

Town of Wolfville Strategic Plan

2025-2029



A cultivated experience for the mind, body, and soil

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A Message from Town Council

In June 2025, with the assistance of Jacques Dubé and Town staff, Council workshopped a renewed Strategic Plan to establish priorities and to guide our actions through 2029. This plan was informed by what we heard during the 2024 municipal election campaign, through ongoing community feedback and by discussions around the Council table.

With the adoption of this Strategic Plan, we share Council's approach to governance, and our shared intention to thoroughly and effectively serve Wolfville. Through this plan we also reaffirm our commitment as a Council to serve all members of our community over the 2024 – 2028 term.

Now that Council has set the strategic direction, we will work with the support of dedicated Town staff to make informed decisions on budgets, plans, bylaws, and policies that shape Wolfville today and into the future. Our decisions are strengthened by staff research & recommendations and by community ideas & insights. We remain committed to ongoing communication and collaboration with you, through community interactions, public discussions and listening sessions.

It is our pleasure to work with you to build a strong, inclusive, and sustainable Wolfville.

Sincerely,

Mayor Jodi MacKay

Councillor Mike Butler

Councillor Ian Palmeter

Councillor Howard Williams

Deputy Mayor Jennifer Ingham

Councillor Wendy Elliott

Councillor Kelly van Niekerk



Introduction

Wolfville is situated in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. A vibrant university town nestled in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley, rich history meets youthful energy and cultural vitality everywhere you turn. The town has long embraced a unique identity shaped by its academic roots, scenic charm, and strong community spirit.

The home of Acadia University, Wolfville's walkable downtown, thriving arts scene, and outdoor amenities make it a destination for both locals and visitors. Cultural events reflect the town's creative pulse. Residents congregate to enjoy local sports, parks and trails, and honour their agricultural heritage through farmers' markets and farm-to-table dining.

As Wolfville looks ahead, it faces challenges common to many towns such as aging infrastructure, climate change, and rising costs. With nearly 90% of revenue tied to property taxes, the Town must balance fiscal responsibility with evolving community needs. Yet, opportunities abound—from its location in wine country to the many contributions of Acadia University. This Strategic Plan outlines how Wolfville will navigate complexity while preserving the distinctive character that makes it one of Nova Scotia's most vibrant communities.

The Town of Wolfville's Strategic Plan outlines four key priorities that reflect what matters most to our community: Fiscal Responsibility, Prosperous Economy, Vibrant Community, and Sustainable Environment. Developed through collaboration, this plan draws on community feedback, expert input, and strategic planning sessions. This Strategic Plan ensures that the Town's actions will align with the values and aspirations of the community.



Vision, Mission & Values

Wolfville is committed to the seven sacred teachings: truth, honesty, love, courage, respect, wisdom & humility. Those teachings shape our vision, mission, values and acts.

A **vision statement** describes a desired future state; it reflects what Wolfville aspires to become:

***An inclusive and vibrant community
where natural beauty, heritage, innovation, and well-being bloom.***

A **mission statement** is a declaration of the Town's purpose and approach to serve the community:

***Lead with care, creativity, and purpose –
honour our past, enrich our present, and shape a resilient future.***

Values are deeply held beliefs and ideals that guide the Town's actions, decisions, and interactions:

Accessibility

Collaboration

Diversity

Equity

Inclusivity

Informed Decision-Making

Innovation

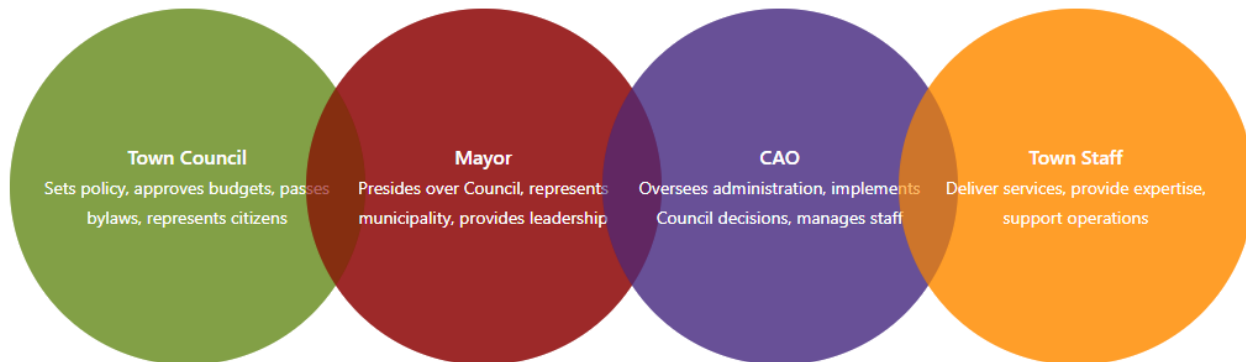
Safety

Stewardship

Trust



Town Operations



In Nova Scotia, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) serves as the administrative head of municipal government. The CAO is Council's only employee and is responsible for the Town's operations. The CAO's core function is relatively simple: **to provide professional, effective, administrative leadership that supports the Council as they serve the community.**

