



# Planning Advisory Committee Meeting

April 10, 2025

6:30 p.m.

Hybrid - In-person (Council Chambers) and Teams

## Agenda

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### Call to Order

**1. Approval of Agenda**

**2. Approval of Minutes**

- a. Planning Advisory Committee Meeting, March 20, 2025

**3. 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.

**4. New Business:**

- a. **Introduction of Community Profile and Staff updates on Housing Accelerator File and related community consultation schedule (15 minutes)**



**b. Presentation on Community Profile from Turner Drake and Partners with discussion period (1.5 hours)**

**5. Round Table (15 minutes)**

**6. Next Meeting**

a. May 8, 2025 6:30-8:30 PM.

**7. Adjournment**

**ATTENDING**

- Mayor Jodi MacKay, Chair
- Councillor Wendy Elliot
- Deputy Mayor Jennifer Ingham
- Councillor van Niekerk
- Beverly Boyd
- Michael Martin
- Alan Howell
- Caroline Whitby

**ABSENT WITH REGRETS**

- Jason Hall

**ALSO ATTENDING**

- Director of Planning & Development, Devin Lake
- Senior Planner, Mark Fredericks
- Community Planner, Lindsay Slade

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair, Mayor MacKay, called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Discussion and Decisions</b>	
<b>1. Approval of Agenda</b>	<b>IT WAS REGULARLY MOVED AND SECONDED THAT THE AGENDA BE APPROVED AS CIRCULATED</b>	<b>CARRIED</b>
<b>2. Approval of Minutes</b>	<b>IT WAS REGULARLY MOVED AND SECONDED THAT THE MINUTES OF THE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF February 2025 BE APPROVED AS CIRCULATED.</b>	<b>CARRIED</b>
<b>3. Public Input</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>No public input</b></li></ul>	

**Agenda Item**

**Discussion and Decisions**

- 4. Continuing Business:**
- a. Informal discussion related to ongoing projects.**
- An informal discussion was held with the Committee to provide updates and hold discussion on any of the ongoing projects below:
    - Zzap highest and best use site analysis for town owned land for non-market housing
    - Happy Cities downtown planning and zoning scenarios
    - Happy Cities place making initiative
    - Turner Drake Community Profile and rent analysis
    - Fathom Growth Management Package/Neighbourhood planning and zoning scenarios
    - Parking Analysis/Study
    - Campus Secondary Plan with Acadia
    - Non-market Housing Strategy
  - Clarification on delivery dates of related Housing Accelerator Fund files was provided.
  - Information about current planning applications was shared with the Committee, including information on where on the Town website to find current planning applications.
  - An update on the ongoing urban forestry work and Tree Policy being developed was provided.
- 5. Next Meeting**
- a. April 10, 2025**
- March 20, 2025 – 6:30pm.
- 6. Adjournment**
- February 20, 6:30 p.m.

**Approved at the \*\*\*\*\*, 2025 Planning Advisory Committee Meeting.  
As recorded by Lindsay Slade, Community Planner, Town of Wolfville.**

DRAFT



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## Housing Accelerator Fund Update

To support the ongoing Housing Accelerator Fund work, Staff have prepared a draft discussion paper entitled *Balancing Growth and Sustainability in Valley Communities* (attached). This paper is a communications tool that examines some of the trade-offs that exist when communities are faced with growth and is intended to be educational and encourage discussion. It will be published in the Blomidon Naturalists Society journal, and will be available on [www.wolfvilleblooms.ca/haf](http://www.wolfvilleblooms.ca/haf) once finalized.

This is one resource Staff are creating as we launch into the Housing Accelerator Fund program, and bring work forward over the next 6 months. This report is for information only.

The April Planning Advisory Committee agenda also includes a draft 2025 Community Profile report, prepared by consultants at Turner Drake and Partners. Consultants will provide a presentation of the Community Profile work during the April 10, 2025 Planning Advisory Committee meeting, and a final draft version of their report will be shared through the May 2025 Planning Advisory Committee Package.

### 1) REFERENCES AND ATTACHMENTS

- Draft Discussion Paper
- [Wolfville Blooms Housing Accelerator Fund Page](#)
- [CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund Page](#)

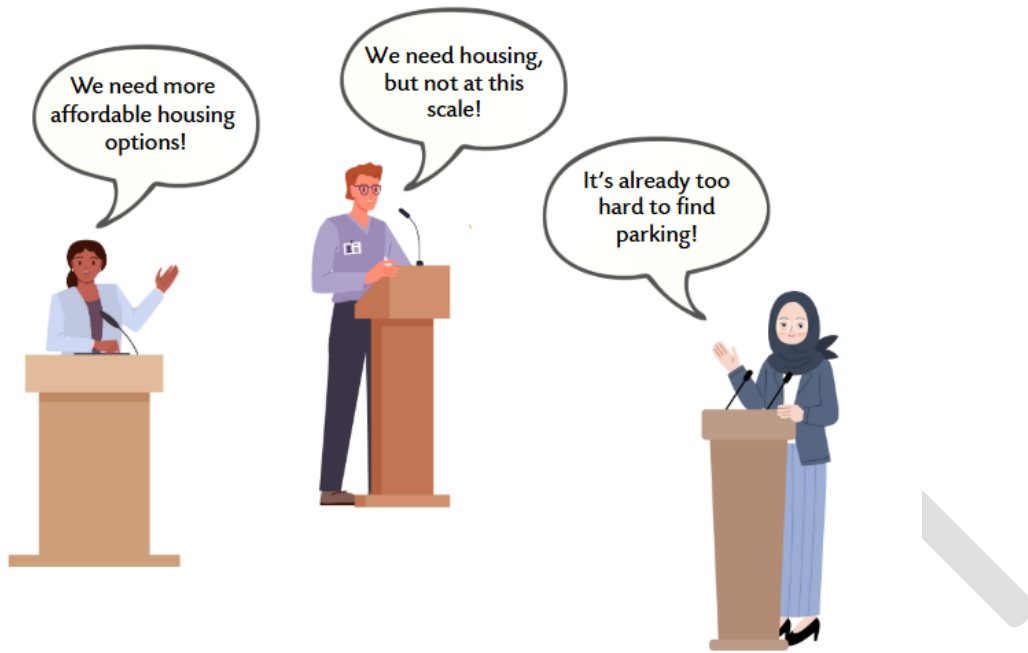


## **Balancing Growth and Sustainability in Valley Communities**

By Lindsay Slade and Devin Lake

***Subheading: Wolfville is one example of a community facing planning dilemmas. What are the questions and tensions that must be addressed?***

The practice of planning requires a consistent navigation of trade-offs. Given the range of priorities in any community, it is challenging to come to a consensus on virtually any decision when focusing on individual opinions. To set the stage, here is an example: a town is holding a public hearing for a large, mixed use development proposal when a heated discussion begins. One resident makes their way to the podium to argue the proposed building is too tall and the town should focus on repairing the roads before considering any more housing. Another resident follows, pleading that more rental apartments are desperately needed to provide lower-cost housing options for people like her aging mother. Another resident jumps in, voicing concern that renters are transient and less likely to make long-term investments in town than homeowners, while another encourages more development in the Town to help preserve the agricultural land outside the town boundary. Lastly, a young entrepreneur pleads for council to consider the proposal as it could provide a commercial space for their start-up business they have been struggling to find a space for, meaning they won't have to move to another municipality with more options if this one is available.



As you can see, making a decision that addresses each individual opinion is impossible. For that reason, planners must look to the public *interest* rather than public opinion when developing planning documents. What decision is most likely to provide the greatest benefit to the existing and future community? What trade-offs are we willing to make? What are the pressing concerns of any given time? This article explores some of the various trade-offs local municipalities are faced with during this time of population growth and housing need.

Communities across Nova Scotia and Canada are grappling with significant housing supply shortages and the related challenge of balancing growth and change with fiscal and environmental sustainability, infrastructure capacity, traffic and mobility concerns and overall community well-being. Navigating this delicate balance becomes more challenging in the face of polarizing views shared widely on social media and complex governance structures that elevate the confusion and tensions around decision-making. Informed decision making requires careful consideration of the trade-offs, both in terms of fiscal





health and community wellbeing associated with growth and change.

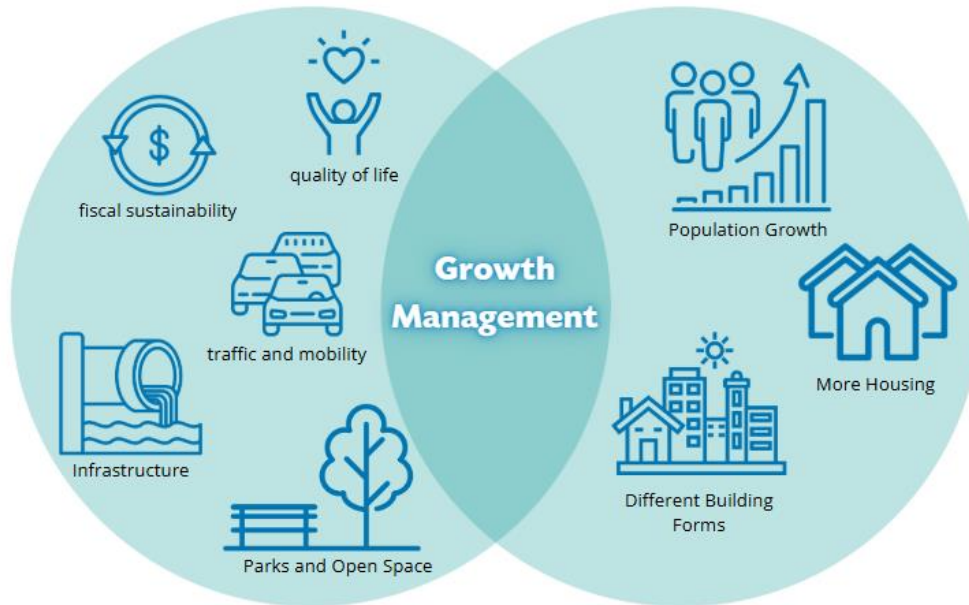


Figure 1. The Growth Management Framework.

## Municipal Challenges in Nova Scotia

The core tension around growth generally comes down to maintaining community integrity and fiscal sustainability; can we have everything we cherish, improved services and infrastructure upgrades while maintaining fiscal health? Towns and municipalities do not have endless revenue sources under our existing political structures and division of powers. Towns are responsible for their own roads and services and can struggle to find a balance between these and other community wants and needs. The figure below illustrates the challenge in weighing these needs equally from a resident's point of view.

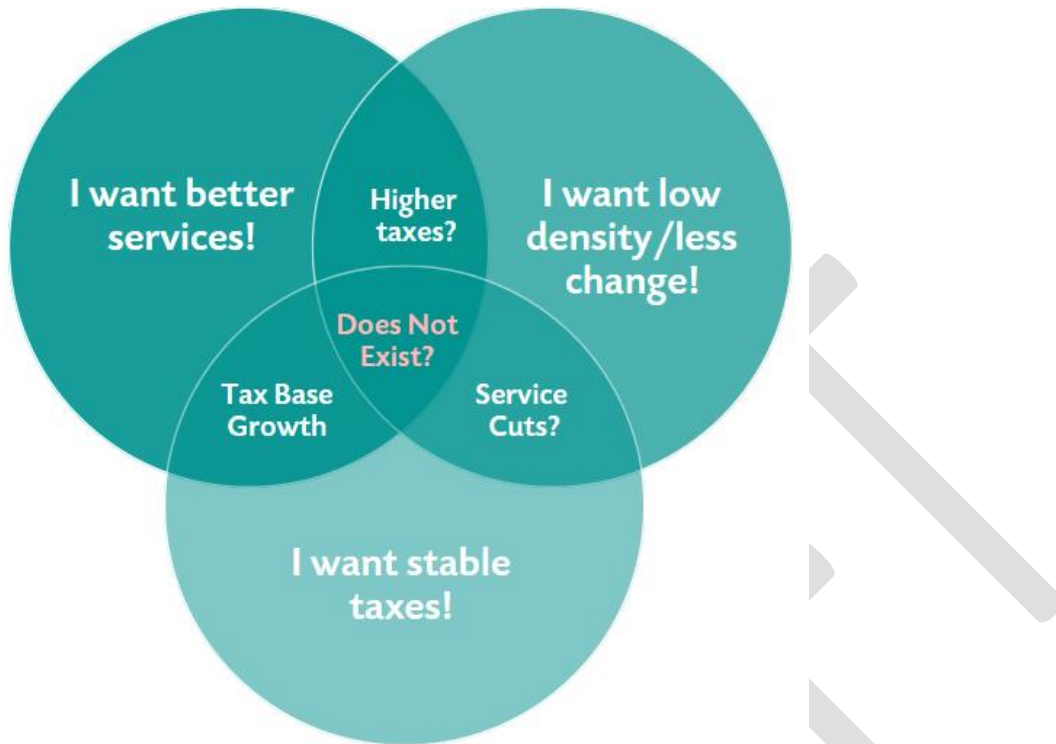


Figure 2. tensions around revenue and wants and needs.

### **How does a municipality pay for things?**

76% of the Town of Wolfville's annual budget (2024-25) is derived from property taxes (Figure 3). On average in Nova Scotia, 63% of municipal revenues are generated from taxes, with 81% in Halifax Regional Municipality, and 65% in Cape Breton Regional Municipality (2024). To maintain aging infrastructure, deal with climate change impacts, plan for myriad major projects like road and sidewalk replacements, park improvements and stormwater management upgrades – difficult decisions have to be made when a limited budget is available and historically low housing (and commercial) growth rates hinder the ability to provide any additional revenue. Other municipal funding sources can include transit fares, recreation fees, community centre rental fees, and more, though it is often argued municipalities should reduce or eliminate charges for these uses as not all users can afford them, and subsidizing specific users is onerous.

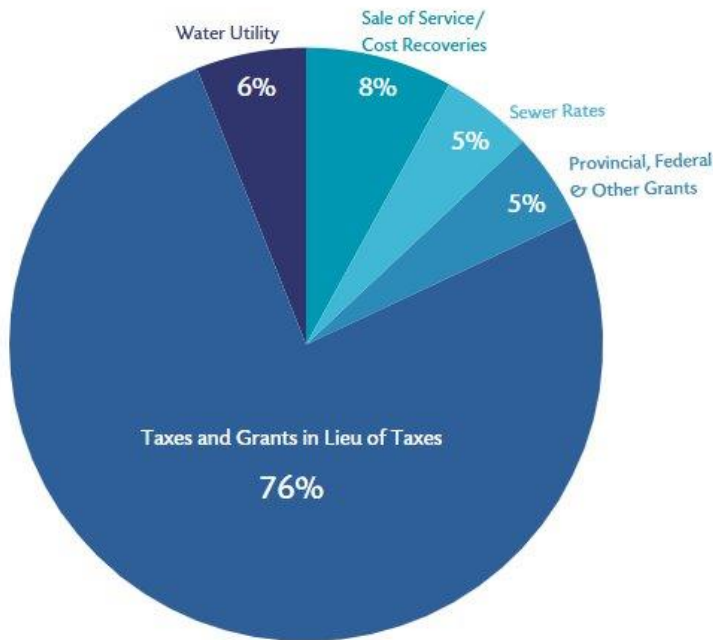


Figure 3. Town of Wolfville's Revenue Sources (2024-2025)

Property tax generation is the most reliable source of revenue for the Town, yet more than half of properties in Wolfville are capped, meaning there is a limit to the taxable amount an eligible residential property can increase each year. Furthermore, the Town's residential tax effort, or tax burden, (2022/23) is categorized as moderate risk, at 4.3%. This means that on average, 4.3% of household income in Wolfville is being spent on property taxes. Tax effort of more than 6% is considered "high risk". Considering these two factors, increasing the tax rate in Wolfville could increase the cost of living and create more affordability issues for some residents.

### **How does density play into these economics?**

More housing and mixed land use per acre of land is associated with a higher tax base, because there are more property owners/residents and businesses contributing taxes. Communities comprised of a mix of housing types, from low to high density, and a mix of commercial spaces, have greater municipal revenues, and higher property values than sprawling, lower density suburban neighborhoods.

Commonly, we hear the misconception echoed that increasing housing density beyond single-family homes lowers the property values of neighbouring homes. Numerous case



studies have proven this argument false; however, municipalities must address factors that accompany more development and density such as traffic, parks and open space needs, and maintaining the overall feel and sense of belonging. Otherwise, there could be negative outcomes of growth. **What is the appropriate density for various locales in this region?**

Examining the property taxes generated by housing forms per area of land demonstrates that the more activity per acre of land, the more tax generation. For example, one single family home on a large lot in Wolfville, is contributing less than \$3,000 per acre of land. Other single-family homes on smaller parcels are generating upwards of \$20,000 per acre of land. Looking at the zones in Town where medium and higher density use is permitted, we see an escalation in value per acre of land: duplexes and multi-unit dwellings with under 10 units generate around \$60,000 per acre, and on the upper end, multi-unit buildings with 20 or more units generating \$60-\$111,000 per acre, with some mixed use, residential and commercial buildings generating over \$175,000 per acre. **How does this impact perceptions of renter household contributions to the overall budget of the Town? Are the very buildings that are criticized for taking away the “feel” of Wolfville, indirectly subsidizing the lifestyles of property owners in lower density zones?**

With many new developments being approved in the province and region, the suitability of some of these areas for more dense development warrants some investigation or critique. Wolfville is a town with a high level of service. We have parks, events, public transit access, entertainment, shops and services all within walking distance of residential areas that are predominantly accessible by sidewalks lit by streetlights. Some of the denser developments in the region, however, are being built in areas where fewer of these amenities exist, such as Cambridge, Canning and Port Williams, for example, forcing new residents into their cars to work, play, shop and access services. **Should this be how we continue to build communities? Should living near amenities and services only be available to a select few, or should we welcome more opportunities in towns and economic centres like Wolfville?**

## **Population Growth and Need for Housing**

In 2021, Premier Tim Houston announced Nova Scotia’s population had exceeded 1 million people. In the same announcement, a new goal was revealed: to reach 2 million by



2060 by attracting 25,000 newcomers per year. This goal ignited conversation around readiness for this level of growth. Many of the passionate comments shared on social media showcase a common binary rhetoric; growth equals loss (if we grow, we lose our identity, our property values will go down, there will be too much traffic). On a provincial level, we may hear concerns around the existing strain on healthcare, public schools, and issues like homelessness. While these sentiments highlight important issues in our municipalities and the province, they ignore the complexity and reality of how places are paid for and built. **If more opportunities to live here are created, will Wolfville's identity cease to exist, or will more entrepreneurs and young families move to Town, opening more businesses and making greater use of amenities like parks?**

Perhaps the sentiment can be flipped: if we grow in a measured fashion, we can have a larger workforce, higher tax revenue, and the ability to fund new public services and infrastructure. On a municipal level, this could translate into better sidewalks, public and active transportation infrastructure, public space and parks improvements, projects to enhance our resilience to climate change and much more. **What is the best rate of growth for Nova Scotia and for Wolfville? Can we find a comfortable pace, or should we refuse more growth? Are there other opportunities aside from property tax to fund these improvements?**

We must also accept a level of uncertainty when dealing with future needs. Global, national and local factors all influence the conditions we live in, and recent years have demonstrated the challenges they create for planning. For example, in 2023, the Town of Wolfville was told we needed 1,705 new units by 2032 to meet our housing need (Turner Drake & Partners, 2023). While we saw unprecedented population growth of 21% between 2016-2021, the dust is settling on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent population shifts. In 2024, the federal government implemented immigration policies to slow population growth. This policy has had significant impacts for housing needs, and as of 2025, Wolfville is being told we need 820 new units by 2032; a substantial decrease from indications just two years prior (Turner Drake and Partners, 2025). While slower population growth is projected for the foreseeable future, the immigration policy could be revised, or other global events could occur, impacting population shifts, housing needs and/or construction feasibility. While population projections have slowed for the time being, housing needs in Wolfville remain high. Lower than needed construction activity, ongoing affordability issues and an aging population are some of the factors driving the housing



need. Knowing the degree of demand for housing in Wolfville, and the number of dwellings the Town is being told it needs, **do we think it is important to create opportunities to house more people?**

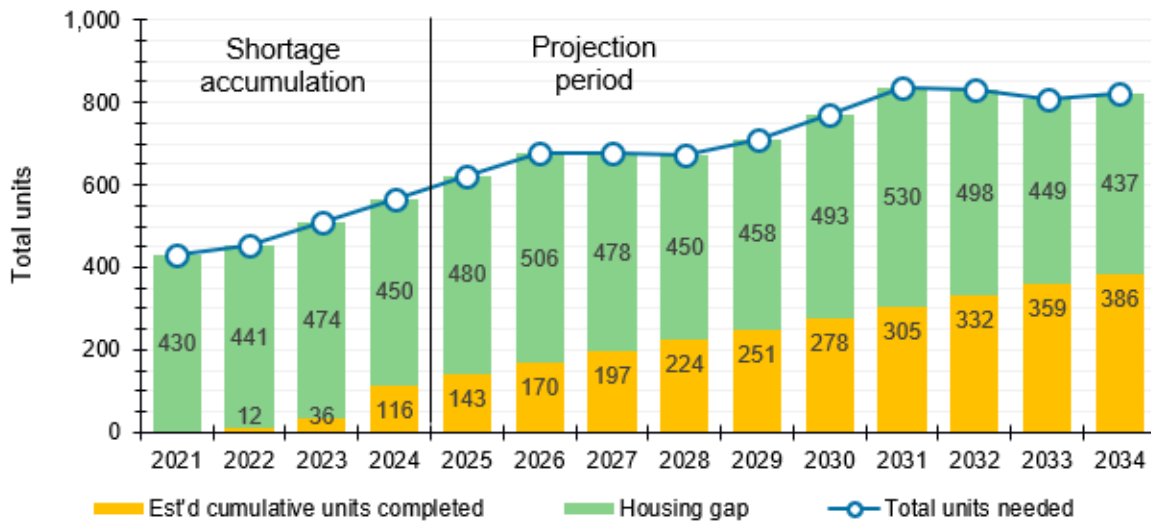
## **Realities and Pace of Construction**

Another factor warranting consideration is the pace of construction, as well as the likelihood that housing gets built at all. More and more, development permits are issued for housing that never gets built, or that take years to be completed and occupied.

