertisement of Notice of Intent to Consider:

Date of second reading:

Date of advertisement of Passage of Bylaw:

Date of mailing to Minister a certified copy of Bylaw:

I certify that this **Business Licence Bylaw 109--** was adopted by Council and published as indicated above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Laura Morrison, Town Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

DRAFT

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 003-2023

Title: Transfer from Operating Reserves

Date: 2023-02-07

Department: Finance

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## SUMMARY

### Unbudgeted Transfer from Operating Reserves

As part of its annual financial reporting process, the Audit Committee and Committee of the Whole receive an Information Report dealing with 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Financial Update. The update includes year end forecast results, which on occasion might call for Council to make decisions before year end arrives on March 31<sup>st</sup>. What those decisions might be are dependent on the circumstances of the year in question. Typically, no decision has been required in past years as the Town has been in a likely surplus position.

For this fiscal year, 2022/23 ending on March 31<sup>st</sup>, staff are forecasting a deficit of \$101,400. The precise dollar amount is not as important as the relative size of the forecast shortfall and the reasons for the result. Please refer to Information Report 004-2023 for the financial information outlining the December 31<sup>st</sup> financial results and the year end estimates yielding the forecast deficit.

This year, the staff recommendation is for a transfer from Operating Reserves to offset unbudgeted costs incurred in this fiscal year. Each of the items adding to Town expenditures are the type that can be considered for funding from reserves and fit with Town's Reserve Policy 140-006 (Section 5.0 and 5.1)

The Audit Committee reviewed and discussed the recommendation (see Info Report 004-203) and approved a motion to forward the use of reserves to Council.

### DRAFT MOTION:

**THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE FORWARD THE FOLLOWING MOTION TO COUNCIL: THAT COUNCIL APPROVE AN ADDITIONAL TRANSFER FROM OPERATING RESERVES OF \$130,000 TO OPERATING FUND COVERING BUDGET SHORTFALL RELATED TO CAPITAL PROJECT OVERAGES, SPECIAL ELECTION COSTS, AND EARLY COSTS FOR THE PARKS MASTER PLANNING PROJECT.**

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 003-2023

Title: Transfer from Operating Reserves

Date: 2023-02-07

Department: Finance

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### 1) CAO COMMENTS

The CAO supports the recommendations of staff.

### 2) LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- Financial Reporting and Accounting Manual – NS Department of Municipal Affairs S 3(1)(a)(iv)B.
- Town Reserve Policy 140-006

### 3) STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend Council approve the motion to transfer an additional \$130,000 from Operating Reserves Fund, for purposes previously unbudgeted or approved, to the Towns Operating Fund to cover costs not included in the 2022/23 approved budget.

### REFERENCES AND ATTACHMENTS

1. Information Report (IR) 004-2023 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Financial Update & Year End Forecast (including attachments)

### 4) DISCUSSION

The 2022/23 approved budget included a transfer from Operating Reserves in the amount of \$437,000 (page 71 of Wolfville Operations Plan 2022-2026). The specific purposes related to that amount were:

<b>Use of Reserves</b>				
Offset portion of RCMP Increase				120,000
Offset Devour Grant - 2nd instalment				50,000
Offset Acadi Pool Grant				72,000
Offset portion of Street maintenance				65,000
Offset cost to refurbish boxcar				30,000
Offset portion of Library Repairs				20,000
Offset added inter Municipal projects				80,000
				<b>437,000</b>

In addition to the total above, the approved budget had referenced the use of COVID Safe Restart Reserve (Transit) balance to the extent there were dollars left coming out of fiscal 2021/22 (page 112 of Operations Plan). Ultimately the March 31, 2022 year end balance was \$30,400 to be carried forward and used in 2022/23.