Wolfville is fortunate to have a talented, dedicated and hard-working team of public servants that delivers a wide variety of programs and services. The Town also works with regional partners to provide high-quality services at a lower cost than it could otherwise, like Acadia University, the Wolfville Business Development Corporation, Valley Waste Management, Kings Transit, Kings Regional Emergency Management, and many more.

The Town has extensive reach and service responsibilities, which includes but is not limited to:

- Provision of safe, high-quality drinking water, which includes 71km of pipe, 220 + hydrants, 1610 + meters, two wells and associated pumps, treatment plant and reservoir.
- Collection & treatment of sanitary sewer, which includes 62km of pipe, 6 pumping stations, and a three-lagoon treatment plant.
- Maintenance and repair of a transportation network, which includes 34km of asphalt roadway, 25.5km of asphalt and concrete sidewalk, 19km of recreational trails, 135 streetlights & 11 parking lots.
- Upkeep of over 110 acres of park and greenspace, 1441 urban forest trees, 93 + benches, 30+ picnic tables and many more assets.
- After school, summer camp, community and recreational programming.
- Support for many community events, celebrations and organizations.
- Administration of bylaws and provision of community safety in partnership among Community Compliance, Wolfville Fire Department, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Kings Regional Emergency Management.
- Management of approximately 200 development agreements, processing of 100 + development & building permits, responsibility for fire inspection of 280 + properties & management of 35 heritage property files.
- Coordination of financial, technology, human resources, communication & privacy services.

Financial Condition

The Town of Wolfville has benefited from many years of sound financial management and decision making, putting it in a relatively stable, low risk position. Each year the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs releases [a report on the financial condition and sustainability](#) of each municipality. For the past five years Wolfville has shown strong financial health viewed through a relatively low risk rating on 11 of 12 financial indicators in the most recent report based on the 2022/23 financial statements.

One indicator, residential tax effort (which is a measure of the percentage of household income spent on municipal taxes), continues to be higher than the average of other Towns in Nova Scotia, making it a moderate risk.

For a complete picture of the Town's financial health, you can find the [approved financial statements dating back to 2019 here](#).

Trends to continuously monitor:

- Assessment growth is not keeping up to the growth in municipal expenses.
- Relatively high residential tax effort making Town services unaffordable for some property owners.
- 82% of all revenue comes from property tax; 8% comes from levies on property (sewer rates, etc.), meaning 90% of all revenue is generated from property.
- Wolfville has increasing capital investment needs as infrastructure continues aging. And with the cost investment increasing primarily due to ever-increasing prices and supply chain issues, external funding opportunities for these important projects need to be considered at every step.

Implementation & Reporting

With approval of the *Town of Wolfville's Strategic Plan 2025-2029*, Council directs the following implementation & reporting:

- Add the *Strategic Priorities At-A-Glance* page to each Committee of the Whole meeting agenda, not for review, but as an ongoing reference to the Town's priorities.
- Schedule an annual review of the *Strategic Plan*, aligned with the beginning of the annual operational plan, operating and capital budget process.
- Schedule two additional *Strategic Plan* updates, aligned with Operational Plan updates, in the spring and fall of each year.
- Report on progress in the CAO report as appropriate.

Strategic Priorities



This plan serves as a roadmap to guide operational planning, shape budgets, inform departmental work plans, and support regular reporting to the community.

Each of the four strategic priority sections follows the same structure:

1. A vision statement outlines the Town's long-term goals in that area.
2. Key themes within each priority identify the focus areas.
3. Action items under each key theme describe the specific initiatives the Town will undertake to support progress, measure outcomes, and ensure accountability.

Strategic Priorities At-A-Glance

Fiscal Responsibility: *Ensure organizational sustainability and deliver public services using sound financial decision-making, through:*

- 1) Asset Management: Collect accurate and timely data to make informed decisions that inspire trust and confidence.
- 2) Community Focus: Make Investments in public services reflective of community need.
- 3) Financial Planning and Management: Collect, administer, and manage funds in a transparent manner.