The Town's role is to respond to housing needs by creating the conditions to enable the development and investment that is needed. Other factors including labour shortages, rising cost of building materials, interest rates and global economic factors have impacts beyond municipal control. As shown in the graph below, the gap between what is expected to be built year over year, compared to our stated housing needs, is vast. It is highly unlikely that Wolfville will achieve the level of growth we are told we need, even if the Town creates the conditions to enable a higher rate of growth. **Knowing our housing needs, and the fact that we will most likely fall short of demand, how much should the Town support growth?**



### Housing Supply and Demand



Source: Turner Drake & Partners

Figure 4. Housing need versus completion for Wolfville (Turner Drake & Partners, 2025).

## Holding on to what makes us great

In addition to balancing community needs and fiscal sustainability, local governments must also find ways to hang onto and nourish the essence of their communities. The charm of a Town like Wolfville can be the very thing that draws new residents to it. This creates a bit of a Catch 22. Can towns maintain their level of desirability if they grow? Can they maintain their charm if they resist growth? There are trade-offs to either option here.

**Who is to say what the right trade-off is? This is a tough role for local politicians.**

Quality public spaces and the unique characteristics that foster a sense of belonging play a critical role in these discussions. Familiarity with one's surroundings and the connections formed within neighborhoods are essential elements that contribute to the overall well-being of residents. Naturally, different community members will value and feel connection to different aspects of their environment, meaning community values and input must be taken into consideration and evaluated along with professional and expert opinion. Further, new opportunities to encourage and nourish community connection must be enabled to maintain community culture.





Rural authenticity and character are delicate aspects of the regional identity, but to maintain this, towns must be built up, rather than preserved like an artifact under a glass dome, refusing change despite fiscal uncertainty. The towns are set up to change and evolve, and for many this is a tension: **Do we want to concentrate growth within our towns, or sprawl evenly throughout the region? How urban are we comfortable being in an area where people move to be “in the country”?**

Communities need a balance of green space and development, meaning we have a lot of green and open spaces for both people and pets to enjoy, as well as sensitive, ecologically significant habitats and watercourses to cherish. Multi-unit developments must also create open space on their building lots, meaning they open otherwise private land for public enjoyment. This is one example of a trade-off that developments can offer to the wider community beyond tax revenue, but is this an adequate trade? Higher density building types also concentrate more housing units on smaller parcels of land compared to low-density neighbourhoods, potentially leading to the conservation of more open and green space. Condensing development within the Town’s boundary can also mean more precious agricultural land in the region can be maintained for its economic benefits and food security. **What level of open space or public space contribution for development is appropriate in Wolfville relative to the nearby rural areas?**

## **Understanding current conditions**

Thinking about the future of Valley communities isn’t all about the unknowns and projections. Addressing the needs of existing community members is a central factor of growth management. For example, Wolfville has an aging population that is not being replenished by young families. As of 2021, nearly half (40%) of dwelling units in Town are large family, 3+ bedroom homes, despite only 20% of households having three or more people living in them. Housing pressures are mounting for first time buyers and young families, while a lot of people are living in housing that exceeds their needs. Demand for 3+ bedroom homes has been declining in recent years and is expected to continue to decline (Turner Drake & Partners). The greatest demand is for housing with two bedrooms or less.

Most of Wolfville’s housing stock is made up of low-rise apartment buildings and single-family homes. The gap between these two forms is referred to as the ‘missing middle’, which includes duplexes, townhomes, accessory dwelling units like garden or granny





suites, semi-detached homes, and low-rise apartment buildings (less than five stories). These housing options are important for enabling people to downsize so they can age in place, increase starter home options, generate revenue through a secondary suite, and/or make more sustainable use of land and existing municipal services through infill development. This type of growth is commonly referred to as “gentle density” as it provides a great option to maintain the low-rise, welcoming feel that many neighbourhoods are known for, by creating multi-unit housing that from the sidewalk, is virtually indistinguishable from single-family homes, and can be tucked in to gaps and underused spaces.



Figure 5. missing middle housing examples (source: <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/types>)



Figure 6. Pre-approved plan for six plex dwelling unit (CMHC).

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Figure 7. Pre-approved 4-unit dwelling (CMHC).

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Figure 8. Pre-approved render of single-storey Accessory Dwelling Unit (CMHC).

## High cost of housing

People living in Wolfville are spending more on their housing costs than what is deemed 'affordable'. Almost a third of households (29%) are spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs, and some (8%) are in core housing need, meaning they are spending more than 30% of their income on poor housing that does not meet their needs, and are unable to find an alternative. In Wolfville, there are 169 units of non-market housing, (7% of all households) which are either provincially owned and subsidized housing, co-operative housing, or housing owned and operated by an affordable housing non-profit. These units provide permanently affordable housing options, as rents do not fluctuate with market conditions. These units have years-long waitlists and low turnover rates. Identifying opportunities to enable more non-market housing is key to the overall affordability issues households are facing in Town. The Town is striving to grow this sector by creating a bank of Town-owned land to dispose of for permanently affordable housing. It



is also exploring further financial incentives through waiving development fees, and other financial incentives to increase the retention of existing affordable units, and the creation of new units.

More than half of households (56%) in Wolfville are renter households. Most rental units are subject to market conditions, creating housing instability for people who do not own their homes. New rental units tend to be the most expensive per unit, but given the high demand for housing, aging units that typically offer more affordable options, are seeing reinvestment and rental price increases. According to the Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation, the median rent for apartments in Nova Scotia built before 1979 have seen increases greater than 40% in the last four years. Renters are residents of the Town and contribute to its vibrancy and economic vitality, though their voices are often unintentionally excluded from Town discussions. **Should their voices be weighed equally in terms of wants and needs, or should we lend our ears only to those who own their homes? How can municipalities ensure renter voices are heard?**

## Tensions will persist

For many, Wolfville is an idyllic place to live and visit– we have plenty of amenities, a vibrant social scene, and are in a scenic and culturally rich region. When we peel back the layers, though, there are concerns about infrastructure, climate resilience, and community well-being. These issues can create uncertainty for some around how municipalities might manage growth if they can't manage these aspects today.

Wolfville is not facing these challenges alone. The province and country are finding ways to manage growth in more effective ways, slowing population growth where possible, and learning along the way. The tensions with growth will persist, but with careful consideration of values and public interest, municipalities can find opportunities to grow without losing their identity.

Addressing these challenges requires a thoughtful approach. Expanding housing options through missing middle and infill development can help municipalities meet housing demands without extensive sprawl or demolition and reinvestment of existing sites. More mixed use and commercial opportunities that draw people downtown can contribute to a greater tax base, resulting in more ongoing revenue that the Town can use to improve



services and infrastructure. Mixed use downtowns also mean there are more people living, shopping, and contributing to a vibrant downtown. They can enable more opportunities for social connection and community building in beautiful, thoughtful public spaces.

Municipalities are like ecosystems. They require a careful balance of housing and economic activity to sustain themselves. They must balance competing needs to serve the broader public interest. While tensions around growth will persist, acknowledging trade-offs and fostering open dialogue can help communities grow in a way that supports both their character and their residents' well-being.

This article is a snapshot of the ongoing work the Town of Wolfville is undertaking, supported by the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund, to better enable housing in the Town. Through this initiative, the Town has committed to reviewing the municipal planning documents to better enable the housing we need, amending parking requirements to improve housing viability and enhance the feeling of our downtown, encourage more non-market housing options, and support Acadia University to identify options for on-campus housing solutions. There are many more questions to ponder and decisions ahead. For more information on this ongoing initiative and to stay up to date on future public engagement sessions related to this work— see here: [www.wolfvilleblooms.ca/haf](http://www.wolfvilleblooms.ca/haf)

Lindsay Slade is a Community Planner at the Town of Wolfville. Her primary focus is on housing and non-market housing policy development. She is a graduate of the Dalhousie School of Planning and Acadia Master of Community Development programs.



# Community Profile & Housing Needs

Town of Wolfville  
Planning Advisory Committee – April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Presented by:



**TURNER DRAKE & PARTNERS LTD.**  
turnerdrake.com



## Turner Drake & Partners

- Real estate consultancy established in 1976, with 28 professional staff spread across 7 divisions.
- Based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, but with offices and expertise across Canada.





# Presentation Outline

- **Population & Demography**
- Labour Force
- Economic Well-being
- Housing Demand

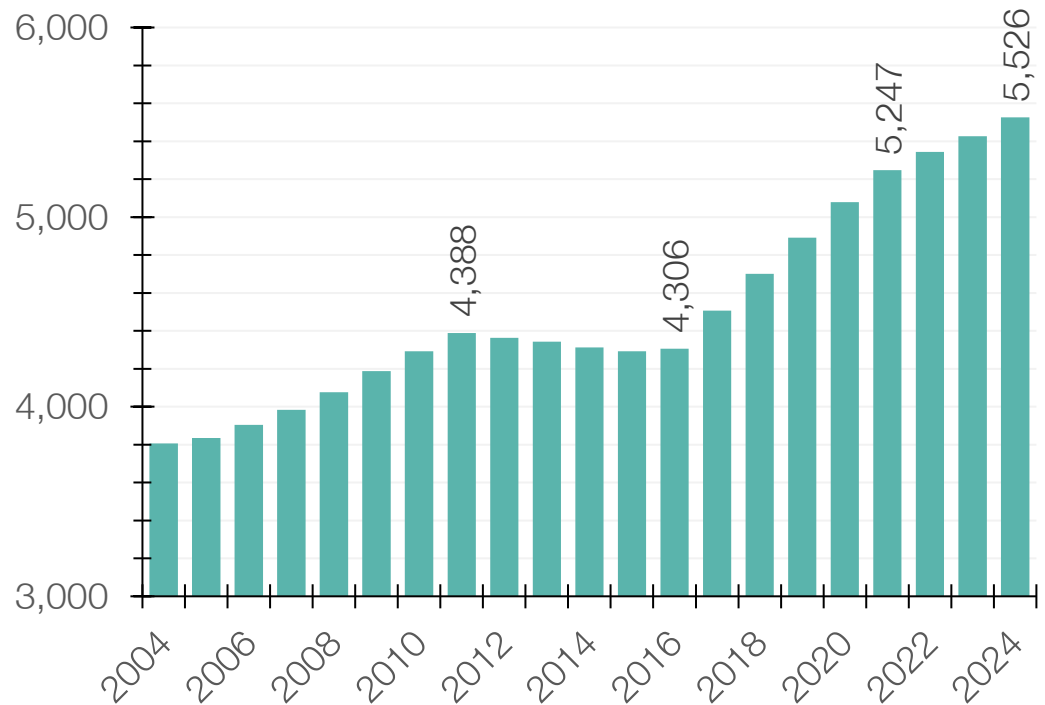


# Population & Demography

Population growth in Wolfville is not a one-time surge – it is a trend that is likely to continue

- Wolfville's population was estimated at 5,526 in 2024.
- Annual estimates show steady growth since 2016, at +3.2% per year.
- The new residents since 2016 skew younger. The median age decreased from 47.4 to 41.6 in 2021.

Annual population estimates, Town of Wolfville, 2004 to 2024



Source: Statistics Canada

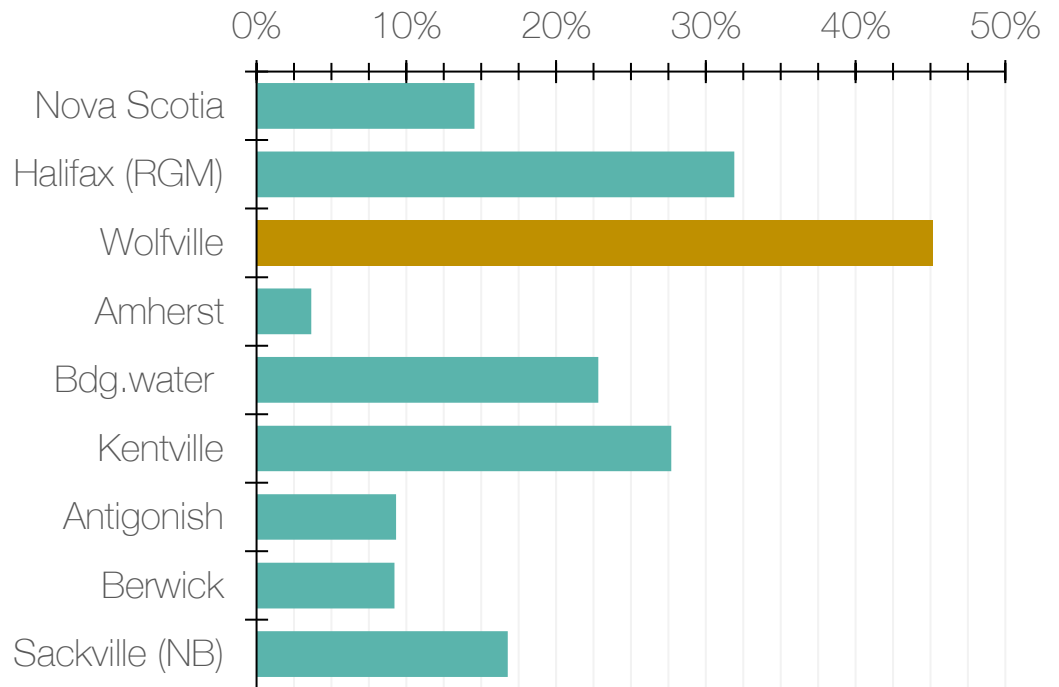


# Population & Demography

## Population growth is strongest and fastest in Wolfville over the last two decades

- Wolfville had the highest overall growth in population – higher than NS overall and HRM.
- Wolfville's average annual growth rate was 1.9% per year.

Population growth by community, 2004 to 2024



Source: Statistics Canada

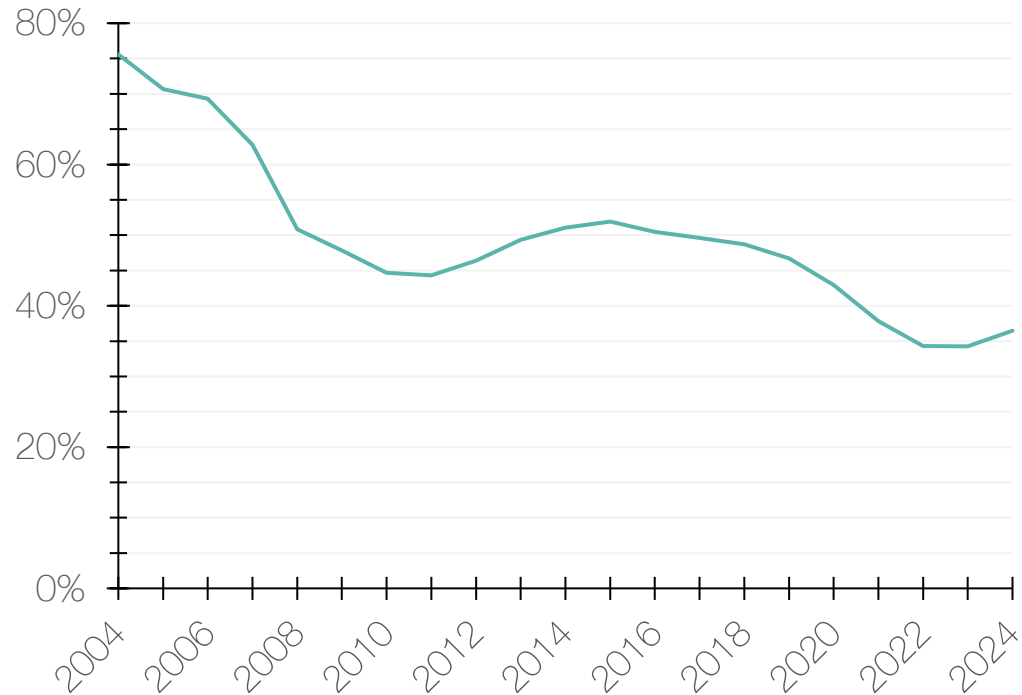


# Population & Demography

The share of the Town's population made up of temporary residents is shrinking, and will likely continue to shrink

- The Town's international and out-of-province students' share of total people has been declining.
- In 2024, 36% of the total population could be non-residents, down from 76% in 2004.
- In other words, a larger share of Wolfville's population are those who live in Wolfville, long-term

International and out-of-province student share, 2004 to 2024



Source: derived by Turner Drake & Partners

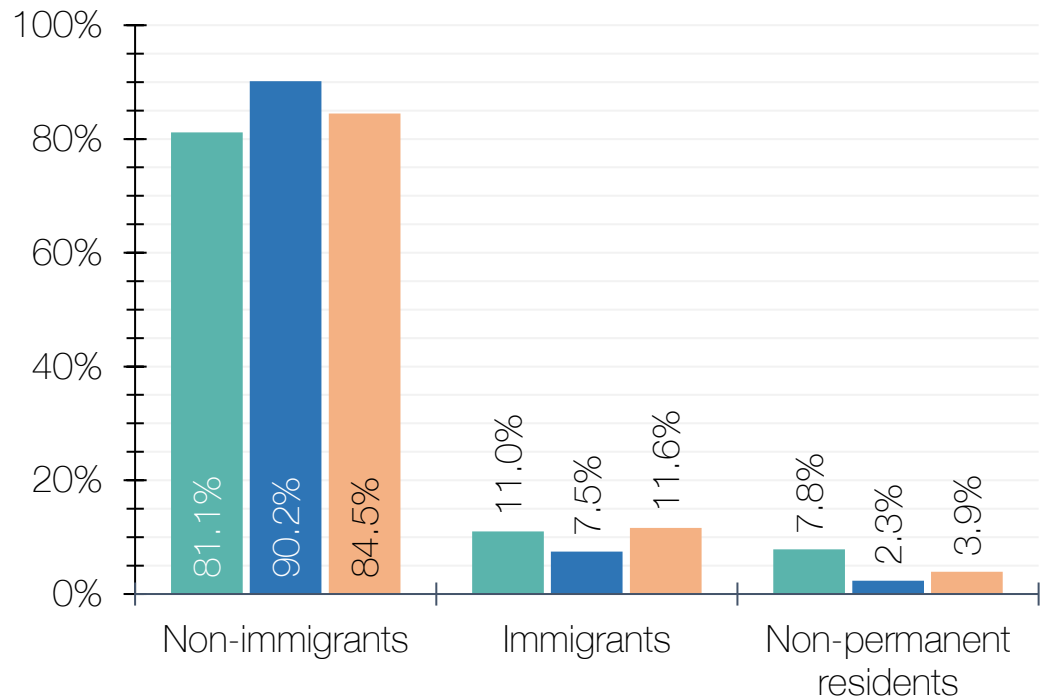


# Population & Demography

## Wolfville has a higher share of immigrants and non-permanent residents than the Province or the HRM

- In 2021, 11% of the population were immigrants – higher than the Province and similar to HRM.
- Wolfville's high share of international students meant that ~ 8% of residents were NPRs, much higher than the Province and the HRM.

Share of population by immigration status by community, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada



# Population & Demography

## People moving to Wolfville, stay in Wolfville

- In 2021, there were 1,175 people in Wolfville who moved here from other Nova Scotia communities (primarily Halifax). About 390 persons migrated in 2020 alone.
- There were 660 residents of the Town who moved here from elsewhere in Canada (primarily Ontario or Alberta). About 290 arrived in 2020.
- The Town also recorded 475 international migrants, which do not necessarily mean only immigrants and non-permanent residents, but also includes Canadian's who were previously living abroad. Of the total, 85 migrated in 2020.
- Although detailed migration numbers are not available at an annual level, since net population growth is consistently positive for Wolfville, we can assume that most people moving to town permanently – unlike students – are staying in Wolfville.

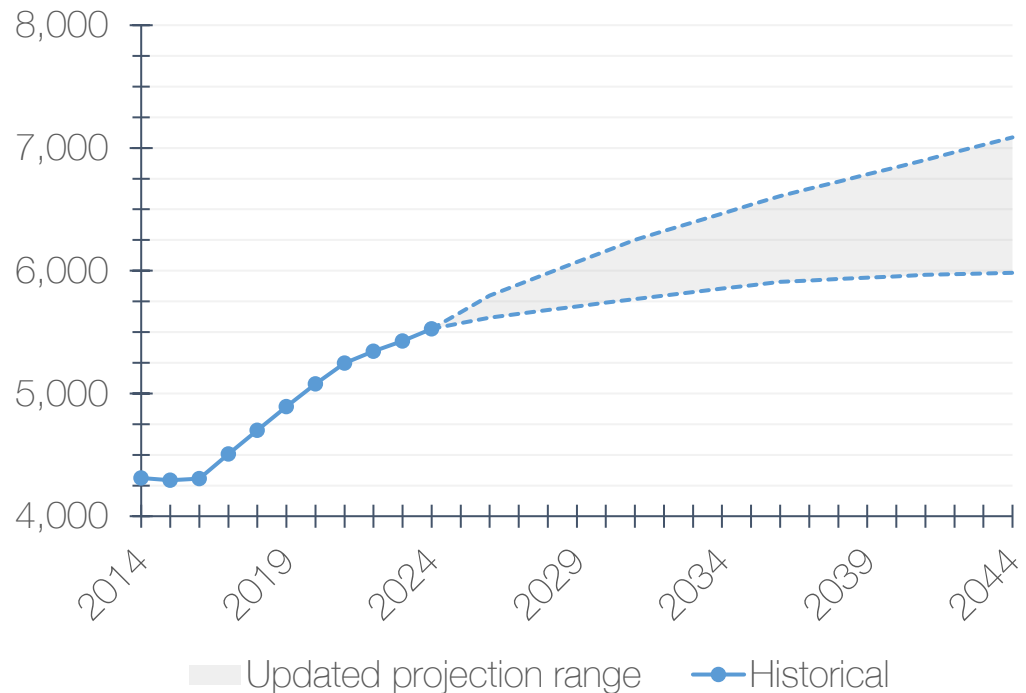


# Population & Demography

## Wolfville's population is projected to increase in every scenario

- Projections are an educated guess – a black box where uncertainty always lingers.
- Latest projections incorporate recent federal immigration plans past migration trends.