As noted in IR 004-2023 discussed at Audit Committee, not all items listed above occurred or in some cases the full amount incurred does not warrant full use of the noted Reserve amount. These include

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## REQUEST FOR DECISION 003-2023

Title: Transfer from Operating Reserves  
Date: 2023-02-07  
Department: Finance

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RCMP cost increase requiring \$58,600 reserve funds (rather than budget of \$120,000), Acadia Pool Grant approved at \$50,000 (versus budget of \$72,000), Boxcar Refurbishment not done (budget was \$30,000) and Library repair allowance of \$20,000 not required.

During the fiscal year Council approved additional use of reserves for Maple Avenue resurfacing (to a maximum of \$80,000). Refer to RFD 050-2022 and Council motion from September. The actual amount needed for this addition to the street maintenance was \$66,100.

The additional transfer of \$130,000 beyond the items listed in IR 004-2023 will cover cost overruns and allow the Town to realize at least a break even result for the year end if not a small surplus.

### 5) FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2022/23 Budget included a transfer of \$437,000 from operating Reserves. Based on forecast results, only \$308,300 is required for approved amounts to date. The difference is \$128,700.

Effectively, if the motion is approved, the same dollar amount will come from Reserves. It is the purpose of those funds which is different from original budget.

The Operating Reserve Fund will have the same balance at the end of the March 31, 2023 year end as it would have IF the original use of funds was required. Accountability and transparency are enhanced by virtue of recognizing the change in purpose.

### 6) REFERENCES TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN AND TOWN REPORTS

Nothing added here for this report.

### 7) COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

Nothing added here.

### 8) ALTERNATIVES

Council could decide to not approve the \$130,000 recommended transfer. Assuming the year end forecast is accurate the result would be a deficit for the Town at year end. Deficit results for municipalities are to be brought into the next year's budget (in this case 2023/24) as an expense. This would add to the draft budget shortfall. It is likely the option would be to use Operating Reserves to offset the item in that budget, ultimately leaving the Town in the same equity position as it will be if the motion in this report is approved. It is only the timing that would be different. The recommended approach demonstrates effective use of Reserves in a timely manner. The practical issue also exists in that the final year end position won't be known until sometime in late May or early June (when financial statements are prepared).

**REQUEST FOR DECISION 004-2023**

Title: Debt Guarantee – VWRM

Date: 2023-02-07

Department: Finance

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## SUMMARY

### Debt Guarantee – Valley Waste Resource Management

Annually the Town is involved in the budget process for Valley Waste Resource Management (VWRM), including any debt guarantees that may be required in relation to the VWRM capital budget.

The request before Council with this report relates to the current year 2022/23 Capital program for completed projects that VWRM intends to bring to the 2023 Spring Debenture issue for funding.

The next step in the process is for each of the Inter-Municipal Agreement Service Partners to guarantee their proportionate share of the debt. The documents before Council with this report represent that guarantee for Wolfville

#### DRAFT MOTION:

That Council guarantees a share of the Valley Waste Resource Management Authority's TBR Capital FY 2022-23 (in the amount of \$174,000), with Wolfville's share being 8.85% or \$15,399 as per attached partner guarantee resolution form.

## REQUEST FOR DECISION 004-2023

Title: Debt Guarantee – VWRM

Date: 2023-02-07

Department: Finance

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### 1) CAO COMMENTS

The CAO supports the recommendations of staff.

### 2) LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- Municipal Government Act - Sections 60 & 88
- VWRM Intermunicipal Service Agreement (IMSA)

### 3) STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the loan guarantee requested by VWRM to address their 2022/23 capital program requirements.

### 4) REFERENCES AND ATTACHMENTS

- Standard loan guarantee resolution provided by VWRM (attached)
- VWRM TBR Capital Projects – Schedule B (attached)

### 5) DISCUSSION

Similar to the Town, VWRM must go through the process required to access debenture funding for its capital program. As one of the IMSA parties, Wolfville must guarantee its share of any long term borrowings of VWRM. This paperwork deals with the documentation needed to ensure their TBR can be approved by the Minister.

### 6) FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no immediate budget impact to the Town as the VWRM capital program was already considered as part of the approval of for the VWRM 2022/23 Budget. The long term debt contemplated will require increased Town contributions in future years, once the debenture is in place and repayments become part of the annual VWRM budget

### 7) REFERENCES TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN AND TOWN REPORTS

None provided at this time.