Prosperous Economy: *Foster a diverse and resilient local economy that supports entrepreneurship, innovation, sustainable development, and contributes to a vibrant community, through:*

- 1) Holistic Planning: Municipal Planning Strategy and development processes that enables investment, foster multiple and complementary uses of property, and supports a growing population.
- 2) Partnerships: Foster partnerships that promote Wolfville and create value.
- 3) Placemaking for a Vibrant Community: Enhancing public spaces to support community connections.
- 4) Event Attraction: Positioning Wolfville as an inclusive, supportive partner for events

Inclusive Community: *Build a safe and inclusive community and be a leader in meaningful engagement, through:*

- 1) Inclusivity: Nurture a sense of belonging for all.
- 2) Engagement: Listen and provide opportunities for the community to participate.
- 3) Safety: Keep our community safe and supported with our partners.

Sustainable Environment: *Lead climate action through integrated mobility and environmental protection, through:*

- 1) Climate Action: Reduce emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change.
- 2) Environmental Protection: Protect and sustain our natural assets and biodiversity.
- 3) Mitigating emissions: Lead and influence through programs and education.
- 4) Integrated Mobility: Determine alternative options for moving around the Town for all ages and abilities.

Fiscal Responsibility

Goal: Ensure organizational sustainability and deliver public services using sound financial decision-making

Focus Areas

1. **Asset Management:** Collect accurate and timely data to make informed decisions that inspire trust and confidence.
 - Review existing processes for capital planning and make recommendations for improvements, aligning with community needs.
 - Develop a talent management strategy to support the recruitment and retention of the Town's public servants.

2. **Community Focus:** Make Investments in public services reflective of community need.
 - Develop a system of receiving, assessing, and reporting on community feedback
 - Create communication service levels.
 - Refine processes for project management & reporting.
 - Continue to emphasize community participation in committees, particularly the Audit Committee.

3. **Financial Planning and Management:** Collect, administer, and manage funds in a transparent manner.
 - Make financial decisions that enable the Town's financial indicators remain or trend toward "low risk".
 - Create opportunities for the public to become more informed on municipal budgeting through education and communication.
 - Review the Town's procurement policy and procedures to facilitate valued for dollars spent.
 - Develop multi-year revenue and expense projections to assist with budget development and financial planning.
 - Explore options for non-property tax revenue generation.

Prosperous Economy

Goal: *Foster a diverse and resilient local economy that supports entrepreneurship, innovation, sustainable development, and contributes to a vibrant community.*

Focus Areas

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1. **Holistic Planning:** Municipal Planning Strategy and development processes that enables investment, foster multiple and complementary uses of property, and supports a growing population.
 - Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) action plan implementation, including: expanding the C-1 zone, creating more streamlined processes and clear requirements, reducing or removing parking requirements, enabling at least 2-units throughout Town, enabling more non-market housing, and ensure Town land is investment ready
 - Stimulate a vibrant atmosphere downtown and throughout the C-1 zone.
 - Invest in infrastructure to support housing
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2. **Partnerships:** Foster partnerships that promote Wolfville and create value
 - Assess the Visitor Information Centre pilot with the Wolfville Business Development Corporation (WBDC)
 - Enable land development at Acadia University aligned with the HAF and support Events Acadia.
 - Explore potential partnerships on microtransit with Kings Transit
 - Provide support for the Wolfville Farmers' Market as a key community space for events, building on its established brand as a safe and inclusive space.
 - Explore mutually beneficial partnerships with other municipalities in Kings County and across the province.
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3. **Placemaking for a Vibrant Community:** Enhancing public spaces to support community connections
 - Through placemaking initiatives, add amenities to alleys in the core such as murals, sunshades and vegetation.
 - Ensure Public Art is included in downtown development.
 - Replace / upgrade Main Street bus stop and work with KTA on locating other shelters in the Town with a consistent look and feel
 - Make key improvements at Waterfront Park, such as deck at Devour Studios, improving the sense of shared/public space, water access point(s) and docking, and planning for future flood control by matching elevations with the Provincial Dyke topping efforts.
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4. **Event Attraction:** Positioning Wolfville as an inclusive, supportive partner for events
 - Invest in inclusive events
 - Communicate with event organizers to position Town as a partner
 - Provide logistical support to Events Acadia
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Inclusive Community

Goal: Build a safe and inclusive community and be a leader in meaningful engagement.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Inclusivity: Nurture a sense of belonging for all.

- Assess existing and consider the creation of new programs and funding opportunities to support and increase initiatives that bring communities together, such as:
 - Soups and Sides
 - Welcome Week event (Acadia, RCMP)
 - Pride events
- Review events through the revised Parks and Recreation framework, once finalized.