Population projection, Wolfville, 2014 to 2044



Source: Statistics Canada

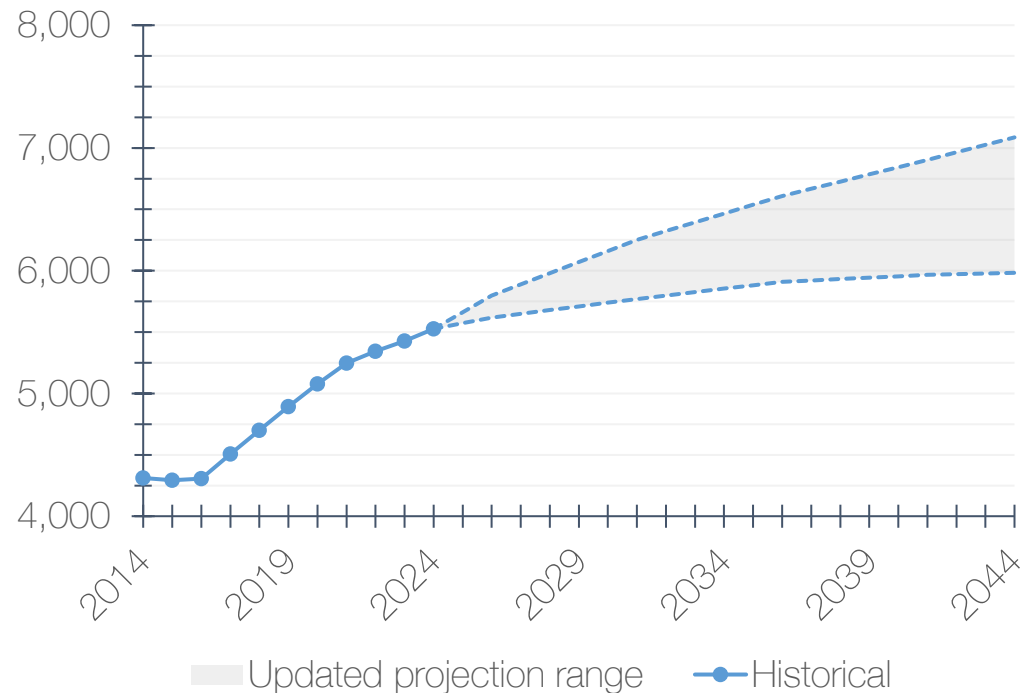


# Population & Demography

Wolfville's population is projected to increase in every scenario

- Regardless of which scenario is considered – maximum, average, minimum growth – Wolfville is going to see its population grow
- Projected Population by 2034:
  - Low: 5,853
  - Average: 6,099
  - High: 6,323

Population projection, Wolfville, 2014 to 2044



Source: Statistics Canada



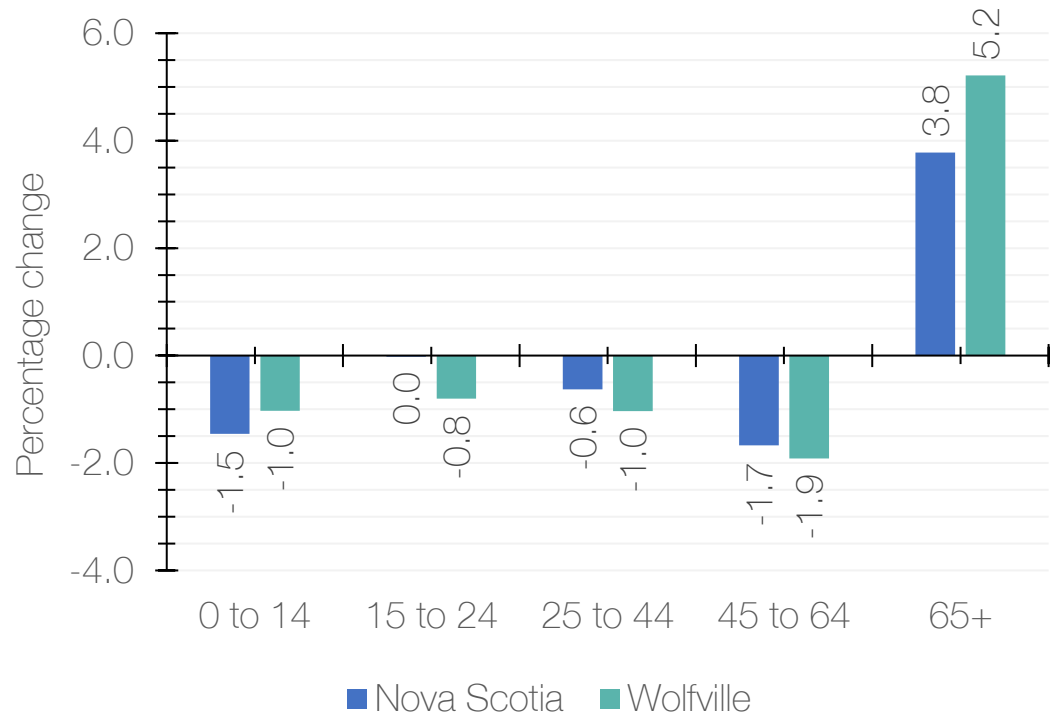


# Population & Demography

## Wolfville's population will grow, but its residents will skew older

- The low scenario projects 5.9% growth from 2024 and 2034.
- The share of those aged 65+ years should grow by 5.2pp
- Share of residents at every other age group is projected to decline.
- Declines stem from lower international and interprovincial migration.

Population projection, Wolfville, 2014 to 2044



Source: Statistics Canada and Turner Drake & Partners



# Presentation Outline

- Population & Demography
- **Labour Force**
- Economic Well-being
- Housing Demand

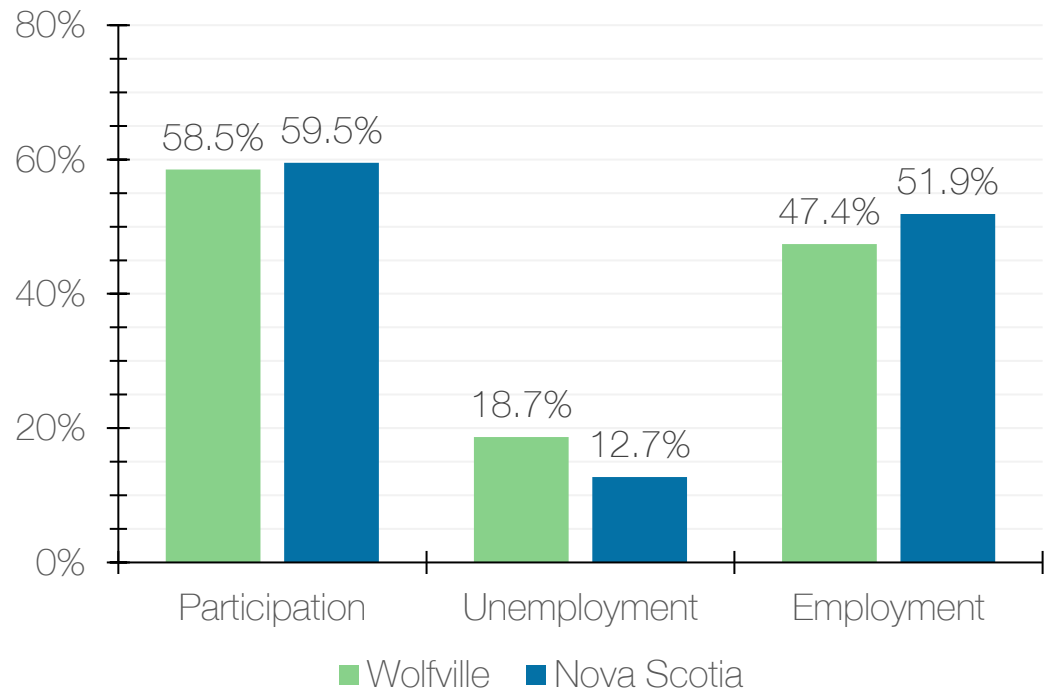


# Labour Force

## Wolfville's labour market needs to improve to attract young professionals

- **Note** that 2021 Census was done in May 2021.
- Labour market in Wolfville has room to improve.
- The continued effect of student age populations and growing seniors may keep labour metrics low relative to the province overall.

Labour market metrics, Wolfville and Nova Scotia, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada



# Presentation Outline

- Population & Demography
- Labour Force
- **Economic Well-being**
- Housing Demand



# Economic Well-being

## Poverty heightened by students in Wolfville

- Wolfville's overall poverty rate was 18.7%, higher than the Province and HRM.
- The rate was 50% for the 18-to-24 age group – also higher than HRM and NS.
- Wolfville has higher poverty rates for all age groups 25+ compared to NS and HRM

Poverty rates by age (Market Basket Measure), 2021

Age Groups	Nova Scotia	HRM	Wolfville
Total	9.8%	10.7%	18.7%
0 to 17 years	11.4%	11.7%	8.0%
18 to 24 years	18.4%	23.1%	50.0%
25 to 54 years	9.5%	9.9%	11.7%
55 to 64 years	10.6%	9.4%	13.3%
65 years and over	5.5%	5.9%	6.3%

Source: Statistics Canada

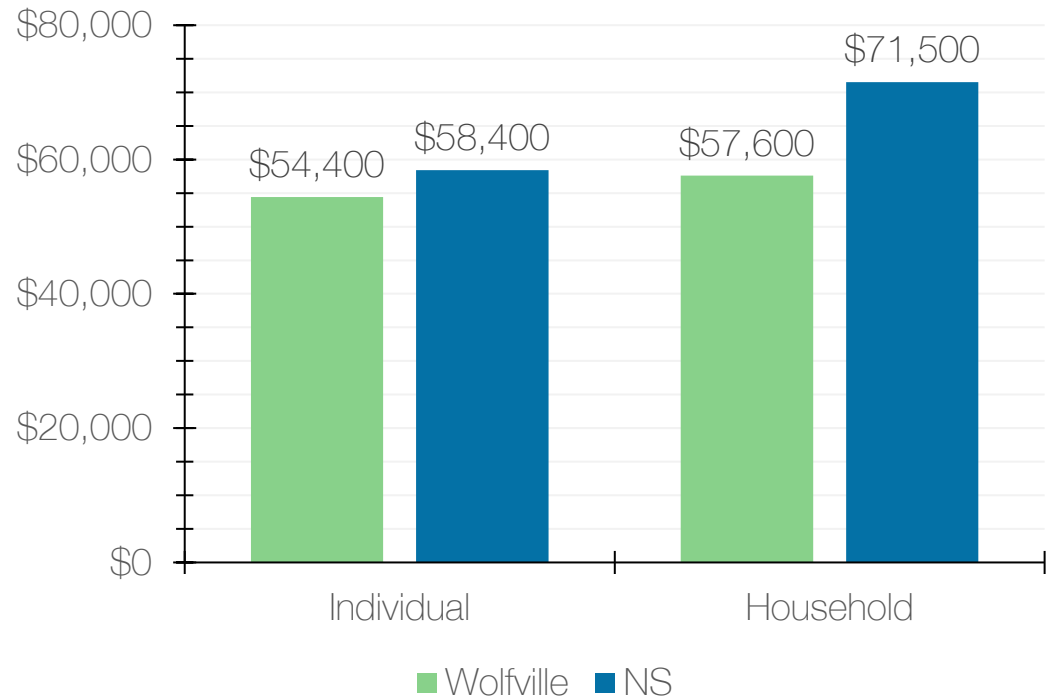


# Economic Well-being

## Median income in Wolfville lower due to larger student proportion

- Median individual and household incomes were reported as less than the Province in 2021.
- Lower incomes stem from the higher share of student populations.

Median income, Wolfville and Nova Scotia, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada



# Presentation Outline

- Population & Demography
- Labour Force
- Economic Well-being
- **Housing Demand**

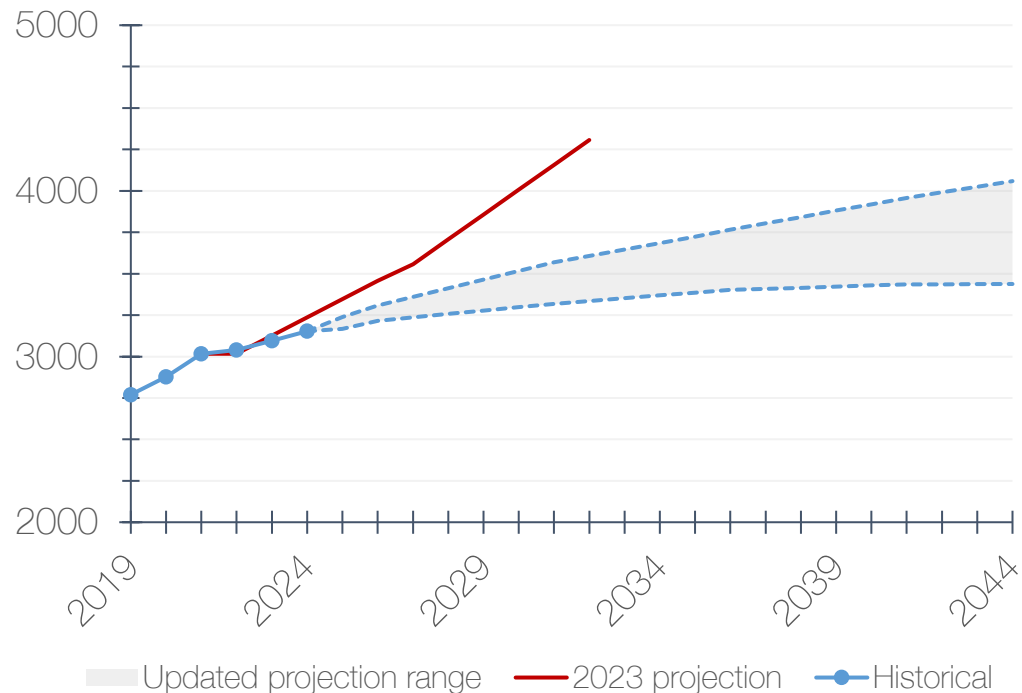


# Housing Demand

The demand for dwellings is anticipated to grow no matter the scenario, but by noticeably less than those produced in 2023

- The 2023 HNA reported a need to build 1,455 new dwellings by 2032 (including shortages).
- New projections suggest anywhere from 780 to 1,100 by 2034.
- The difference stems from changes to immigration targets, which should impact Wolfville.

Projected dwellings, Wolfville, 2019 to 2044



Source: Turner Drake & Partners and 2023 Wolfville HNA



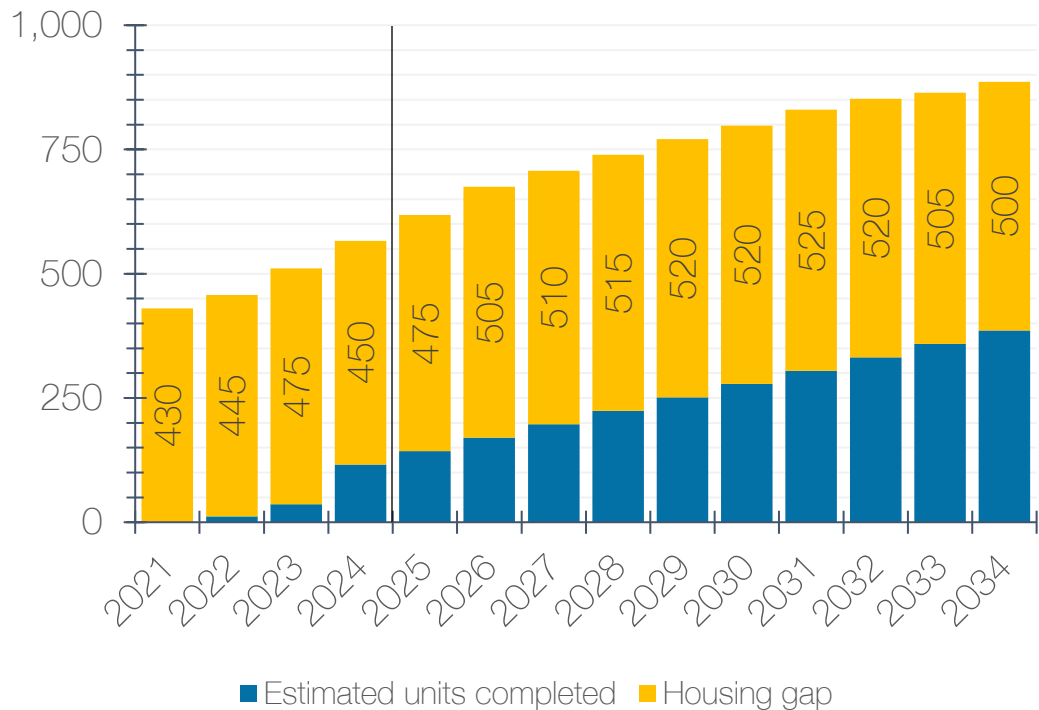


# Housing Demand

If the pace of construction follows historical trends, a dwelling gap will persist over the next decade

- The chart shows a low growth scenario and thus shows the minimum that would need to be built over the next decade.
- The future is uncertain, and it is very possible growth will be higher than noted, especially if immigration targets change.

Projected dwelling gap, Wolfville, 2021 to 2044



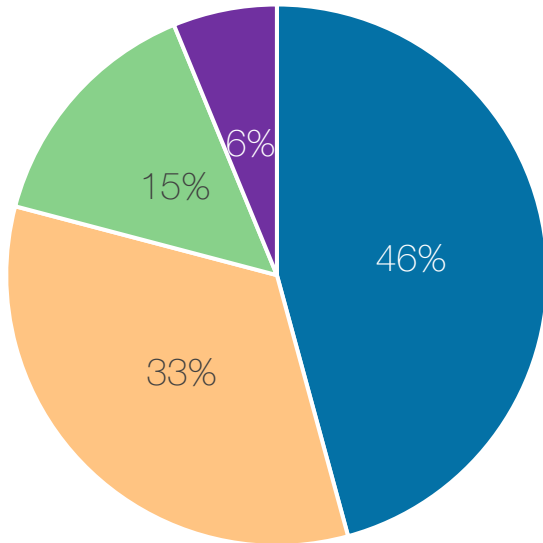
Source: Turner Drake & Partners



# Housing Demand

New dwelling demand will look different than past construction, due to changing demographics and worsening affordability

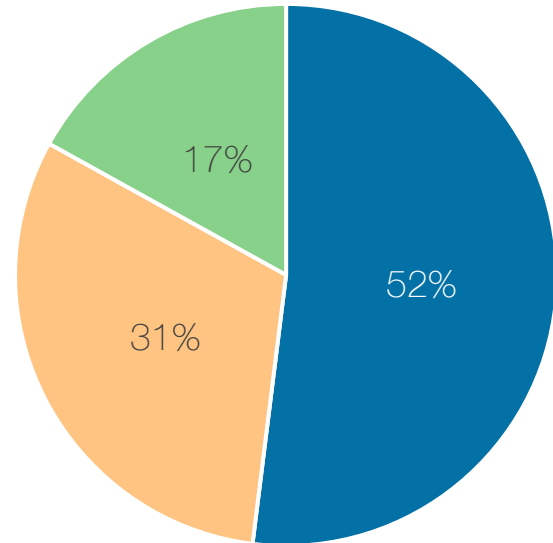
New demand by unit size, 2034



■ 0- / 1-bed ■ 2-bed ■ 3-bed ■ 4+ bed

Source: Turner Drake & Partners

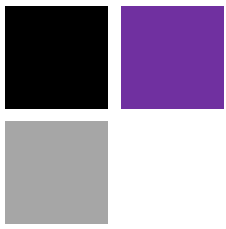
New demand by price model, 2034



■ Market housing ■ Below-market  
■ Deeply affordable

Source: Turner Drake & Partners





# Questions?



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Manager, Economic Intelligence Unit  
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Community Profile & Housing Needs Update  
(Draft)  
Town of Wolfville, Nova Scotia



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**COMMUNITY PROFILE AND HOUSING NEEDS UPDATE**

**TOWN OF WOLFVILLE  
NOVA SCOTIA**

**PREPARED FOR  
TOWN OF WOLFVILLE**

**AS OF  
19<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2025**

**BY**

**ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE UNIT**

**TURNER DRAKE & PARTNERS LTD.  
HALIFAX - NOVA SCOTIA**

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Regulated by RICS

Our Ref: 2519762

19 March 2025

Lindsay Slade  
Community Planner  
Town of Wolfville  
200 Dykeland Street  
Wolfville, NS B4P 1A2

Dear Lindsay:

**Re: Community profile and Housing Needs Update**

This report is intended only to be used for strategic planning purposes and only by the Town of Wolfville, our client for this assignment. Use of the report for other purposes or by other parties may invalidate the conclusions.

**Scope of Work**

Update to the community profile and the housing needs assessment for the Town of Wolfville.