### 8) COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

Once approved the guarantee will be signed, and the Town will advise VWRM staff of Councils decision and forward duly signed copies of the guarantee documents

### 9) ALTERNATIVES

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**REQUEST FOR DECISION 004-2023**

Title: Debt Guarantee – VWRM

Date: 2023-02-07

Department: Finance

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In theory, Council could not provide the guarantee. This option would require VWRM to seek a different mechanism to fund it's 2022/23 completed capital projects. Since Council has already approved their budget, not providing the guarantee would be an impractical option. The approval process is an annual housekeeping matter to finalize details around VWRM Board and Town Council decisions made earlier in the year.



## REQUEST FOR AGENDA ITEM

Title:

Submitted by:

Submitted on:

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The Request for Agenda Item form is to be used by the Mayor and Councillor's to request an item to be added to the Committee of the Whole agenda for consideration. All Request for Agenda Item forms should be submitted at least **10 BUSINESS DAYS** prior to the scheduled Committee of the Whole meeting to the Chief Administrative Officer. Exceptions may be made for extraordinary circumstances.

### Date of Committee of the Whole requested:

### Recommendation(s) and/or Motion

(provide the recommendation(s) and/or motion that you would like Committee of the Whole to forward to Council for consideration)

### Summary

(provide a Brief description of item/background for this request)

### Expected Outcome:

In Camera Discussion

For information/discussion purposes only

Recommend an action to the CAO

Promote clarification/renewal or production of a policy or procedure

Recommend a motion for approval by Council

## REQUEST FOR AGENDA ITEM

SOP for Council Committees Policy

Submitted by: Councillor

Submitted on: December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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**Date of Committee of the Whole requested:** January 10, 2023

### Recommendation(s)

“That Council direct Staff to develop a Standard Operating Procedure to support the Council Committees Policy”

### Summary

The policy (section 5.7.1) indicates that the Town Clerk or designate will arrange for an orientation. I am not sure if this happens, if it happens at a single time of year, or what information is given. With recent information related to video participation, and discussion of expectations, perhaps this needs to be revamped, made mandatory. There may be a benefit for Committee Chairs, who are generally Members of Council, to take a role in mentoring new committee members. It is understandable that the process can be intimidating for new community committee members - some new councillors say little during their early months or years. It would benefit community members to have a better understanding of expectations for their role both from Town Administration and from Committee Chairs. This would also help in situations where a committee member is not performing to expectations or needs. If they are not reappointed it will not come as a surprise.

Either in the policy or in an SOP it should be clear the reason(s) for having community members on committees. Is this intended to be an opportunity for inclusion and engagement with Town operations – only/partly/not really? Are these stepping-stones for someone who may wish to run for elected position? Is the intent to provide expertise that we don't have? In this case should we be clearer about the qualifications we are looking for and not accept those who might have an interest but not the required qualifications? Or at minimum ensure that they are aware that they don't fully meet requirements and may not be reappointed. Are there other reasons for community participation and if so, how are these roles and expectations communicated, mentored, monitored, addressed if not met, and by whom. Making these roles and expectations clear and providing feedback should be clear to Council, staff, the Chairs, community members and applicants.

In addition to clearer operating procedures with respect to community members appointment and expectations, some clarity around the process Council uses to make appointments would be helpful. In that we are making decisions that have implications to the management and decisions of the Town, and decisions that have implications, often at a personal level, for members submitting an application, the time scheduled and level of effort on the part of council should reflect this. This has implications for the timing and duration of this process of review.

**REQUEST FOR AGENDA ITEM**

SOP for Council Committees Policy

Submitted by: Councillor

Submitted on: December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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**Expected Outcome:**

In Camera Discussion

For information/discussion purposes only

Recommend an action to the CAO

Promote clarification/renewal or production of a policy or procedure

Recommend a motion for approval by Council