2. Engagement: Listen and provide opportunities for the community to participate.

- Develop and implement a communications plan that includes proactive communication, digital accessibility and personal touch.
- Responsive services and resident care.
- Civic engagement and trust building through accessible public meetings.
- Consideration of rebranding the Visitor Information Centre (Information Hub).

3. Safety: Keep our community safe and supported with our partners

- Continuous relationship building with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, with specific attention toward community and vehicle safety.
 - Review and implement the Memorandum of Understanding with Acadia University.
 - Support funding for fire equipment, facilities, training, and volunteer retention.
 - Reinforce community safety priorities, including dog control, traffic and pedestrian safety, including crosswalk reviews.
 - Carry out the priorities in the Town's Accessibility Plan.
 - Carry out the priorities in the Town's Equity and Anti-Racism Plan.
 - Ensure Town spaces are safe for all who use them (staff, council & residents).
 - Improve the resiliency of water system through source water protection plan and strategic investments.
 - Upgrades to the IT systems and infrastructure of internal servers.
 - Upgrades to water and wastewater information systems.
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Sustainable Environment

Goal: Lead climate action through integrated mobility and environmental protection.

Focus Areas

1. **Climate Action:** Reduce emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

- Protect critical infrastructure from future climate impacts (flood mitigation)
- Waterfront improvements
- Stormwater assessment, plan and improvements
- Explore the implications of making Wolfville a “fire smart” community
- Consider climate impacts with all capital purchase
- Influence individual climate action through information sharing and initiatives

2. **Environmental Protection:** Protect and sustain our natural assets and biodiversity.

- Consider an Urban Forest Plan/Policy
- Create an approach with our partners and community volunteers to green space that protects biodiversity while encouraging people to connect with nature
- Include natural assets in Asset Management

3. **Mitigating emissions:** Lead and influence through programs and education.

- Review and implement Climate Action Plan
- Facilitate solid waste reduction by assessing the availability of waste receptacles, reducing waste at Town events, and assessing options to divert bulky waste
- Maintain secure, clean and abundant public water source:
 - Ensure appropriate land-use within Source Water Protection Area
 - Secure new source water
 - Review Source Water Risk Assessment and define appropriate next steps
 - Consider the adoption of a water conservation plan and/or by-law

4. **Integrated Mobility:** Determine alternative options for moving around the Town for all ages and abilities

- Investigate the need and feasibility of microtransit
 - Continue to improve and create an Active Transportation (AT) network through:
 - Appropriate education and signage on AT network
 - Improve Harvest Moon trail, including hard surface in the downtown core and winter maintenance
 - Improve bike lanes on Main Street
 - Calm traffic and make streets safer for more users
 - Work with providers to expand options
 - Assist with Acadia interconnectivity
 - Consider options to incorporate AT into new development
 - Improve side-walk conditions and determine how new sidewalks will be considered
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Appendix A – SWOT Analysis

Opportunities

- Grow business sector
- East end development
- Increase housing options
- Nursing home
- Grow tourism
- Becoming a recognized leader within Province and Valley
- Asset management and Capital Plan
- Dyke system, parks
- Operations with Acadia
- Accessibility Plan implementation
- Equity and Anti-Racism Plan
- Public transportation
- Recreational programming
- Community engagement
- Event hosting
- Communications
- Short-term accommodation
- Information management
- Access to waterfront
- Celebrating successes

Threats

- Climate change
- Mental health crisis
- Municipal boundary
- Cybersecurity attacks
- Unaffordability of living
- Increases in Taxes
- Public anxiety
- NIMBYism
- Physical and psychological safety of our council and staff
- Aging infrastructure
- Government funding cuts
- Low staff retention rates
- Pandemic level issues
- Growth adversity
- Overdependence on & unsupported immigration
- Deferred maintenance

Strengths

- Strong staff-council relations
- Communications
- Stable tax base
- Acadia
- Wineries
- Inclusion

- Safety
- Open to innovation
- Partnerships-welcoming
- Value and celebration of heritage and culture
- Strategic location (proximity to Halifax and other partner communities)
- Highly engaged community
- Track-record of collaboration
- Developed agriculture
- Educated and engaged population
- Diverse business community
- Green spaces
- Age and demographic diversity

Weaknesses

- Geographically locked land
- Lack of housing options
- Location flooding
- Reliance on partners
- Lack of labour force
- Little industrial base
- Aging infrastructure
- Limited tax base
- Demographics
- Affordability
- Reliance on property taxes
- Construction autonomy
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of health care facilities and resources
- Lack of recreational centers
- High reliance on partners
- Insufficient transit service
- Absence of Uber
- Complexity of issues