**Quality Standards**

Turner Drake's quality assurance system, which covers the conduct of all of our operations, is registered to the ISO 9001:2015 standard. This assignment has been conducted in accordance with our quality assurance system. This analysis assignment also conforms to the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) adopted by the Appraisal Standards Board of the Appraisal Foundation.

Yours truly,

TURNER DRAKE & PARTNERS LTD.

**Jigme Choerab**  
Manager  
Economic Intelligence Unit





## Executive Summary

Wolfville is at a pivotal moment in its growth, experiencing rapid population increases and evolving community needs. Over the past two decades, the town has attracted a dynamic mix of students, young professionals, and retirees, drawn by its charm, strong educational presence, and high quality of life. This growth brings exciting opportunities for economic vitality, cultural enrichment, and community development—but also presents challenges in housing, infrastructure, and fiscal sustainability.

One of the most pressing concerns is housing availability and affordability. Wolfville's appeal has led to high demand for homes, but new construction has struggled to keep pace. Many residents—whether students looking for affordable rentals, young families searching for starter homes, or retirees hoping to downsize—are finding fewer options that fit their needs. While recent zoning reforms have opened the door for more diverse housing types, ensuring that new development is both accessible and sustainable will be critical to maintaining the town's livability.

At the same time, Wolfville's infrastructure is under growing pressure. More residents mean greater demands on roads, public services, and essential utilities like water and wastewater systems. The town must balance these needs carefully, ensuring that investments in infrastructure are timely, well-planned, and financially sustainable. Strategic improvements, will be essential to support growth while preserving Wolfville's unique character and environmental resilience.

Financially, the town's ability to fund these changes depends largely on property tax revenues, which have risen alongside population growth. However, if housing shortages persist and infrastructure investments are not managed effectively, the costs of maintaining services could strain municipal finances. A balanced approach to development, where housing, infrastructure, and economic growth move in sync, will be key to keeping Wolfville both affordable and prosperous in the years to come.

Looking ahead, Wolfville has a unique opportunity to shape its future thoughtfully. By embracing smart planning, encouraging diverse and affordable housing options, and making targeted infrastructure investments, the town can continue to thrive as a vibrant, welcoming, and sustainable community. With proactive leadership and collaboration between local government, businesses, and residents, Wolfville is well-positioned to build on its strengths and ensure a bright future for generations to come.

### 1. Location & Geography

The Town of Wolfville is situated in Kings County at the head of the Annapolis Valley where the Cornwallis River empties into the Minas Basin and the Bay of Fundy. The town's diverse topography ranges from the low lying dykelands built by the Acadians to steep hillsides that offer magnificent views of Cape Blomidon and the Minas Basin. Before the construction of the dykes, the area in and around the Town of Wolfville were marshlands. Most of the water in the area was drained due to the dykes' construction by the Acadians, and further expanded by New England Planters.]

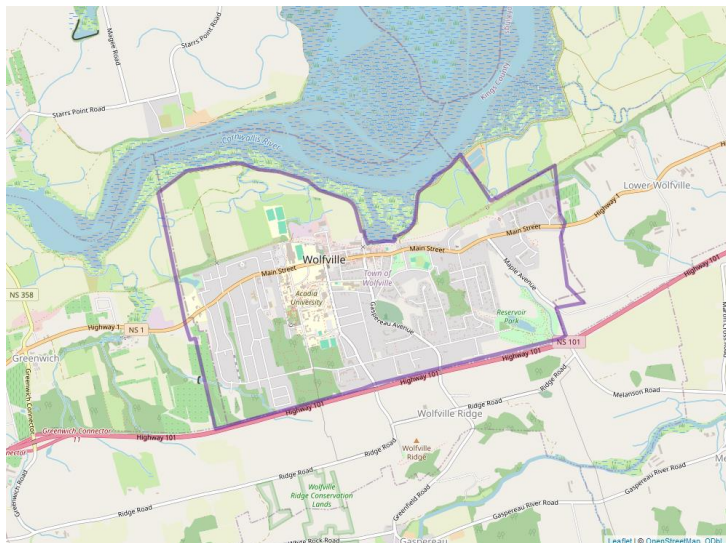
The Town has a geographic area of approximately seven square kilometres and is surrounded beyond the Town boundary by orchards and agricultural land that acts as an agricultural 'green belt,' which is also subject to land use regulations through the County of Kings.

The [Flood Risk Mitigation Plan](#) published by the Town of Wolfville highlights that inland and coastal flooding could occur in the Town due to the topography of the Town, in combination with rising precipitation and sea levels. The Town of Wolfville and the provincial government are working together to elevate the waterfront park and the surrounding dyke walls to provide additional coastal flood protection in response to potential climate change impacts.

Residential development has tended to be built on the southern hillside portion of the Town while the more mixed-use, commercial and limited industrial uses have been concentrated on "the flats" spreading east

Commented [LS1]: Should include First Nation history here (staff will add)

and west from the core area adjacent to the harbour and agricultural land that occupies the northern extents of the incorporated Town boundary.



## 2. Community & culture

It is the intricate combination of geography, culture and history as exhibited in the built heritage, community events, and institutions, along with the landscape of the Town environs that make Wolfville such a unique place to be.

Wolfville is home to Acadia University and is the regional educational and cultural centre of the Annapolis Valley. Wolfville has developed a reputation for being a welcoming place to newcomers and a hub of artistic activities and cultural events.

The strong ties that exist between Acadia University and the Town lend themselves to a culture supportive of learning, creativity and community involvement. There is a strong interconnection between the culture of a community and its economic life. Council recognizes this connection and supports efforts to strengthen Wolfville's cultural diversity for the benefit of community vitality. Community culture, diversity and vitality are an integral component of social and cultural sustainability.

## 3. Land Use

According to 2020 data from the Town of Wolfville, approximately 35.1% of the Town's total land area is designated for low density residential – general (R-2: 10.1%), low density residential – restricted (R-1: 10.4%), medium density residential (R-3: 10.8%), and high density residential (R-4: 3.9%). There are still opportunities to diversify the residential land uses by providing opportunity for 'missing middle' housing forms, innovative housing, a focus on affordability, and home-based business.

Commented [LS2]: This will need to be updated with plan review.

### Land Use Breakdowns (detailed), Town of Wolfville, 2020

Details	Zone Name	Land Use Share
Other	Active Transportation Corridor	1.6%

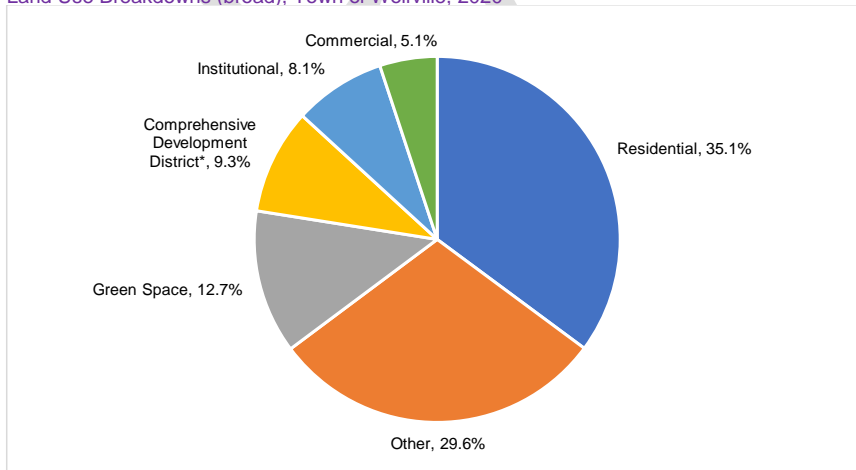
	Agriculture	28.1%
	Comprehensive Development District*	9.3%
Commercial	Core Commercial	1.7%
	Neighbourhood Commercial	3.1%
	Core Commercial - Large Format	0.3%
Residential	Low Density Residential - R-2 General	10.1%
	Low Density Residential - R-1 Restricted	10.4%
	Medium Density Residential - R-3	10.8%
	High Density Residential - R-4	3.9%
Institutional	Institutional General	2.4%
	Institutional University	5.7%
Green Space	Parks and Open Space	6.5%
	University Open Space	6.2%

\*New zoning categories were introduced in the comprehensive development district in 2023.  
 Note: Shares are all approximate values.  
 Source: Turner Drake & Partners; Town of Wolfville

Approximately 9.3% of the Town's total land is dedicated as the comprehensive development district. In 2023, The Town zoned lands in the East End which fell under these comprehensive development districts, and introduced new zoning categories that have more development rights. These new zoning categories are:

- R-LD4, intended to permit a range of low-density residential housing;
- R-LR, intended to permit a range of medium density residential development ranging from two-unit dwellings to multi-unit dwellings with up to 50 units;
- R-MDU, intended to permit a range of high-density residential development to a maximum of 120 units per building; and
- MU, intended to permit a range of mixed commercial, office, hotel, and high-density residential use buildings.

Land Use Breakdowns (broad), Town of Wolfville, 2020



\*New zoning categories were introduced in the comprehensive development district in 2023.  
 Note: Shares are all approximate values.  
 Source: Turner Drake & Partners; Town of Wolfville

Approximately 5.1% of the Town's total area is designated for core commercial (1.7%), neighbourhood commercial (3.1%), and core commercial – large format (0.3%). The share is an increase from the share of 4.0% reported in 2013.

Institutional general and university make up approximately 2.4% and 5.7%, respectively. Parks and open space are dedicated about 6.5%, while approximately 6.2% is for university open space.

Some 1.6% of the Town's total area is for the active transportation corridor, and approximately 28.1% is for agricultural use.]

Commented [LS3]: And this

#### 4. Fiscal Health and Revenue

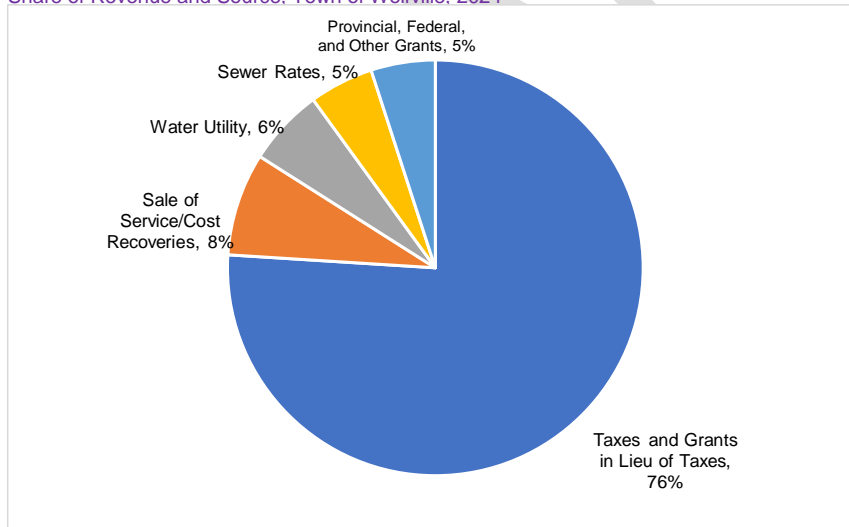
According to the Consolidated Financials of the Town of Wolfville, 2024, taxes and grants in lieu of taxes made up 76% of the total budget of the Town, contributing approximately, \$9.6 million, and \$1.1 million, respectively, to total 2024 revenue.

The second largest source of revenue for the Town is sale of service/cost recoveries that make up 8% of the total revenue, bringing in approximately \$1.2 million.

Unconditional and conditional transfers and grants from the Provincial and Federal governments, along with other sources make up 5% of the total revenue, which is about \$680,000.

Lastly, water utility and sewer rates make up 6% and 5%, respectively of the Town's entire revenue for a total of \$1.8 million.

Share of Revenue and Source, Town of Wolfville, 2024



Source: Town of Wolfville

87% of the entire 2024 revenue of the Town of Wolfville comes from taxes and grants in lieu of taxes, water utility, and sewer rates.

Overall revenue for the Town increased from \$13.6 million in 2023 to \$14.4 million in 2024, a jump of about \$800,000, almost all of which came from taxes, water, and sewage.

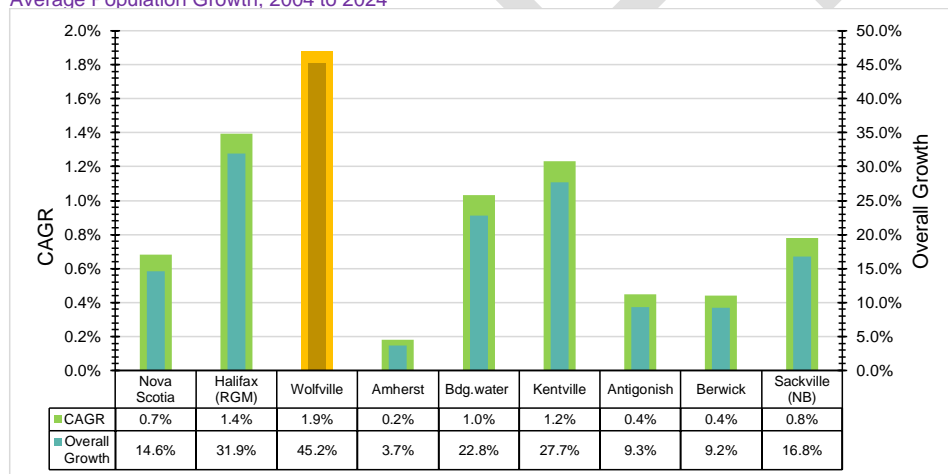
## 5. Population

According to Census 2021, Wolfville had 5,247 residents in 2021, growing 20.5% over the 2016 figure of 4,195. More recent data can be drawn using sub-provincial population estimates from Statistics Canada, which approximate the population of the Town to be 5,526 as of 2024. Between 2004 and 2024, the Town of Wolfville saw its population grow by 45.2% overall, reflecting a growth of 1.9% per year.

Growth observed in the Town of Wolfville is higher than the 1.2% annual average (+14.8% overall) increase reported by Nova Scotia over same time period. The more recent period of growth comes after the Town saw a decline in population of 1.9% (-89 people) between 2011 and 2016. This period was when the entirety of Atlantic Canada saw a decline in population, with younger workers moving primarily to Alberta.

Measuring the Town of Wolfville's population growth against towns like Amherst, Bridgewater, Kentville, Antigonish, Berwick, and Sackville (NB), the Town leads the list in terms of both annual average growth (+1.9% per year), as well as overall growth (45.2%) over the last two decades. Growth in the Town even outpaced the HRM, that saw an average annual growth of 1.4% and an overall growth rate of 31.9% between 2004 and 2024.

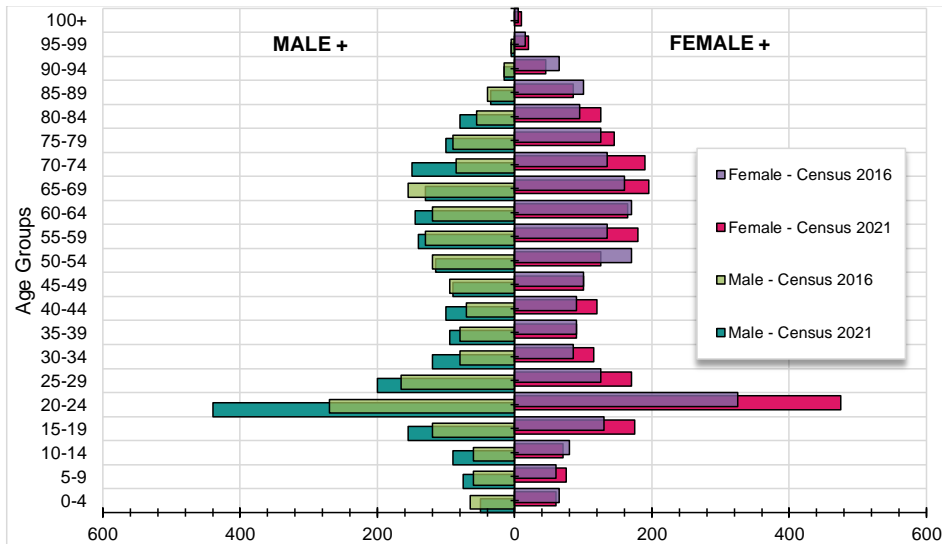
Average Population Growth, 2004 to 2024



Source: Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0155-01 and Table 17-10-0152-01.

### Age Characteristics

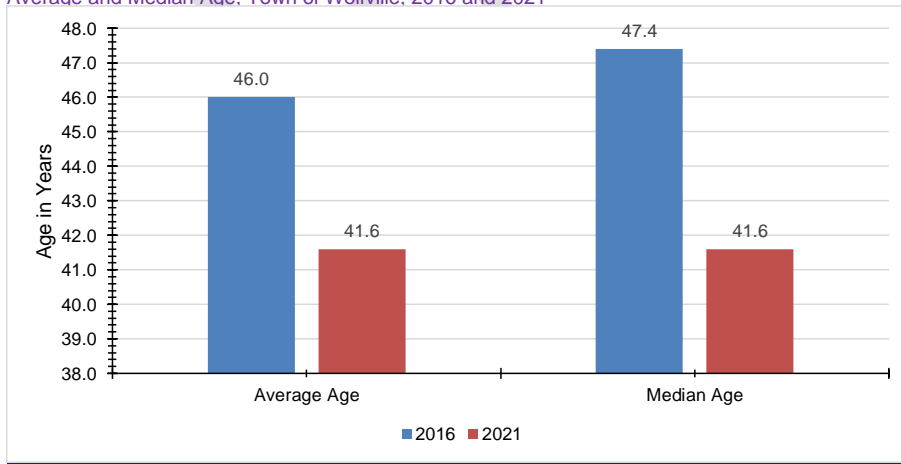
#### Wolfville Population Pyramid, 2016 and 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 & 2021.

Shifting back to data from the 2021 Census, median age in Wolfville dropped to 41.6 years, a decrease of 4.4 years since 2016 when the average age of the Town was 46.0 years. Even the median age declined from 47.4 years in 2016 to 41.6 years in 2021. The share of the population aged 65 years and over declined by 1.1 percentage points, falling from 27.4% in 2016 to 26.3% in 2021. The Town's share of those aged 85 years and over has also decreased from 5.7% in 2016 to 4.2% in 2021.

**Average and Median Age, Town of Wolfville, 2016 and 2021**

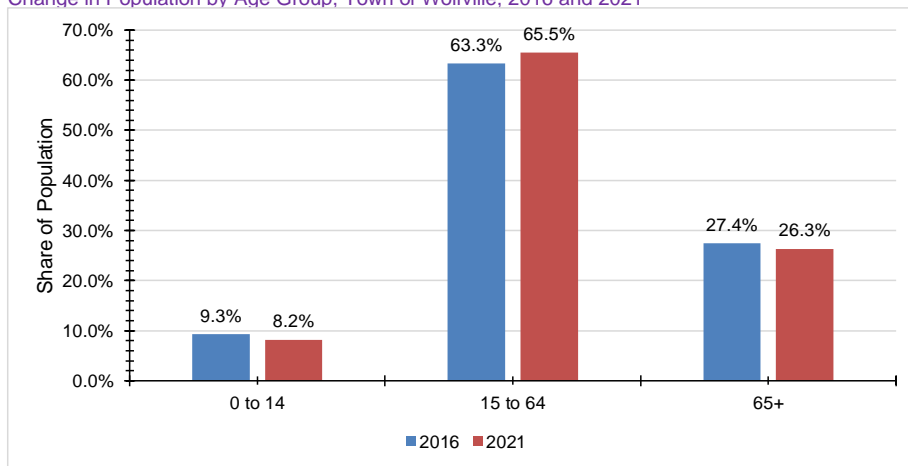


Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 & 2021.

The working age population (15 to 64 years) of the Town represents 65.5% of the total, 30.6% of whom fell in the category considered to be prime working age (25 to 44 years). In 2016, the working age

population made up 63.3% of the Town's total, 29.2% of whom were in their prime working age. 8.2% of the Town's population were aged 0 to 14 years in 2021, a decline from 9.3% in 2016.

Change in Population by Age Group, Town of Wolfville, 2016 and 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 & 2021.

Based on the numbers from the 2016 and 2021 census years, the Town of Wolfville appears to have grown younger between the two census years, with lower median and average ages, a shrinking senior population (those aged 65 years and over), and a growing working age population. This was, however, accompanied by a shrinking share of those aged 14 and under. The combination of these trends suggests that Wolfville is growing younger due to positive net migration to the Town.

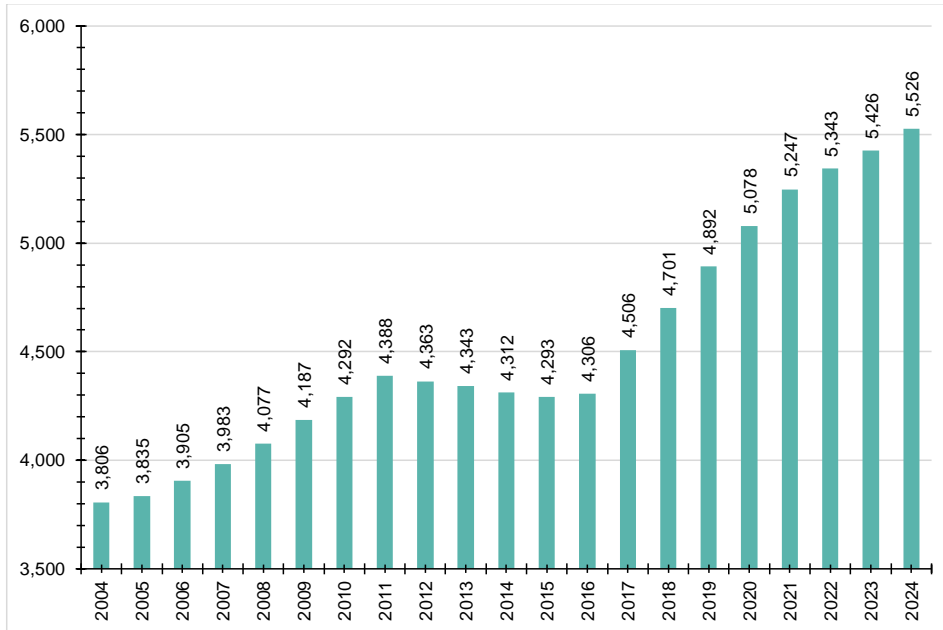
The positive net migration that Wolfville recorded in 2021 may on the surface seem like an entirely COVID-19 driven phenomena, however, there may be other forces at play.

Comparing populations in just the 2016 and 2021 census years show that the Town saw a much larger share younger people, especially of those aged 20 to 24 years. While a quick glance may indicate that more students may have remained in the Town during the time census data was collected in May 2021 due to travel restrictions, this effect may have been somewhat balanced because many students could have not moved to Wolfville due to the same pandemic-induced restrictions, and the global shift towards remote learning.

More evidence that the pandemic may not be the sole driver of the young-population growth in Wolfville can be found when looking at population growth in the years between 2016 and 2021, and beyond till 2024.

Commented [LS4]: This is because students were here in 2021 with pandemic compared to other years? Will this happen again?

Annual Population Estimates, Town of Wolfville, 2004 to 2024



Source: Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0155-01.

The chart above shows that migration trends before COVID-19 overall played a more notable role in Wolfville's demographic trend. Although age profiles are not captured in the annual population estimates of the Town, given the share of those aged 65 years and over in 2021 was lower than in 2016, it is safe to assume that most of the growth in population was made up of younger movers. Young professionals, attracted to the relatively lower cost of living in Wolfville, remote work opportunities, and the appealing lifestyle, likely moved to Wolfville, increasing the working aged population.

Although the pandemic did play a role, the combination of an influx of young adults before the pandemic, while the outflow of seniors and families with children may have played a larger role than previously anticipated in lowering the median and average ages. This signals a sustained shift in the Town's demographic landscape.

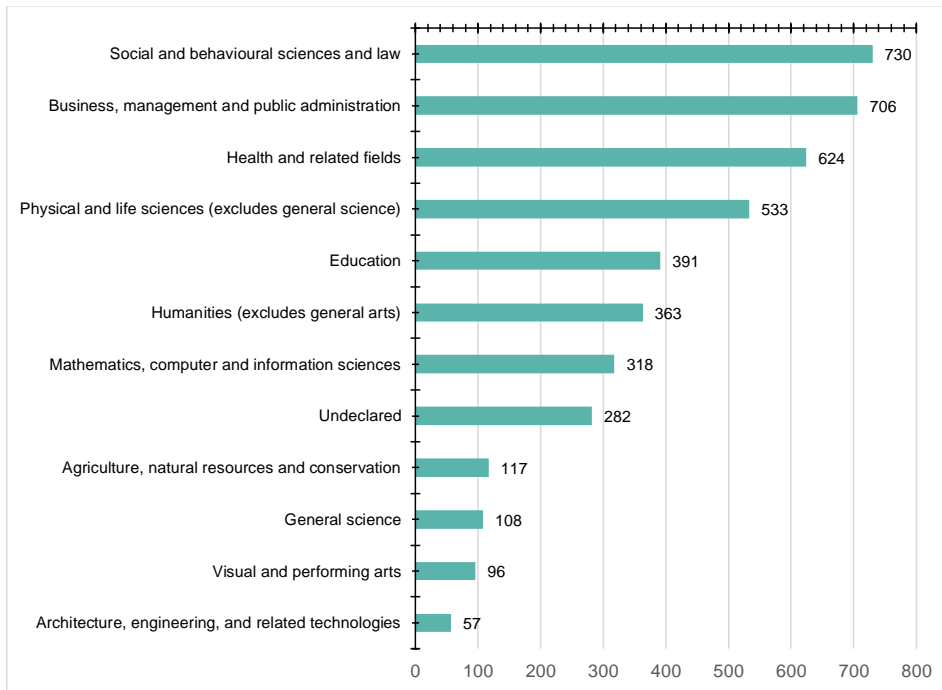
Acadia University's Influence on Population

Every year, Acadia University welcomes more than 4,000 students enrolled across more than ten major fields of study. According to data from the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC), Acadia University had a total of 4,325 registered full- and part-time students in the academic year 2023-24.

The following chart details enrolment figures by broad field of studies as defined by MPHEC. Programs in social and behavioural sciences and law attracted the most students at Acadia University with 730 enrolments, 16.9% of the total student body, while programs in business, management, and public administration were the second most popular with 706 students, 16.3% of the total.

Acadia University, Enrolment by Field of Study, 2023-2024



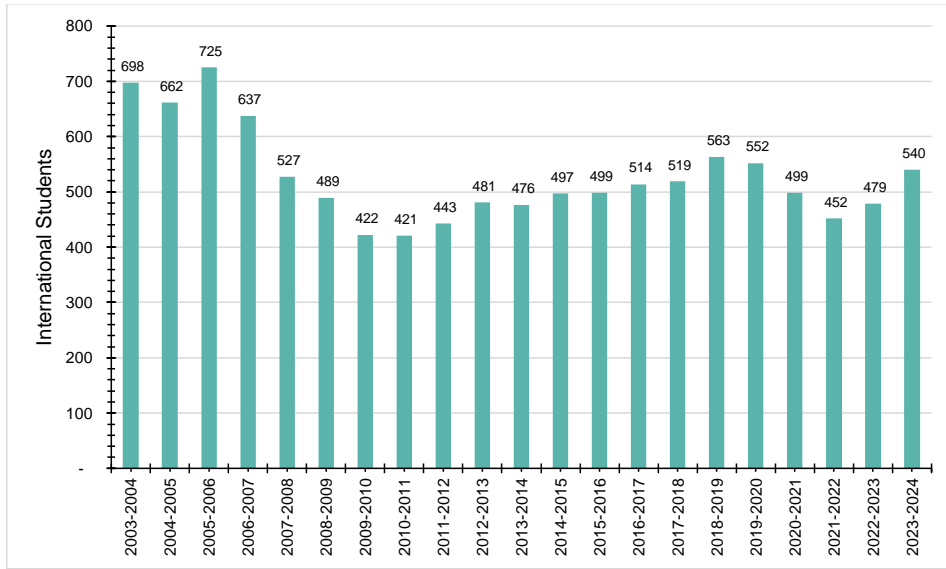


Source: Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC)

Over the past two decades, more than 10% of all enrolments at Acadia University can be attributed to international students. In 2023-24, Acadia recorded 540 international students, the highest it has been since numbers dropped as an aftermath of COVID-19. Although, international figures do remain lower than what they were between 2003 and 2007, at an average of 680 per year.

A notable trend in the chart below is the decline in international student enrolment between 2006 and 2011. This decline can be attributed to a multitude of factors like global economic conditions, shifts in Canadian immigration policies, structural changes in Acadia University's offering, and competition from other post-secondary institutions from across the country.

However, national data suggests that international student figures increased for Canada in the years immediately following the Great recession. In 2008, Canada also unveiled the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) program to facilitate permanent residency for skilled workers and international students in Canada with a Canadian degree or work experience. This suggests that the drop in international student enrolment in Acadia stemmed from more students opting to move to other post-secondary institutions in larger provinces and cities, where work experience was more likely to be acquired and a job opportunity in the students' desired fields were more common.



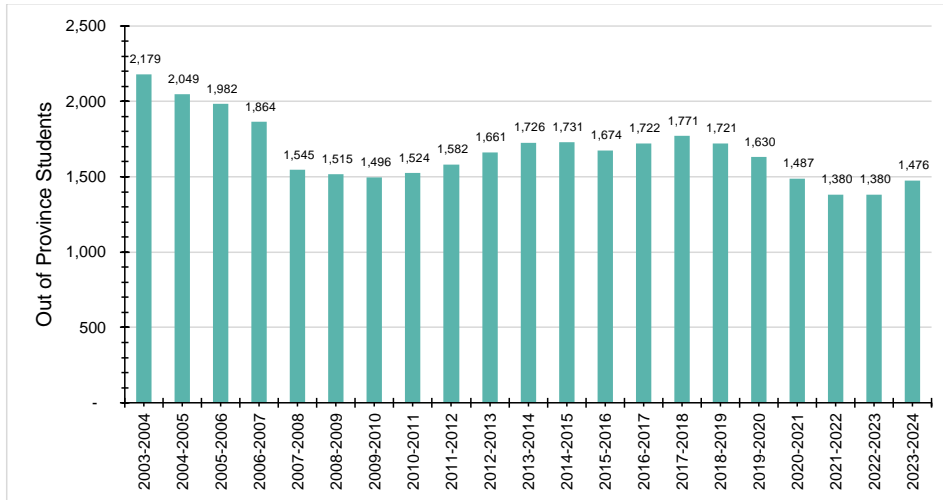
Source: Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC)

International student figures at Acadia University have never returned to their pre-2008 levels, and is unlikely to do so, unless labour market opportunities improve in the town. Especially given the study permit caps and lower overall immigration targets outlined by the Federal government, Acadia University and the Town of Wolfville would have to be more attractive than cities like Halifax, Toronto, Montreal, etc., to increase international student numbers.

Shifting focus from international to interprovincial students, 1,476 students enrolled at Acadia in 2023-24 were not residents of Nova Scotia, meaning they travelled to Nova Scotia to study at Acadia University. The University consistently attracts more than a thousand students from elsewhere in Canada every year, but there used to be a time, before 2007, when close to 2,000 students from elsewhere in Canada studied at Acadia University.

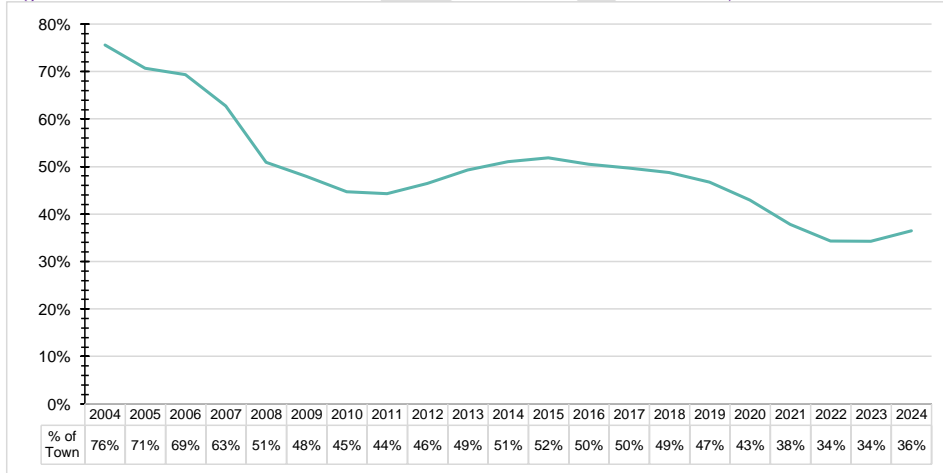
Interprovincial student enrolment trends follow a similar path to the one observed for international students. There was a notable drop in the year 2008, when due to the Great Recession, many younger Canadians decided to join the labour force and delay their education. This combined with more job opportunities in the larger or urban cities of the country meant a decline in Canadian students wanting to move to Wolfville.

Commented [LS5]: What was going on between 2006-2010?, what do we think the future looks like and why?



Source: Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC)

Figure S4.8 – International and Out-of-Province Student Share of Wolfville Town, 2004 to 2024



Source: Turner Drake & Partners

The combination of international and out-of-province students made up about 46.6% of all of Acadia's enrolment in 2023-24, with 2,016 students. Interestingly, this total also makes up about 36.5% of the Town of Wolfville's entire population in 2024. This share has not been less than 34% since data collection began. At its peak in 2004, the international and out-of-province student population at Acadia was equal to 76% of the Town's population. The share dropped to its lowest level of 34% in 2022 and 2023 after the pandemic induced travel restrictions.

This share is unlikely to return to the highs observed pre-2008. The population of Wolfville has grown quite notably since 2004 (+ 1,720), meaning that a much higher number of international and

Commented [LS6]: That is a big drop from 76% to 36% what is the reason for this? Particularly after 2006 it drops steeply and doesn't recover to 2004 levels.

interprovincial students would be required to make up a large proportion of the town. For instance, 70% of the 2024 Wolfville population of 5,526 is 3,868.

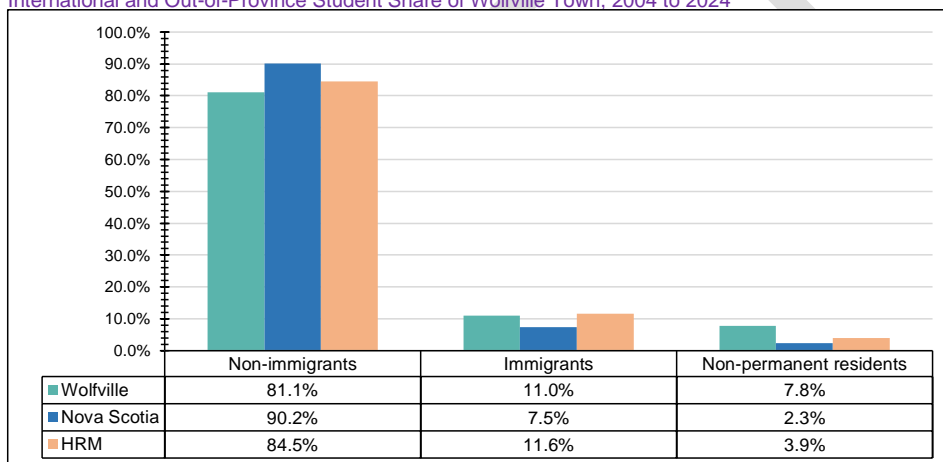
Also, it is not bad news that a lower share of the population of Wolfville is made of international and interprovincial students, since most of them are temporary residents of the town. Unless job opportunities are present in the industries of choice for students, most international and interprovincial students will move on after graduation.

Moreover, due to the Immigration Plan 2025 -2027 rolled out by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in late 2024, it is likely that Acadia will fall further short in their international recruitment targets, putting a financial strain on the university, which would in turn have a negative impact on staff retention, student recruitment initiatives, and thus overall growth.

Having said that, another way to look at this is to say that 64% of the population of Wolfville are indefinite residents of the town with long-term plans to remain. Having a large share of indefinite residents mean a more stable economic outlook for the Town, and less uncertainty in planning.

In-Migration

International and Out-of-Province Student Share of Wolfville Town, 2004 to 2024



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2021

According to the 2021 Census, about 7.8% of the population of the Town were non-permanent residents, which include study permit and work permit holders. This share is more than three times larger than the Provincial share of non-permanent residents at 2.3%, and two times the share in HRM at 3.9%.

Additionally, 11.0% of the Town's population were immigrants in 2021, more than the 7.5% for the province overall, and 0.6 percentage points less than HRM's share of 11.6%. About 25% of the town's immigrants, immigrated between 2011 and 2021.

The high share of immigrants making up the Town's population has several implications on its economy, labour market, and the housing market. A higher proportion of immigrants is a strong suggestion that Wolfville is attracting international newcomers at the rate of an upran centre like Halifax. Given that fact that both the Country and the Province are facing an aging crisis, this trend positions Wolfville as a community that successfully integrates newcomers has the potential to avoid the aging crisis better than others.

**Commented [LS7]:** Lots of stats here that could become graphics

**Commented [JC8R7]:** This can not be further broken down. The chart above is as detailed as we can get.

**Commented [LS9]:** "immigrants made up 11% of the Town's population in 2021, the same as HRM. This is higher than the Provincial average of 7.5%" - what are the implications of this?

A growing immigrant population also has the potential to fill labour market gaps in crucial industries such as education, hospitality, healthcare, local services, etc., which are all crucial to Wolfville's economy. Furthermore, immigrants are often entrepreneurs, and their diverse backgrounds could provide a diverse business landscape for Wolfville.

Wolfville's housing market has and is likely to continue to feel the pressures of a growing population. Local policy makers need to continue to consider proactive housing strategies like incentivizing rental development, like the 2023 introduction of new zoning categories in the comprehensive development district.

With a higher share of non-permanent residents and immigrants, the Town had a lower share of non-immigrant Canadians at 81.1%, compared to the province at 90.2% and HRM at 84.5%.

In 2021, there were 1,175 people in the Town who moved there from other areas in Nova Scotia, primarily Halifax; 390 alone migrated in 2020. Of the 660 Town residents who moved-in from other provinces of the country, primarily from places in Ontario and Alberta; 290 arrived in 2020. Although detailed migration numbers are not available at an annual level, since net population growth is consistently positive for Wolfville, we can assume that most people moving to town permanently – unlike students – are staying in Wolfville.

The Town also recorded 475 external migrants, which do not necessarily mean only immigrants and non-permanent residents, but also includes Canadian's who were previously living abroad. Of the total 85 migrated in 2020.

#### Natural increases

Nova Scotia's fertility rate for 2023 was 1.05 children per woman, lower than the national 1.26, according to Statistics Canada, Table 13-10-0414-01. Total fertility rates below 2.1 indicate declining populations unless there is in-migration to off-set this.

Given the age characteristics of the area, it is safe to assume that the total fertility rate in Wolfville will not increase substantially in coming years and in-migration, through interprovincial, intraprovincial, and immigrations, along with international and out-of-province students to Acadia University will continue to be critical to sustaining the workforce.

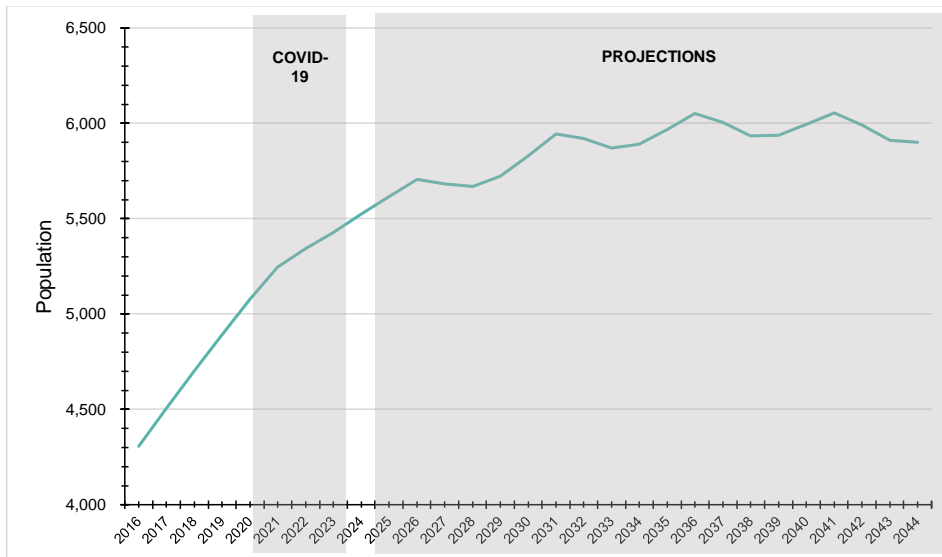
#### Population Projection Population Projections, 2016 to 2044

Commented [LS10]: Do we know if they are still here? Why not?

Commented [LS11]: "here from"

Commented [LS12]: This projection section needs more work - needs to be reconciled with the library and housing needs assessment. As for the graph, perhaps indicate key events :covid, today, and explain what the dips and peaks in the projection section mean? How did you come up with these projections?

Commented [LS13R12]: Ex.housing needs says we need 1,705 units by 2032, is this still true? See table in email with units in the hopper. Likely more than 375 units coming.



Source: Turner Drake & Partners

According to population estimates from Statistics Canada, the 2024 population of Wolfville is 5,526. Projections from Turner Drake and Partners, the methodology for which is detailed in the appendix, indicate that the population of the Town of Wolfville would grow to 5,891 by 2034. This figure suggests that the Town's population would grow at an annual average rate of 0.6% between 2024 and 2034; an overall growth of 6.6%, or 365 more people. Looking two decades ahead, the Town's population could grow to 5,900, representing an annual average growth of 0.3%; an overall growth of 6.8%, or 374 more people.

These projections take into consideration the lower fertility rate for the province and the Town, lower levels of immigration and non-permanent residents as targeted by the 2025 to 2027 Immigration Plan, and 2022 to 2024 interprovincial and intraprovincial migration trends.

Projecting population by age groups, the change in the composition of the Town of Wolfville's population indicate a risk that the Town should look to address. Although overall population between 2024 (5,526) and 2034 (5,891) is expected to grow by 365 more people, most of this growth is going to be concentrated in the 65+ years cohort.

While the town is expected to grow, the fact that most of this growth will come from older residents suggests a shifting demand in the housing market. Seniors typically have different housing needs than younger populations, often preferring smaller, accessible, and lower-maintenance homes, such as apartments, condominiums, or senior-oriented housing communities. This shift could create a mismatch between housing demand and supply if development does not align with these changing demographics.

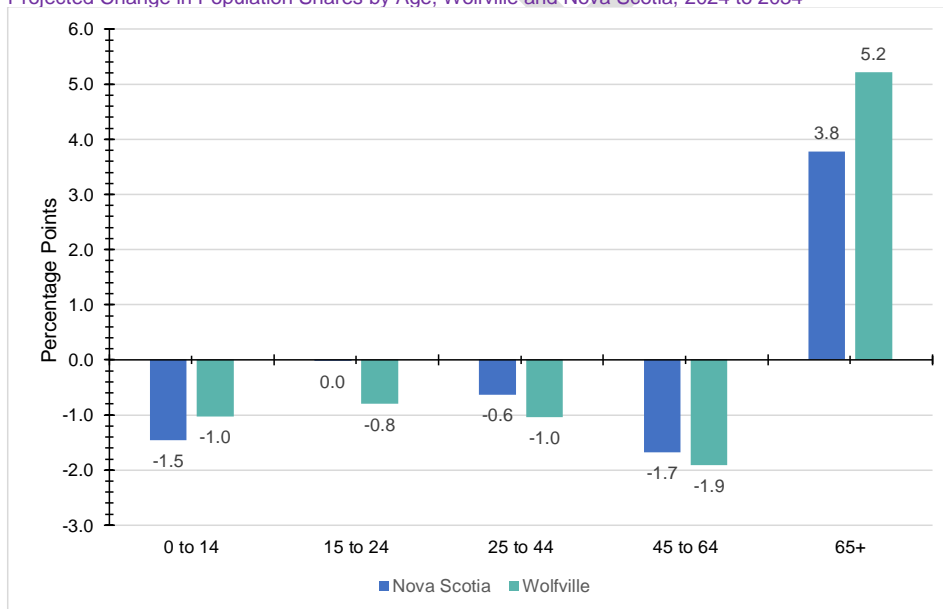
However, the emergence of smaller apartment-style units in the development pipeline appears to align well with this demographic shift. These units may serve older residents looking to downsize from single-family homes, particularly if they offer accessibility features, proximity to amenities, and a manageable living arrangement. However, if these new units are primarily designed for students or younger renters, they may not fully address the housing needs of the growing senior population. Ensuring that new developments include options suited for aging residents—such as barrier-free designs, elevator access, and senior-friendly layouts—will be crucial to accommodating this demographic transition.

Additionally, a growing senior population could impact housing turnover rates in Wolfville. If older residents remain in their current homes due to a lack of suitable downsizing options, it could limit housing availability for younger families or new residents. This could further constrain supply and drive housing costs. On the other hand, if well-designed smaller units become available, they could encourage housing fluidity, allowing older residents to move into more appropriate housing while freeing up larger homes for younger households.

From a policy perspective, these trends suggest that Wolfville should actively plan for an aging population by ensuring a mix of housing types that cater to different life stages. This could involve incentives for age-friendly housing, policies that support senior-oriented developments, and measures to enhance accessibility in existing residential areas. If properly managed, the anticipated growth in the 65+ population could lead to a more balanced housing market that meets the needs of all residents while maintaining the town's appeal as a desirable place to live.

Over the decade 2024 to 2034, the Town's share of those aged 0 to 14 is projected to decline by 1 percentage point; the share of those aged 15 to 24 is projected to decline by 0.8 percentage points; the share of those aged 25 to 44 is projected to decline by 1 percentage points; while the share of those 45 to 64 years is projected to decline by 1.9 percentage points. The only cohort projected to see a growth in their share is those 65 years and over, which is projected to increase by 5.2 percentage points. A very similar trend will be observed across the province as shown in the chart below.

Projected Change in Population Shares by Age, Wolfville and Nova Scotia, 2024 to 2034



Source: Turner Drake & Partners

Diversity

The 2021 Census reported that about 12.0% of the population of the Town of Wolfville self-identified as being a visible minority, while 88.0% self-identified as 'not a visible minority.' Among visible minorities, the largest share self-identified as being Black (31.0%), followed by South Asian (26.7%), and Chinese (18.1%).

Commented [LS14]: How does this measure up with provincial averages?

Commented [LS15]: The graph indicating we need 150 units a year to meet housing needs should be shown as we have updated council and shown them this graph (the orange and grey graph from our needs assessment).

Those not as large as the three aforementioned visible minority groups, the Town of Wolfville also had residents who self-identified as Arab (6.9%), Southeast Asian (6.0%), Latin American (3.4%), West Asian (3.4%), and Japanese (2.6%). 1.7% of the population of the Town stated that they belonged to multiple visible minority groups.

Commented [LS16]: Provincial context/other small towns?

**Visible Minority Shares, Town of Wolfville, 2021**

Visible Minority	Wolfville	Nova Scotia	Halifax
Black	31.0%	30.2%	28.2%
South Asian	26.7%	23.2%	23.0%
Chinese	18.1%	12.4%	13.4%
Arab	6.9%	11.4%	13.0%
Southeast Asian	6.0%	2.6%	2.5%
Latin American	3.4%	3.1%	3.1%
West Asian	3.4%	2.0%	2.3%
Japanese	2.6%	1.1%	1.0%
Multiple visible minorities	1.7%	2.9%	3.0%
Filipino	0.0%	7.3%	6.3%
Korean	0.0%	2.9%	3.0%
Visible minority, n.i.e.*	0.0%	1.0%	1.2%

\*Not included elsewhere  
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2021

For those minority groups represented in the Wolfville, compared to shares in Nova Scotia and HRM, the town has a larger proportion of residents of all visible minority groups except Arab and those who self-identify as belonging to multiple visible minorities. Although, some minority groups as defined by Statistics Canada, like Filipino, Korean, and visible minority not included elsewhere, have no presence in Wolfville as of 2021.

**Employment, Economic Development, and Education**

The Town of Wolfville has experienced notable economic development, driven by strategic initiatives and community collaboration. The town's Planning Department plays a crucial role in this progress, overseeing long-term planning, economic development, and land use. By implementing comprehensive policies and managing development permits, the department ensures sustainable growth and maintains the town's unique and historic built environment.

A key contributor to Wolfville's economic vitality is the Wolfville Business Development Corporation (WBDC). As an independent, non-profit organization, the WBDC supports the local business community by promoting the town as an attractive place to work, live, study, and visit year-round. Their efforts include marketing initiatives, beautification projects, offering member support, and fostering partnerships among businesses, the town, and Acadia University.

The WBDC, in partnership with the Town of Wolfville and Acadia University, launched the "When In Wolfville" Gift Card program. This program encourages residents, students, and tourists to support local businesses by providing a convenient way to shop within the community. With over 60 participating businesses, the gift card aims to drive economic growth and strengthen the connection between the university population and the town's vibrant downtown core.

The Town of Wolfville is also part of Nova Scotia's Regional Enterprise Network (REN), which plays a key role in supporting economic development and strategic planning across municipalities. As part of this regional framework, Wolfville benefits from collaborative efforts to attract investment, support local businesses, and address regional housing and workforce challenges. This connection to the REN provides



an opportunity for Wolfville to align its housing and economic strategies with broader regional initiatives, ensuring that population growth and demographic shifts are addressed in a way that supports long-term sustainability and economic resilience.

Labour Force and Incomes

As the home of Acadia University, Educational Services is the largest sector in Wolfville, representing 19.6% of the total labour force in the Town according to Census 2021. 13.9% of the labour force is based in accommodation and food services, and 13.3% is centered in Health care and social assistance sector. Retail trade makes up 11.9% of total labour force. 70 people in the labour force were in unclassified industries.

The labour force participation rate for Wolfville residents over the age of 15 was 58.5% in 2021; in other words, 2,590 residents in Wolfville were actively working or seeking work. 41.5% of residents, 1,840 people, were not participating in the labour force. These include those retired, full-time students, stay-at-home parents, and pre-school children. There are some 1,380 people aged 65 and over in the town, and about 115 children aged 4 or below, that alone make up more than 80% of these people not participating in the labour force. Of course, many people above the age of 65 participate in the labour force, while many people of working age do not, but there is no way to quantify the exact numbers.

Of the 2,590 persons actively working or seeking work, 485 were unemployed, representing an unemployment rate of 18.7%, compared to the provincial unemployment rate of 12.7%. 2,100 people, 47.4% were employed. It is important to note that the 2021 Census was collected in May 2021, when most industries were under mandated lockdowns.

Approximately 37.1% of those employed worked full time for the full year, and 62.9% worked part year and/or part time in 2021. 12.5% of the labour force in Wolfville was classified as self-employed, close to the provincial share of 11.1%. This suggests a significant presence of entrepreneurial activity and independent work within the community. Self-employment can be an indicator of a thriving small business ecosystem, where individuals are not only seeking flexible work arrangements but also creating their own opportunities.

Self-employed individuals in Wolfville may be engaged in various sectors, such as consulting, creative industries, trades, or agriculture, all of which are common in smaller communities and university towns. The relatively high percentage of self-employed workers could reflect the town's reliance on industries like education and tourism, where independent contractors, freelancers, and small business owners play an essential role. For instance, the local economy may include self-employed individuals who provide services to students, faculty, and visitors, or entrepreneurs who run seasonal businesses catering to the influx of tourists.

Labour Force by Industry, Town of Wolfville, 2021

Industry	Employees	Share
61 Educational services	495	19.6%
72 Accommodation and food services	350	13.9%
62 Health care and social assistance	335	13.3%
44-45 Retail trade	300	11.9%
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	155	6.2%
31-33 Manufacturing	120	4.8%
91 Public administration	100	4.0%
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	85	3.4%
23 Construction	80	3.2%

**Commented [LS17]:** Insert pie chart of real examples of who employers are - we could likely show bigger employers like Acadia, NS Health, etc.

**Commented [JC18R17]:** This is difficult to do accurately. It will require us to conduct a thorough desktop research on employers in the Town, which would take a little longer to verify.

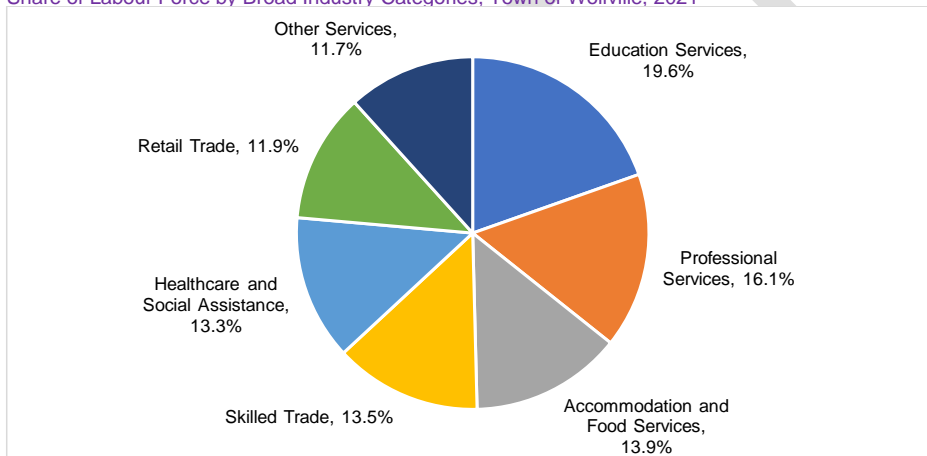
**Commented [LS19]:** Who are these people? What percent is retired, stay at home parent, etc?

**Commented [LS20]:** This is important

56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	80	3.2%
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	75	3.0%
81 Other services (except public administration)	75	3.0%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	65	2.6%
51 Information and cultural industries	60	2.4%
52 Finance and insurance	55	2.2%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	55	2.2%
41 Wholesale trade	20	0.8%
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	15	0.6%
22 Utilities	0	0.0%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0	0.0%

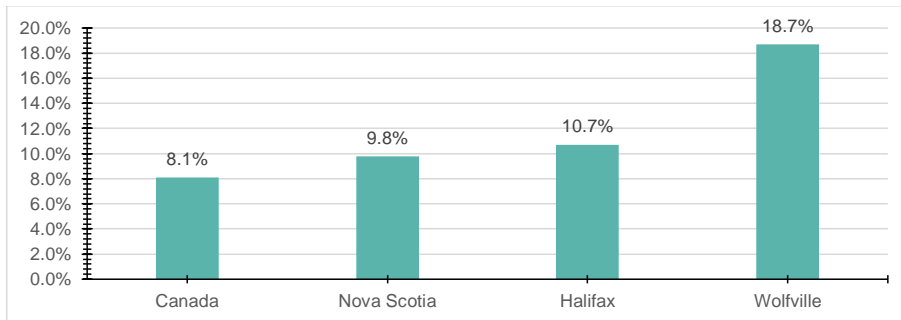
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2021

Share of Labour Force by Broad Industry Categories, Town of Wolfville, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2021

Poverty Rates (Market Basket Measure), 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2021

Median income of a Wolfville resident, employed full-time for the whole year was \$54,400, and is slightly lower than the provincial median of \$57,600. Median household income for Wolfville households was \$58,400, compared to provincial median of \$71,500, according to Census 2021. The lower income in Wolfville stems from a larger share of its population being students. Note that income data collected in the 2021 census is for the year 2020.

**Commented [LS21]:** Before tax? Why so low?

**Commented [JC22R21]:** Yes, before tax, for those employed full-time. The overall median is even lower at \$31,200. Average is \$43,760.

An estimated 20.2% of Wolfville residents in 2021 could be considered “low-income” based on the Low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT), compared to provincial averages of 14.9%. According to the Market Basket Measure (MBM), which is the official measure of poverty in Canada, the Town of Wolfville had a poverty rate of 18.7% in 2021, compared to 9.8% for Nova Scotia, and 10.7% for HRM. Canada as a whole had a poverty rate of 8.1%.

**Commented [LS23]:** What is the reason? Do students influence this number? Can we examine it without student population?

The poverty rate in Wolfville is notably higher than that in Nova Scotia and in HRM, because the MBM does not exclude students. Breaking down poverty rates by age group provides better context. The poverty rate in Wolfville is highest for those aged 18 to 24 years at 50%, compared to 23.1% in HRM, and 18.4% in Nova Scotia.

The poverty rates become essentially equal between the three compared geographies at all age levels over 25 years.

**Poverty Rates by Age Groups (Market Basket Measure), 2021**

Age Groups	Nova Scotia	HRM	Wolfville
Total	9.8%	10.7	18.7%
0 to 17 years	11.4%	11.7	8.0%
18 to 24 years	18.4%	23.1	50.0%
25 to 54 years	9.5%	9.9	11.7%
55 to 64 years	10.6%	9.4	13.3%
65 years and over	5.5%	5.9	6.3%

**Place of Work**

The share of the Town’s employed residents who worked from home jumped from 8.1% in 2016 to 22.9% in 2021, the growth most likely stemming entirely from the pandemic. The share of residents without a fixed place of work remained fairly unchanged at 8.6%, up less than a percentage point since 2016 when it was 7.8%. The majority of the Town’s residents have a usual place of work at 68.3%, though down from 84.3% in 2016.

## Education Levels and School Health

### **Elementary Level**

Wolfville Elementary School currently has an enrollment of approximately 360 students. While specific trends in enrollment numbers over recent years aren't readily available, the school's capacity and ability to accommodate future growth are important considerations, especially given the town's projected population changes.

As Wolfville's population is expected to grow, with a notable increase in the 65+ age group from 1,508 in 2024 to 1,915 in 2034, the town's demographic shifts could impact school enrollment. The number of young families, represented by the 25 to 44 age group, is projected to remain relatively stable, increasing slightly from 1,170 in 2024 to 1,186 in 2034. This suggests that while there may be some new young families moving into the area, the overall growth in school-aged children might not be substantial.

The vitality of Wolfville Elementary School in the long term will depend on factors such as the town's ability to attract and retain young families. With an aging population, the town may need to focus on creating family-friendly policies and amenities to ensure a steady influx of young families who can fill the classrooms. Additionally, the presence of Acadia University and its transient student population could influence local demographics and housing demand, indirectly affecting school enrollment.

### **Post-secondary Level**

As of 2021, 61.2% of the population aged 15 years and over, 2,710 people, has some form of post-secondary education compared to the provincial average of 56.3%. 560 people have a college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma, 110 people have university education below a bachelor, and 1,895 people, 42.8% of Wolfville residents surveyed, have a bachelor's degree or above. In comparison, the provincial share of residents with a bachelor's degree or above is 24.3%. Only 150 people, 3.4% of applicable Wolfville residents, are educated in apprenticeship or trades, down from 4.0% in 2016. The provincial share is 8.6%.

Several factors could explain why Wolfville has a higher poverty rate despite its higher educational attainment. One possible reason is the mismatch between the skills of the educated population and the available job opportunities. If the local economy does not have enough high-paying jobs that require advanced education, individuals may end up underemployed or in lower-paying jobs. This mismatch can lead to a situation where even well-educated individuals struggle to find employment that matches their qualifications and provides adequate income. The alternative is for them to move to other locations.

Another factor to consider is the cost of living in Wolfville. If the cost of living is high, even individuals with higher education and decent-paying jobs may find it challenging to make ends meet. High housing costs, for example, can significantly impact poverty rates, as a substantial portion of income may be spent on housing, leaving less for other necessities. Economic inequality can also play a role. Even with a well-educated population, if wealth and income are concentrated among a small segment of the population, like students having less income, the overall poverty rate can remain high. This inequality can result in a situation where the benefits of higher education do not translate into widespread economic prosperity.

In 2024, 95% of grade 6 students in the Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education (AVRCE) participated in assessments. 71% met or exceeded expectations in reading, up from 67% in 2023. In mathematics, 67% met or exceeded expectations, an 8-point increase from 59% in 2023. Writing saw 50% meeting or exceeding expectations, improving from 41% in 2023.

## Infrastructure and Asset Management

The Town of Wolfville constructs, owns and manages extensive municipal infrastructure and services that are required to meet our basic human needs. This includes infrastructure for water, water treatment processes, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, and sanitary treatment processes, along with our road networks, trail systems, parking lots, parks and open spaces.

**Commented [LS24]:** Add section on Wolfville Elementary School - are enrollment numbers up or down, what's the capacity of the school if the town's population increases, vitality in the long term with aging population and few young families?

**Commented [LS25]:** If our population is more educated than provincial avg, why do we have a higher poverty rate?

The relationship between population growth, infrastructure needs, and fiscal health is central to Wolfville's long-term sustainability. According to the latest estimates, Wolfville's population has grown by 45.2% over the last two decades, outpacing both the provincial average and growth in larger urban centers like Halifax. Much of this increase has been driven by an influx of younger residents, including students and professionals attracted to the town's lifestyle and affordability. While this growth strengthens the local economy and labor force, it also places increasing pressure on infrastructure. The town must balance its expanding residential base with the need for improved transportation, housing, and public services. At the same time, climate change poses additional infrastructure challenges, particularly in managing flood risks along the dykelands and waterfront.

Wolfville's infrastructure must evolve to support this growth while remaining financially sustainable. The town's housing stock is already experiencing significant strain, with vacancy rates at critically low levels and affordability challenges intensifying. The 2023 introduction of new zoning categories in the comprehensive development district was a step toward addressing this, allowing for higher-density residential developments. However, the housing supply remains insufficient, with current construction rates falling short of the anticipated demand. The latest housing needs assessment projects that 820 new housing units will be required by 2034, yet Wolfville has only been adding around 27 new units per year based on historical permitting trends. If this rate continues, there will be a shortfall of over 437 units in the next decade – discussed in detail in the Housing Supply and Demand section – leading to further affordability concerns and increased pressure on rental markets. The demand for smaller housing units, particularly one- and two-bedroom apartments, is expected to rise, largely due to the growing student population and aging residents looking to downsize.

Fiscal health plays a crucial role in determining how effectively Wolfville can meet these infrastructure and housing needs. In 2024, taxes and grants in lieu of taxes accounted for 76% of the town's total revenue, underscoring the reliance on a growing property tax base to fund essential services. The town's total revenue increased from \$13.6 million in 2023 to \$14.4 million in 2024, largely due to higher tax revenues. However, if development does not keep pace with population growth, the town may face higher costs for emergency repairs, service inefficiencies, and potential tax hikes. A shortage of housing could also push more residents into unaffordable living conditions, affecting economic stability. Strategic infrastructure investments—such as encouraging mixed-use developments, supporting rental housing, and maintaining a well-planned housing supply—can ensure that growth translates into long-term fiscal stability.

Ultimately, Wolfville's ability to thrive depends on its capacity to manage these interdependencies effectively. Without proactive infrastructure planning and increased housing development, the town risks falling behind in meeting the needs of its expanding population. However, with careful coordination between population trends, infrastructure investment, and fiscal policy, Wolfville can maintain its reputation as a desirable place to live while ensuring economic resilience and sustainability.

## 6. **Housing Needs Assessment**

Before we dive into this section, a couple of definitions to keep in mind:

Housing demand	The number of dwellings units required to address needs of households, both now (shortages) and in the future (anticipated household growth), adjusted to account for not all dwellings being occupied by a resident who lives in the community permanently.
Housing shortage	The number of dwellings that have not been able to form historically due to unhealthy market and labour conditions.
Housing need	Synonymous with housing demand, unless otherwise referred to as part of "core housing need."

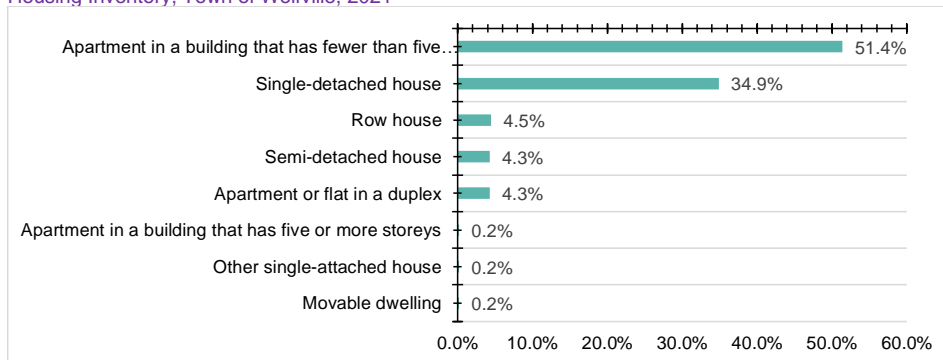
As part of this community profile update, Turner Drake and Partners performed an update to the housing needs assessment for the Town of Wolfville, which yielded different results to those in the 2023 housing

Commented [LS26]: need a discussion on what caused the conclusion in the needs assessment versus this narrative, vs library projections.

needs assessment and the 2022 library catchment projections. The main reason for the different results is the fact that there have been large scale changes in immigration policies from the Federal government.

The new housing needs assessments are based on updated household projections, which comes from updated population projections, which consider lower permanent resident admissions, fewer non-permanent residents such as study- and work-permit holders, and fewer seasonal workers coming into Canada, and therefore, Nova Scotia and Wolfville.

#### Housing Inventory, Town of Wolfville, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2021.

According to Census 2021, the largest proportion of dwelling units in Wolfville are apartments in buildings with fewer than five storeys (51.6%), followed by single-detached houses (35.0%), row houses (4.5%), semi-detached houses (4.3%), apartments or flats in duplexes (4.3%), apartments in buildings with five or more storeys (0.2%), other single-attached houses (0.2%) and movable dwellings (0.2%).

These percentages demonstrate the Town's continued lack of "missing middle" housing in the form of ground-oriented town/row housing, semi-detached and duplex dwellings. This is similar to trends across Nova Scotia and Canada. The large portion of single-detached houses result in fewer total living units available and few developers willing to undertake building low-cost affordable housing, instead focusing on creating dwellings targeted at the more affluent stream.

The 2021 Census data for Wolfville shows that 77.9% of households are 1- or 2-person households, with an average household size of 2 persons, unchanged from 2016. Projections indicate an increase in the number of households to 2,550 by 2024, 2,754 by 2034, and 2,788 by 2044. This growth raises questions about the need for right-sized housing.

The significant increase in the 65+ age group, growing from 1,508 in 2024 to a projected 1,915 in 2034, suggests a growing need for housing suitable for older adults, such as smaller, accessible homes or retirement communities. Empty nesters, typically older adults whose children have moved out, might be looking to downsize, freeing up larger homes for young families who need more space.

At the same time, the 25 to 44 age group remains substantial, with a slight increase from 1,170 in 2024 to 1,186 in 2034. This age group typically includes young families who may need larger homes with more bedrooms. The stable numbers in the 0 to 14 and 15 to 24 age groups also indicate a continued need for family-friendly housing and accommodations for students.

Therefore, while the need for right-sized housing for empty nesters remains important, there is also a clear need to address the housing requirements of young families and the growing senior population. Balancing these needs will be crucial for Wolfville's urban planning and housing policies to ensure that all age groups have access to suitable and affordable housing options. Additionally, the presence of Acadia

University in Wolfville attracts a transient student population, which can influence housing demand and availability. Addressing the diverse housing needs of students, empty nesters, and young families requires thoughtful urban planning and policy interventions to ensure that all residents have access to suitable and affordable housing options.

**Projected Housing Demand**

Demand by Number of Bedrooms

Based on our most recent projections, the demand for units, which is essentially the number of households projected (one household is assumed to demand one unit), for 0- and 1-bed units is expected to have increased in 2021 since 2016, from 20% to 21%. Another percentage point increase can be expected between 2024 and 2029, taking the share of demand to 22%, increasing again by 2034 to 24% of total housing demand. Demand for these smaller units is expected to reach 27% by 2044.

Demand for 2-bedroom units is estimated to have remained unchanged between 2021 and 2024 at 47%. However, this is likely to increase to 49% by 2029. By 2034, the Town of Wolfville can expect half of it's housing demand to be for 2-bedroom units. This demand is projected to maintain it's growth to 2044, making up 52% of total demand by then.

Share of Housing Demand by Number of Bedrooms, Town of Wolfville, 2021 to 2044

Demand by Number of Bedrooms						
	2021	2024	2029	2034	2039	2044
0- / 1-bed	20%	21%	22%	24%	26%	27%
2-bed	47%	47%	49%	50%	51%	52%
3-bed	25%	24%	22%	20%	18%	16%
4+ bed	9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	5%

Source: Turner Drake & Partners

Demand share for 3-bedroom units declined by a percentage point between 2024 (24%) and 2021(25%), and this decline is expected to continue for the next two decades. By 2044, 16% of total housing demand is expected to be for 3-bedroom units.

4+ bedroom units continue to make up the lowest share of total demand with 8% in 2024. By 2034, this share is expected to decline to 6%, and to 5% by 2044.

Demand by Dwelling Type

Assessing demand by dwelling type, demand for single-detached units is estimated to have declined between 2021 and 2024, from making up 42% of total demand to 39%. The demand share, or general preference for single-detached homes, is expected to fall to 30% by 2034, and to 21% by 2044. Though proportions differ, the trend of declining demand for single-detached homes is nationally common because of demographic shifts with older adults preferring low-maintenance living and younger generations delaying family formation.

Commented [LS27]: Is this true across the country? Specific to wolfville?

The demand share of apartments increased from 42% in 2021 to 44% in 2024, and is expected to continue its increase over the coming decades. Half of total housing demand could be attributable to apartments by 2024 (52%), rising to 60% by 2044. The low household formation rates, and higher demand for denser builds play into this projected increase.

Share of Housing Demand by Dwelling Type, Town of Wolfville, 2021 to 2044

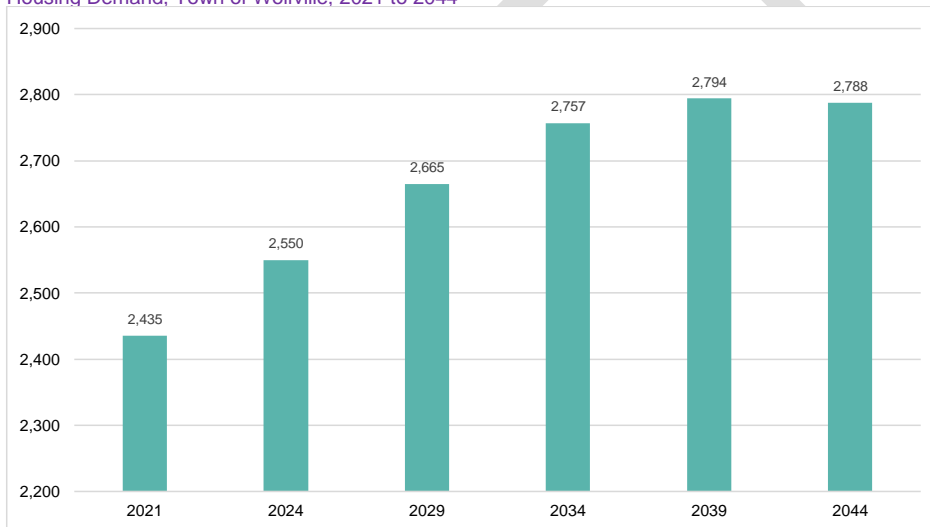
Demand by Dwelling Type						
	2021	2024	2029	2034	2039	2044
Single	42%	39%	35%	30%	25%	21%
Apartment	42%	44%	48%	52%	57%	60%
Missing Middle	16%	16%	17%	18%	19%	19%

Source: Turner Drake & Partners

The demand for the missing middle units remained unchanged between 2021 and 2024 at 16%. Demand share for these units is likely to grow to 18% by 2034, and make up almost 20% by 2044.

Housing demand grew from 2,435 in 2021 to 2,550 in 2024, an overall increase of 4.7% in units demanded; an annual average growth rate of 1.6%. Demand is projected to increase by another 207 units between 2024 and 2034, representing an annual average growth of 0.8% or 8.1% overall.

**Housing Demand, Town of Wolfville, 2021 to 2044**



Source: Turner Drake & Partners

The growth in housing demand is likely to slow down between 2034 and 2039, growing at an annual rate of 0.3%, and then decrease between 2039 and 2044 by 0.05%. This decline is based on current projection methodology which incorporates low international migration, as well as low fertility rates. If changes are brought in to increase international migration, and with a better fertility rate, the projection could change.

Commented [LS28]: What caused the decline?

**Anticipated Housing Need**

**Anticipated and Estimated Housing Need (Units), Town of Wolfville, 2021 to 2044**



	Market				Below-market				Deeply affordable				Total			
	2021	2024	2034	2044	2021	2024	2034	2044	2021	2024	2034	2044	2021	2024	2034	2044
0- / 1-bed	25	50	100	120	115	135	180	195	95	100	100	100	235	285	380	415
2-bed	60	110	210	235	25	30	40	40	20	20	20	20	105	160	270	295
3-bed	30	55	80	70	15	20	25	25	15	15	15	15	60	90	120	110
4+ bed	10	20	25	20	10	10	15	15	10	10	10	10	30	40	50	45
Total	125	230	415	445	165	195	260	275	135	145	145	140	430	565	820	860

Source: Turner Drake & Partners

The Town of Wolfville has an estimated need for 565 units as of 2024, and increase from 430 in 2021. Current need is highest for 0- and 1-bedroom units at 285 units. Most of these 0-to1-bedroom units are needed at below-market price, indicating the need for student housing and single-person households.

Housing need is anticipated to grow to 820 units by 2034, with particularly dire needs for 0- to1-bedroom units (380), and 2-bedroom units (270). Although about 77% of the 2-bedroom units needed in 2034 would be at market price, 23% about 15% would be needed at below-market price.

Anticipated housing need is estimated to grow to 860 units by 2044. Overall, between 2024 and 2034, the growth in anticipated housing need is about 45%. The overall growth between 2034 and 2044 is estimated to be about 5%.

The demand for below-market price units indicates a significant need for affordable housing for students and single-person households. With Acadia University attracting a large student population, many students require affordable, smaller units. Additionally, single-income households, including young professionals and retirees, often seek 0- and 1-bedroom units due to their affordability and suitability for their living arrangements.

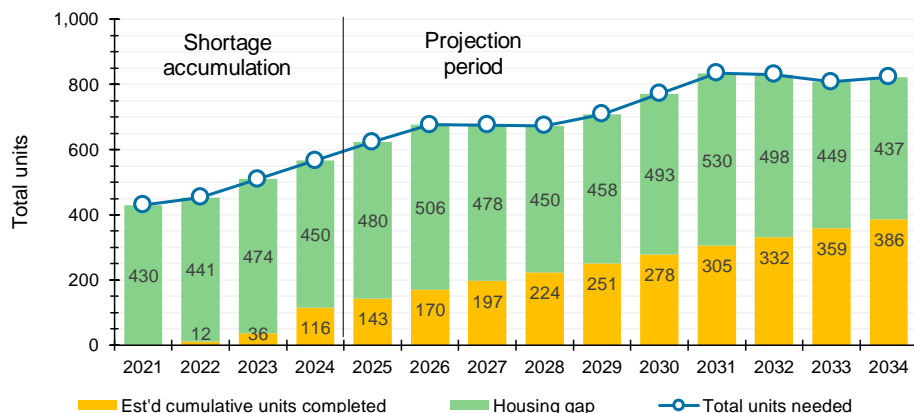
The projected growth in housing need to 820 units by 2034 (82 per year, down from 150 per year discussed in the 2023 housing needs assessment) with a notable increase in demand for 0- to 1-bedroom units (380) and 2-bedroom units (270), highlights the importance of planning for non-market housing.

Given that 23% of the 2-bedroom units needed in 2034 are anticipated to be below-market price, it is crucial to focus on creating affordable housing options to support single-income households and low-income families.

Commented [LS29]: How many units do you think we will actually produce?

Commented [JC30R29]: Added next section.

Housing Supply and Demand



Source: Turner Drake & Partners

The above chart illustrates the number of units that can be expected to be built per year given current permitting rates, the housing gap (the number of units not anticipated to be built based on past trends), and total units needed (the sum of prior two).

The 2023 housing needs assessment for the Town of Wolfville found that the town would need to build almost 150 per year by 2032. However, since then, there have been major changes to federal immigration policies that generally decreased anticipated population growth across Nova Scotia and Canada. The result is a decrease from the 1,455 net new demand identified in 2023 to 820 units in this analysis.

Nevertheless, the need to build more units still persists due to lower than needed construction activity, ongoing affordability challenges, and the necessity to accommodate an aging population. Based on a 10-year average, Wolfville may build about 27 units annually. If that rate holds, Wolfville would still need to build an additional 437 units by 2034 – or ~44 annually over the next decade.

**Home Prices, Shelter Costs and Affordability**

29.0% of households in Wolfville were spending more than 30% of their household income on shelter costs, according to Census 2021, putting them in the category of living in unaffordable housing. The impact of students on this are minimal as those who were enrolled in an educational institution during the census are marked as in a transient phase. Overall, 7.9% of all households are in core housing need in Wolfville, which means that they pay more than 30% of their income as shelter costs, live in dwelling where the number of bedrooms is not enough for the size of the household, and live in dwelling that require major improvement/renovations.

The vast majority (90.6%) of Wolfville's tenant households live in non-subsidized housing, while 40.1% of them spend more than 30% of their incomes on shelter costs. A total of 11.6% of tenant households in the Town live in core housing need.

The average value of dwellings in Wolfville according to Census 2021 was \$422,000. For comparison, the provincial average was \$295,600, and the average was \$270,400 for Annapolis Valley economic region. The average monthly shelter costs for owned dwellings are \$1,292, and \$997 for rented dwellings. These figures, however, may be slightly skewed, in that 1) the dwelling values are estimated by the home owner responding to the census; 2) monthly costs for owned dwellings include homes that the respondent has

owned for a long time, thereby lowering monthly costs; and 3) monthly costs for rented dwellings include rents for homes where the tenants have resided for a long time and do not reflect current market conditions.

**Owned or Rented Dwellings & Rental Vacancies**

Out of 2,856 total private dwellings, 2,440 were occupied as of May 11, 2021. 940 were occupied by owners and 1,500 by tenants in the private market. 9% of the private occupied dwellings are condominiums.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reports a rental vacancy of 2.0% for Nova Scotia in 2024, 0.7% for Kings subdivision A, and 1.2% for Kentville, the closest two subdivisions to the Town of Wolfville.

Rental rate estimations from Turner Drake & Partners, the methodology for which is included in the appendix, show that the Town has an average rental rate of \$1,176.67. This figure is an average of all units in the market. Current average asking rent, for all unit types, in the Town is higher at \$1,651.

**Estimate Average Asking Rent by Dwelling Type and Bedroom, Town of Wolfville, 2025**

Dwelling Type	Bedroom	Lower Bound	Average Rent	Upper Bound
Single-detached	1-bed	\$1,210	\$1,273	\$1,339
	2-bed	\$1,577	\$1,659	\$1,744
	3- bed	\$1,744	\$1,835	\$1,930
Apartments	1-bed	\$1,226	\$1,289	\$1,356
	2-bed	\$1,636	\$1,721	\$1,810
	3- bed	\$1,597	\$1,679	\$1,766
Other	1-bed	\$1,612	\$1,695	\$1,783
	2-bed	\$1,829	\$1,923	\$2,023
	3- bed	\$1,711	\$1,799	\$1,892

Source: Turner Drake & Partners

The rental data estimations for Wolfville as of 2025 indicate varying rent prices across different dwelling types and bedroom counts. Single-detached homes have lower bounds ranging from \$1,210 for 1-bed to \$1,744 for 3-bed, with average rents between \$1,273 and \$1,835.

Apartments show slightly higher lower bounds for 1-bed and 2-bed units compared to single-detached homes, but lower for 3-bed units, with average rents ranging from \$1,289 to \$1,679. The "Other" category, which includes townhouses and duplexes, has the highest rent prices, with lower bounds starting at \$1,612 for 1-bed units and average rents reaching up to \$1,923 for 2-bed units.

Our estimations suggest a trend where apartments are becoming a more attractive option due to their competitive pricing, especially for 3-bed units. The higher rents in the "Other" category indicate a premium for these types of dwellings, possibly due to their unique features or locations. The demand for apartments might be increasing due to affordability, urbanization, lifestyle preferences, and demographic shifts, while single-detached homes remain desirable but are less accessible due to higher costs. Balancing these housing options will be crucial for meeting the diverse needs of Wolfville's residents.

**Conclusion**

This report highlights the demographic, economic, and housing trends shaping Wolfville's future, reinforcing the town's need for strategic planning and investment. Over the past two decades, Wolfville has seen remarkable population growth, outpacing both the provincial and national averages. This expansion has largely been driven by an influx of students, young professionals, and retirees, each of

**Commented [LS31]:** University impact? Who else is renting?

**Commented [JC32R31]:** A renter profile would have to be created to be able to answer this question.

**Commented [LS33]:** Do we know the number of rentals that are one bed, 2, 3 bed or studio?

**Commented [LS34R33]:** What is the range of rents (highest and lowest rates)?

whom has distinct housing and service needs. At the same time, the town's fiscal health depends heavily on property taxes, making sustainable growth essential to maintaining financial stability.

One of the most pressing findings is the imbalance between housing supply and demand. With a vacancy rate nearing crisis levels and housing costs rising, the town is at risk of becoming unaffordable for both residents and newcomers. The anticipated shortfall of 437 housing units by 2034 underscores the urgency of expanding the housing supply, particularly in affordable rental units, "missing middle" housing, and senior-friendly developments. Without these options, Wolfville could struggle to retain its workforce, attract new businesses, and support a vibrant community. Housing affordability is not just a social issue—it has direct implications for economic growth, student retention, and local business sustainability.

Infrastructure capacity is another critical challenge. Wolfville's aging water, wastewater, and stormwater systems must be upgraded to accommodate both higher-density residential developments and the impacts of climate change, particularly the risks associated with coastal and inland flooding. The town's transportation network, including its active transportation corridors, must also be expanded to support sustainable mobility and reduce reliance on personal vehicles. Ensuring that infrastructure investments are timely, cost-effective, and aligned with growth trends will be essential in preventing service disruptions and unexpected fiscal burdens.

The town's fiscal health is closely tied to these challenges. In 2024, 76% of Wolfville's revenue came from property taxes and grants in lieu of taxes, making growth and development key drivers of municipal financial stability. While increased tax revenues have strengthened the town's budget, uncontrolled growth without matching infrastructure investment could lead to rising costs, inefficiencies, and a decline in public services. On the other hand, if housing shortages continue, affordability challenges could discourage migration, reduce the workforce, and weaken local economic activity, impacting tax revenues in the long run. A balanced approach—where development is proactively planned, financially sustainable, and inclusive—is critical to ensuring Wolfville's long-term resilience.

Ultimately, these findings highlight the interconnected nature of population growth, housing, infrastructure, and fiscal health. Wolfville is at a turning point where decisive action will determine whether it continues to grow sustainably or faces economic and social challenges. By expanding housing options, modernizing infrastructure, and ensuring sound fiscal management, the town can support its growing population, maintain affordability, and strengthen its economic foundation. Coordinated efforts between policymakers, businesses, residents, and institutions like Acadia University will be necessary to achieve this vision. If these challenges are met with innovation and strategic foresight, Wolfville is well-positioned to not only sustain its growth but to enhance its livability, economic strength, and environmental resilience in the years ahead.

## Appendix A – Projection Methodology

### Shift Share model

The Shift Share projection method is an approach that considers that both local and regional population trends have an impact on future resident totals for the local community. For instance, although a small town may have historically experienced population decline, it can benefit from anticipated growth at the regional level. Although any projection method is inherently imperfect, the Shift Share approach is often most appropriate when using outdated Census data (for instance, when performing work in 2021 but detailed data is only available as of 2016). By including County level annual population estimates (produced by Statistics Canada), results better reflect the current demographic context.

To perform the shift share, two main data points are required:

1. Provincial population projections (5 year age cohorts); and
2. Historical municipal population totals (5 year age cohorts).

We then calculate the percent share of the Municipality relative to the Province in each Census year and establish how these shares have changed between each period. For instance, the difference between the municipal to provincial proportions for 2016 to 2021 are added to the 2021 share to anticipate what it may be in 2026. We then multiply the 2026 share into the total projected population of the Province to determine the local total. To better visualize the math, an example process is as follows:

1.  $\frac{Municipality_{pop,2016}}{Province_{pop,2016}} = \frac{1,200}{100,000} = 1.20\%$        $\frac{Municipality_{pop,2021}}{Province_{pop,2021}} = \frac{1,225}{105,000} = 1.17\%$
2.  $\% \text{ share } 2026 = (\% \text{ share } 2021) + [(\% \text{ share } 2021) - (\% \text{ share } 2016)] = 1.14\%$
3. **If**  $Province_{pop,2026} = 110,000$ ;  
**Then**  $Municipality_{pop,2026} = 110,000 \times 1.14\% = 1,254 \text{ people}$
4. Between 2021 and 2016, Province to grow ~4.8% while Municipality to grow ~2.4%.

### Shortage estimations

To determine the pent up housing demand for Wolfville, we take inspiration from the BC Government's Housing Needs Report demand calculation methodology, released in June 2024. The purpose for BC releasing a standardized method for calculating demand was to ensure that all local governments produce consistent and comparable assessments of their housing need. While produced for BC communities, it is applicable across Canadian municipalities.

Among the calculations are those for four primary variables, largely based on publicly available data sources that can be applied to communities of various scales. These are:

Housing units for:	Intention
Households in Extreme Core Housing Need	To estimate the number of new units required for those in vulnerable housing situations. Extreme need refers to those paying more than 50% of household income on shelter costs.
Individuals experiencing homelessness	To quantify the supply of permanent housing units required for those currently experiencing homelessness. If not available, this is listed as zero.

Housing units for:	Intention
Suppressed households	To address those households that were unable to form between 2016 and the present due to a constrained housing environment.
Increasing the rental vacancy rate to 3%	To add surplus rental units to restore local vacancy rates to levels representing a healthy and well-functioning rental housing market. Typically, rates between 3% and 5% are considered healthy rates. In the absence of a local rate, the provincial rate is used.

Source: HNR demand calculation methodology<sup>1</sup>

### Distribution of anticipated demand

Accurately forecasting the required units by size or type necessitates sophisticated datasets encompassing past, present, and future individual household demand, along with an assessment of the economic feasibility of constructing these units by the private sector. Unfortunately, such granular data is not available, and even if it were, predictions would remain imperfect. Thus, this report adopts two simple approaches, one to estimate minimum need and another to estimate market outcomes.

The determination of demanded unit size by number of bedrooms varies between market and non-market housing. In market housing, bedroom size is driven by developers who cater to buyer or renter preferences, offering layouts that align with market trends. In contrast, non-market housing focuses on providing essential shelter, generally prioritizing minimum standards to ensure affordability. Thus, units in non-market housing are typically smaller and more utilitarian, designed to meet basic needs rather than personal preferences.

### Need based on National Occupancy Standards

Understanding the variation in household sizes across different family types is important for determining the number of bedrooms required in a dwelling to meet specific needs. To estimate these outcomes, we use 2021 Census Public Use Microdata Files (PUMF) from Statistics Canada for Nova Scotia, which allow us to estimate maintainer age to total bedroom conversion rates based on National Occupancy Standards (NOS). This methodology draws inspiration from the approach presented in the City of Burnaby's Housing Needs Report from January 2021.<sup>2</sup>

Briefly, Burnaby estimates the demand for particular unit sizes by determining the minimum number of bedrooms needed (as per NOS) based on the number of persons in a household and their relationship (e.g., a studio or one-bedroom unit as the minimum requirement to meet the needs of a couple without children). This approach is particularly useful when addressing non-market housing provision, a notable limitation being that there is no detailed information about the characteristics of non-market housing occupants. As a proxy, we limited the households studied to those that experienced Core Housing Need in 2021.

### Demand based on recent market housing outcomes

While the preceding analysis addresses spatial requirements, private market outcomes often notably differ. To estimate these outcomes, we utilize the same 2021 PUMF data for Nova Scotia. Specifically, we establish how primary maintainers distribute across unit sizes (by number of bedrooms) for dwellings constructed between 2016 and 2021.

By incorporating projected household maintainer age data, we can assess how bedroom demand may evolve over the specified period based on anticipated demographic changes.

<sup>1</sup> BC Ministry of Housing. (2024, June). Guidelines for Housing Needs Reports – HNR Method Technical Guidance. [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/housing-and-tenancy/tools-for-government/uploads/hnr\\_method\\_technical\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/housing-and-tenancy/tools-for-government/uploads/hnr_method_technical_guidelines.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> City of Burnaby. (2021 January). Housing Needs Report. <https://www.burnaby.ca/sites/default/files/acquidam/2021-07/Housing%20Needs%20Report.pdf>

Results are then further adjusted for the change in the above relationship from 2011 to 2021 (2011 data reflects construction activity from 2006 to 2011) to estimate how preferences may be changing over time (with the understanding and limitation that changes in preference may be influenced more so by the existing strained conditions of BC housing markets).

#### Other applications

The projection work aimed to provide results for different data categories, being demand by dwelling size (number of bedrooms), by dwelling type, by income distribution, and by household family type. Each projection applies a similar approach as detailed above using historical Census PUMF data for Nova Scotia.

#### Appendix B – Rent Estimation Methodology

The relationship between rural rent and other local data is studied for the year 2021, using the only source of data in Canada that provides (self-reported) rural rental data as well as data on a list of socio-economic variables, the Census of the Population. Although the Census provides data at the Dissemination Area (DA) level, we conduct the study at the CSD level because, though relationships between rural rent and other data could be studied at the DA level, rural rent estimations for non-census years would not be possible because DA level data is not available on an annual basis. Many CSD data, on the other hand, are available on an annual basis.

We build our model based on the equation

$$Rural\ rent_{(i)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(x_i) + \beta_2(U_i) + \varepsilon;$$

where,  $Rural\ rent_{(i)}$  is the average monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings in place  $i$ ;  $x_i$  is a vector of socio-economic indicators in place  $i$ ; and  $U_i$  is the rent in the nearest urban centre from place  $i$ .

$\beta_{0i}$  represents the change in rural rent, ceteris paribus;  $\beta_1$  represents the change in rural rent with every one unit change for a socio-economic indicator;  $\beta_2$  represents a one unit change in rent for place  $i$  with every unit change in the rent of the nearest urban centre; and  $\varepsilon$  is the error representing the effects of the variables not included in the model.

After a lengthy significance testing, the socio-economic indicators we included in our model as the primary determinants of rural rents were

1. Average value of dwellings, 2021, in place  $i$ , henceforth denoted as *dwellings value*;
2. Population of place  $i$  in 2021, henceforth denoted as *pop2021*;
3. Total private dwellings, 2021, in place  $i$ , henceforth denoted as *dwellings*; and
4. Average monthly shelter cost for rented dwellings in the nearest urban centre from place  $i$ , henceforth denoted as *nearest urban rent*.
5. Average Total Income of Household, 2021, in place  $i$ , henceforth denoted as *income*.

The model, thus, takes the form:

$$Rural\ rent_{(i)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(dwellings\ value_{(i)}) + \beta_2(pop2021_{(i)}) + \beta_3(dwellings_{(i)}) + \beta_4(nearest\ urban\ rent_{(i)}) + \beta_5(income_{(i)}) + \varepsilon;$$

For ease of interpretation, we applied logarithmic transformation on both sides. This allows coefficients to be interpreted as percentage changes.

$$\begin{aligned} \log(rural\ rent_{(i)}) &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 \log(dwellings\ value_{(i)}) + \beta_2 \log(pop2021_{(i)}) + \beta_3 \log(dwellings_{(i)}) \\ &+ \beta_4 \log(nearest\ urban\ rent_{(i)}) + \beta_5 \log(income_{(i)}) + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

In the log-log model:

- $\beta_1$  represents the percentage change in rural rents in place  $i$ , with every 1% change in the average dwelling value in place  $i$ ;
- $\beta_2$  represents the percentage change in rural rents in place  $i$ , with every 1% change in the population of place  $i$ ;
- $\beta_3$  represents the percentage change in rural rents in place  $i$ , with every 1% change in the number of dwellings in place  $i$ ;
- $\beta_4$  represents the percentage change in rural rents in place  $i$ , with every 1% change in the rents of the urban centre closest to place  $i$ ; and
- $\beta_5$  represents the percentage change in rural rents in place  $i$ , with every 1% change in the average income in place  $i$ .

Though not exhaustive, the list of independent variables in the model incorporates the effects of supply (the number of dwellings), demand (population and income), the state of the local market (dwelling value), and external factors (rent of nearest urban centre).

Theoretically, we would assume that rural rents decrease if the number of dwellings increases; rural rents increase as the population increases; rural rents increase if the average dwelling value increase; rural rents increase if the rent in the nearest urban centre increases; and rural rents increase with increase in the average income

The relationship was tested using seven different models:

1. Ordinary Least Squares (**OLS**) – a model that minimizes the sum of squared residuals to estimate relationships between variables.
2. Generalized Least Squares (**GLS**) – an improvement to the OLS model, that accounts for heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation in the residuals, thus providing more robust and efficient estimates when these issues are present.
3. Spatial Durbin Error Model (**SDEM**) – a spatial model the includes both spatially lagged independent variables and spatial error terms to account for dependence in both the predictors and the error term.
4. Spatial Error Model (**SEM**) – a spatial model that accounts for spatial dependence in the error terms, assuming that errors in one location may be correlated with errors in neighboring locations
5. Spatial Lag of X Model (**SLX**) – a spatial model that incorporates spatially lagged independent variables to capture the spillover effects of predictors on the dependent variable.
6. Spatial Autoregressive Model (**SAR**) or Spatial Lag Model (**SLM**) – a spatial regression model that includes a spatial lag of the dependent variable, capturing spatial dependence by assuming that the outcome in one location is influenced by outcomes in neighboring locations.
7. Spatial Durbin Model (**SDM**) – an extension of the spatial lag model that includes spatially lagged independent variables as well as spatially lagged dependent variables to account for dependence in both predictors and outcomes.

All seven models were tested for significance across Canada, by regions we defined as Atlantic Canada (Newfoundland & Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick), Quebec, Ontario, Central Canada (Manitoba and Saskatchewan), and Western Canada (British Columbia and Alberta). The GLS model was tested to be the best out of all seven, for all areas of study across the country.<sup>3</sup>

### Modelling Rural Rent for Atlantic Canada

<sup>3</sup> Results of model tests are included in the appendix.



Regression Statistics	
Multiple R <sup>2</sup>	0.5187
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.5149
Standard Error	0.664
Observations	511

GLS coefficients – Atlantic Canada (PEI, NL, NS, & NB)						
Variables	Coefficients	Std. Error	t-value	P(> t )	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Intercept)	-0.46	0.38	-1.21	0.23	-1.21	0.29
log (dwelling value)	0.39	0.03	13.48	0.00	0.34	0.45
log (pop2021)	0.24	0.05	5.07	0.00	0.15	0.33
log (nearest urban rent)	0.27	0.05	4.90	0.00	0.16	0.38
log (dwellings)	-0.20	0.05	-4.25	0.00	-0.30	-0.11

The results above are for the generalized least squares estimation done for the rural areas of Atlantic Canada. The model for Atlantic Canada has a Multiple R<sup>2</sup> of 0.5187 and adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.5149. This means that about 51.5% of the variance in rural rent is explained by the independent variables.

Note, firstly, that the variable *income* is removed due to insignificance in the Atlantic Canadian model. The insignificance of income could stem from various reason like income homogeneity, where there is little difference between income across areas; or due to high homeownership rates, which means a smaller rental market where the incomes of those renting have little effect on market rents; or it could be a result of the effects of other variables in the model overshadowing or incorporating the effects on income with them.

Note also that the intercept is insignificant. Theoretically, the intercept in our model would be the baseline level of rent in an area. The statistical insignificance of the intercept suggests that there is no implicit baseline rent level in the rural areas of Atlantic Canada.

The coefficient for log (dwelling value) of 0.39, suggests that a 1% increase in the value of dwellings in the rural areas of Atlantic Canada is associated with an increase of 0.39% in the average rent of those areas. Both the t- and p-values indicate high statistical significance for this coefficient.

The coefficient for log (pop2021) of 0.24, suggests that a 1% increase in the population in the rural areas of Atlantic Canada is associated with an increase of 0.24% in the average rent of those areas. The t- and p-values indicate high statistical significance for the coefficient.

The coefficient for log (nearest urban rent) of 0.27, suggests that a 1% increase in the average rent in the nearest urban centre is associated with an increase of 0.39% in the average rent of the rural area in question. The t- and p-values indicate high statistical significance for this coefficient.

The coefficient for log (dwellings) of -0.20, suggests that a 1% increase in the number of dwellings in the rural areas of Atlantic Canada is associated with a decrease of 0.20% in the average rent of those areas. Both the t- and p-values indicate high statistical significance for this coefficient.

### Estimating Rural Rents in Nova Scotia - 2025

Using the coefficients for Atlantic Canada we estimate rural rents across CSDs with less than 10,000 people in Nova Scotia. Since the exact annual versions of all the data we used to build the model are not available, we use proxies as described below. One point to keep in mind is that the average rent that we estimate are

the average for all rented dwellings in an area, which include currently rented units as well as vacant units. The estimated rents are not asking rents.

The number of dwellings for each CSD in reported in the 2021 Census is an aggregation of self-reported households. For our 2025 estimation we calculate total dwellings from the number of dwellings assessed through Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) records.

### **The Town of Wolfville**

Once we establish the average rent for the Town of Wolfville, we calculate current asking rents by applying a 40% premium to the average rent.

To estimate average asking rent by dwelling type and bedroom count, we establish relationships between the weighted averages of rents per dwelling type by the number of bedrooms for Nova Scotia regions outside Halifax in 2021 using public use microdata files (PUMF). We use those relationships to estimate average asking rent per dwelling and bedroom type in Wolfville.

DRAFT

# Wolfville Master Plan Engagement Strategy and Communications Plan

April 5, 2024

## 1.0 Background overview

In 2024, the Town of Wolfville received funding through the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) to remove barriers to housing construction and accelerate the development process. Wolfville retained Happy Cities' services to explore, analyze, and conduct engagement on potential growth scenarios, zoning reforms, and other actions that can help encourage development. This document outlines a strategy for engagement and communication to support this reform effort.

## 2.0 Objectives

A core focus of engagement will be to communicate the need for change. Our central objective is to shift the focus of conversation from *whether* growth should happen, to *how* growth can best support people's desires for their community (informed by best practice and evidence).

We also have the following objectives for engagement with stakeholders and the public.

### Stakeholder engagement

- Identify challenges with current zoning or development regulations that constrain growth to help us refine proposed zoning updates.
- Identify concerns stakeholders have about potential development, and solutions to address those concerns.
- Identify potential solutions for Acadia University to enable residential and mixed use development on its campus.

### Public engagement

- Understand the extent and impact of the housing shortage for Wolfville residents.
- Inform the public on the need for housing and commercial development, and the trade-offs between various scenarios for achieving it. Identify the public's preferred growth scenario, given these trade-offs.
- Explore the public's concerns about growth, and identify solutions to alleviate these concerns.
- Build confidence with the public by articulating how early rounds of engagement shaped the project's later proposals.

### 3.0 Engagement approach

As noted above, a central objective of this work is to focus conversation on how growth can best support people’s desires for their community, and not whether it should happen. We will do this by:

- Communicating the need for growth, including:
  - The requirements of the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) agreement.
  - The housing gaps that justified the HAF program.
  - The role of growth in meeting the town’s financial needs.
  - The need for more commercial and office space in the core.
- Asking participants to articulate what they most value about their community, so that we can craft the growth plan to preserve and enhance those values.
- Seeking feedback on growth scenarios, so that participants can articulate which sets of goals they prioritize above others, and to focus conversation on which type of change they prefer.

Happy Cities uses the IAP2 spectrum of participation to guide our engagement activities. We will use different levels of participation for various audiences:

- **Planning advisory committee:** Collaborate.
- **Stakeholders:** Involve.
- **Public:** Consult.



### 4.0 Audiences

It is important to consider the audiences we hope to reach, to ensure that our engagement strategy is adequately designed to reach them.

Public:

In the following list, we identify audiences we seek to reach, and solutions for reaching them:

- **Long-time residents.** This demographic is the most likely to come to public meetings.

- **Students.** It will be valuable to hold pop-ups or events on Acadia campus. We can also inquire into promotional opportunities on campus, such as newsletters, an events calendar, or prominent billboards.
- **New residents and people struggling to find housing.** Pop-ups and a survey would be valuable to reach these groups. It would also be valuable to distribute information about engagement opportunities through affordable housing providers and related organizations.

### Stakeholders:

- **Core stakeholder groups.** We will reach Councillors, the PAC, the Business Corporation, and Acadia University through one-on-one interviews. They will also be invited to workshops and other engagement events.
- **Landowners.** The Wolfville planning department will reach out to key landowners — including people who have considered their development options — and will set up interviews with them. We may also organize a focus group for landowners, depending on the number of people who may want to participate.

## 5.0 Engagement activities

Engagement will occur in three rounds:

### Round 1. Stakeholder engagement - [Complete](#)

Starting immediately (January 2025), we will reach out to the following stakeholder groups for 1-on-1 interviews. For each, we offer a tentative assessment of their level of support for growth:

- The Wolfville Business Development Corporation: **Supportive.**
- Councillors: **Mixed levels of support.**
- Planning Advisory Committee Members: **Mixed levels of support.**
- Acadia University representatives: **Supportive, but depends on decision-making processes.**
- Others suggested by interviewees or Wolfville staff.

We envision conducting **6-8** interviews.

### Round 2a. Public engagement

Once we have presented the four growth scenarios to the Planning Advisory Committee on May 8, we will open engagement up to the public. We will hold a week of public engagement events with the goal of concentrating the public's attention, and to provide sufficient time and space for people to offer substantive ideas on potential changes.

We propose to hold the following events:

- **Online survey. May 12 to June 6.** Surveys help to reach a representative sample of residents. They are especially useful for asking what to prioritize between competing goals or options, as this offers substantive guidance for the next steps of detailed planning.
- **2 Pop-ups. Weekends of May 17/18 or 24/25.** We propose to set up booths with display boards for the public to give feedback at popular locations. Tentatively, we propose to hold these at the Market and at the pizza oven.
- **2 Open houses. Between May 19 and May 23.** Open houses allow residents to arrive at a time that works for them, and visit stations with display boards to offer their feedback. Open houses are valuable because they are flexible and make less demand on people's time than a multi-hour workshop. They also help avoid grand-standing, because each person offers their opinion one-on-one with staff, or in small groups.
- **Interviews with Acadia stakeholders. May 12 to June 6.** We propose to conduct 3-6 interviews with Acadia representatives to solicit detailed feedback, including management and student representatives.
- **Interviews with developers. May 12 to June 6.** We propose to conduct 2-4 interviews with developers to assess the viability of proposed strategies for

#### **Round 2b. Land-owner engagement. May 26 to June 30.**

We will interview a small sample (2-4) of landowners who have considered developing their land to understand the limitations of the current zoning regime, and how it can be improved.

#### **Round 3. Follow-up on key issues. May 26 to June 30.**

We may hold follow-up workshops with residents and/or stakeholders if a particular issue emerges as controversial, so that we can discuss the issue further and seek to identify solutions.

## **6.0 Risks and assumptions**

- **Concerns about losing Main Street's charm.** Main Street is a tourist destination thanks to its many shops and diverse, fine-grain architecture. Residents will need assurance the plan will enable growth without undermining this asset.
- **Concerns about losing heritage.** More generally, it will be important to communicate how the plan will enhance heritage and maintain the core attributes of the community's charm while enabling growth.
- **Acadia University's participation.** Engaging Acadia should not be a challenge, but it is difficult to foresee whether Acadia will be able to approve land use changes within the timeline of this project.

- **Concerns regarding farmland.** Many residents view the protection of farmland as sacred. Any proposal to build on farmland — even if only a concept — must be carefully framed to avoid the impression that eliminating farmland is a goal of this project.
- **Potential major change on Summer Street.** The plan will likely not propose fundamental changes for most neighbourhoods, with the exception of Summer Street. It will be important to approach this discussion with due sensitivity.
- **Parking changes may be controversial.** Any proposal to introduce paid parking or eliminate parking requirements may be deeply controversial. It will be important to articulate the value of such changes to drivers, businesses, and residents.

### Risks specific to engagement

- **Disruption.** There is a risk that those opposed to development or change may disrupt engagement meetings. To avoid this, we generally recommend against townhall-style engagements, in which members of the public speak at a microphone in front of everyone. Instead, we recommend holding workshops in which participants sit around a table to discuss challenges and solutions.
- **Misunderstandings.** Complex planning terms risk being misinterpreted by the public. We will aim to be as specific as possible in our communications. To avoid this, we will:
  - Avoid terms like FAR (to the extent possible), and focus on what they allow or do not allow.
  - Avoid using broad terms like “density,” and focus on what we mean, such as housing, backyard suites, and x-story buildings.
  - Use visuals to clarify what precisely is being proposed.

## 7.0 Communications

A variety of community strategies are needed to reach the range of audiences noted above, and to raise the profile of the project. Happy Cities can offer support on any of the following communications actions, if desired by Wolfville staff:

- **Content for the project webpage.** We can provide text and project updates.
  - **Question:** Would you like us to prepare such text?
- **Press release.** We can draft a press release.
  - **Question:** Would you like support on writing a draft press release? Will Wolfville communications staff disseminate it?

- **Social media.** We can provide 2 graphics and text for social media promotional campaigns. We recommend providing a budget for paid ads to increase the visibility of these posts.
  - **Question:** Would you like graphics for social media?
  - **Question:** Would you be open to using paid ads?
- **Print posters.** We can design one print poster, and coordinate having copies of it printed.
  - **Question:** Would you like us to coordinate having this printed? Is there someone on your staff, or a local service, that can disseminate them? (i.e., post them around town)
- **Stakeholder emails.** We can help keep key stakeholders up-to-date.
- **Relevant email lists.** We can craft emails to be sent to groups to promote engagement opportunities.
- **Earned media.** We are happy to make ourselves available for interviews with journalists, if requested.

It will be important to identify what promotional activities Happy Cities will support as the second round of engagement approaches.

## 7.0 Key messages

The following list offers a few key messages to help guide public communications, such as in promotional materials and workshop presentations. We will update this list as needed as the project progresses.

- The CMHC's Housing Accelerator Fund will provide \$1.4 million dollars over the next four years to help the town provide more housing. As part of this agreement, Wolfville needs to reform zoning to allow more homes to be built.
- It is possible to retain and enhance what people love about Wolfville — like its historic character, quiet neighbourhoods, and bustling Main Street — while also enabling more homes to be built. In fact, new homes can help preserve these qualities, by ensuring people can afford to live here, and by providing tax revenue to protect against flooding and invest in public spaces.
- All communities change over time, even if Wolfville did not update its plans. By taking a proactive approach, we can ensure that change strengthens Wolfville and its quality of life.
- Entrepreneurs struggle to find space new businesses in Wolfville due to a lack of retail space. There is an opportunity to bring more vibrancy to the downtown by enabling more commercial construction.
- There are opportunities to expand the downtown without impacting existing neighbourhoods, such as on Front Street.



- Wolfville is exploring two strategies to increase tax revenue to ensure the town can continue to invest in its streets and public spaces, and to manage future risks, such as flooding:
  - Growing the downtown.
  - Making better use of Wolfville’s underused lots.

## 8.0 Engagement plan

The most intensive period of engagement will be in March and April, during the public engagement portion. We will update this table once we have identified the detailed engagement activities with Wolfville staff.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Stakeholder engagement	Interviews	January - February (complete)
Public engagement	A week of intensive engagement (details TBD)	May
Landowner engagement	Interviews or focus group	May - June
Follow-up engagement	1 or 2 focus groups	June
What we Heard Report		July