

2022

MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF ST. MARY'S

MUNICIPAL PLANNING STRATEGY

Adopted: 2022.10.18

Effective:

With Amendments To: N/A



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Municipality would like to recognize the many residents and stakeholders who shared their thoughts, insights, and aspirations for the Municipality throughout the process of developing this Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law.

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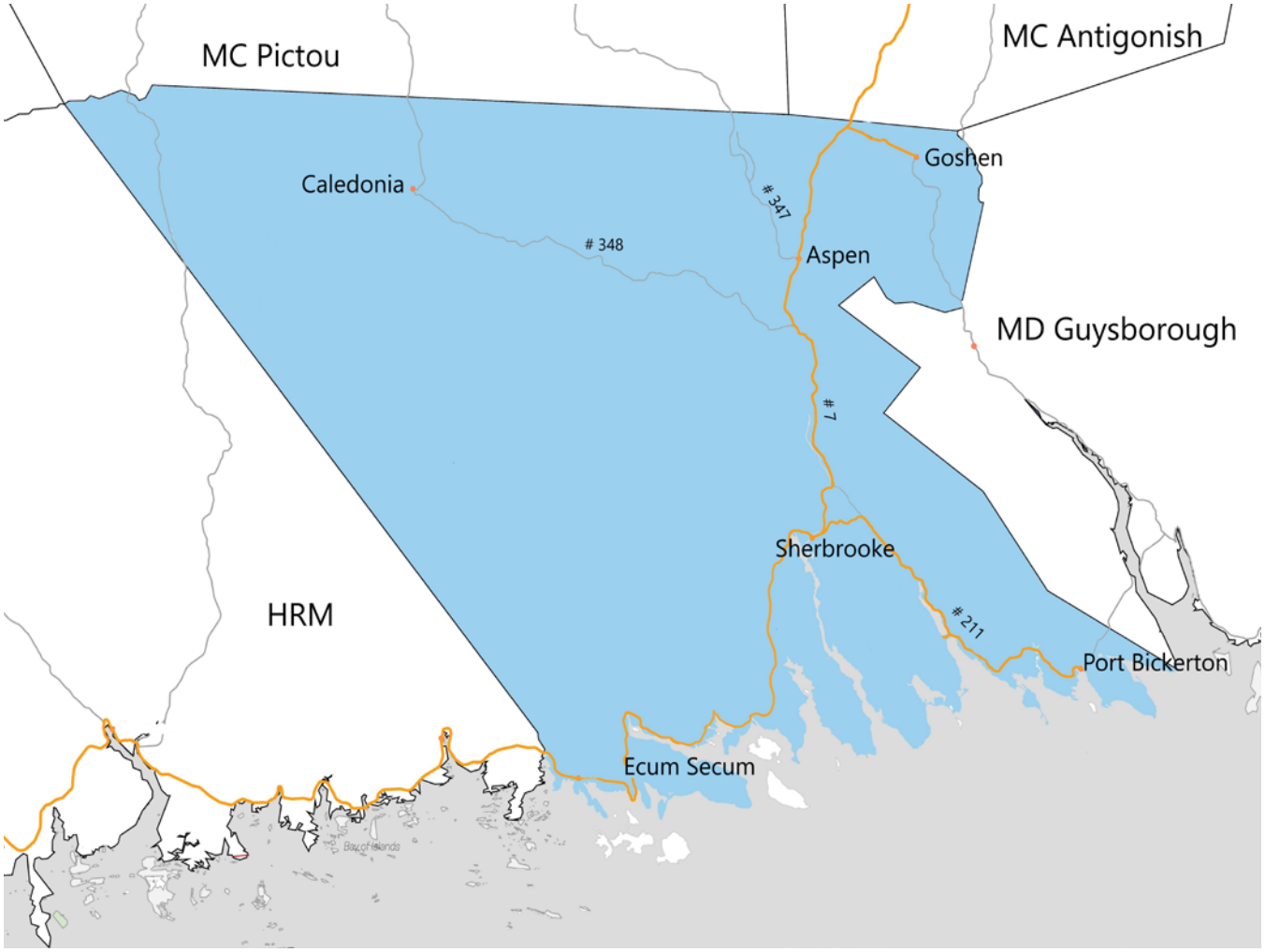
PART 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The Municipal Planning Strategy (hereafter referred to as 'MPS') represents the long-term planning framework for the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's. It outlines residents' vision for the future and presents different planning strategies and policies to achieve this vision. The MPS represents the collective aspirations of both community members and Council and helps to inform future Council decisions on behalf of the Municipality. The MPS establishes guidelines to manage land use change, conservation, and development within the local area. The MPS is an important resource for residents and interested citizens, especially those engaged in residential and commercial development, to gain a thorough understanding of the strategic direction of the Municipality.

The associated Land Use By-Law (hereafter referred to as 'LUB') follows the policy framework established by the MPS to outline the legal requirements and land regulations within the Municipality as well as the process for making decisions regarding development permit applications. The LUB is the principal legal document that governs which types of land use or development are allowable for individual properties within the Municipality.

Figure 1.A District of St. Mary's



The process of developing both this MPS and the associated LUB was guided by engagement with residents, community stakeholders, and business leaders. Interviews, public workshops and an online survey gathered valuable feedback from citizens about the current state of the Municipality as well as desired future aspirations.

To be effective, this MPS informs the Municipality's strategy for capital investment, asset management, and Committee and Administrative (staff) workflows while also aligning with existing municipal strategies and plans. This MPS and associated LUB supersede the previous MPS and LUB, approved in 2006, and act as the new planning and regulatory framework for the Municipality. This new MPS may be amended as necessary, from time to time, to ensure relevancy and to respond to future challenges and opportunities.

This MPS has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the *Municipal Government Act* Chapter 18 of the Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1998. Application of this MPS and the associated LUB relate to land within the boundaries of the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's as shown in Figure 1.A.

1.2 Plan Goals and Structure

1.2.1 UPDATED PLANNING GOALS

In 2020, the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's embarked on a significant update of its previous MPS and LUB with the aim of realigning those planning documents with the present needs and desires of the community, and the mandatory requirements of the Province of Nova Scotia. This new MPS outlines the following five priorities:

- protect and conserve the natural environment,
- encourage responsible economic growth that benefits the community long-term,
- improve and expand access to essential community services,
- enable existing residents to live lifelong in the community and attract new residents, and
- capitalize on the rural assets of the District of St. Mary's.

These revised priorities reflect the findings of an extensive community engagement program as well as the results of background reports and studies that were produced and reviewed during the course of developing this MPS.

The Planning Priorities reflect changes in the Municipality since the completion of the first MPS in 2006, and they also reflect the current developmental needs and hopes among residents, business stakeholders, and Municipal Council. This MPS aims to improve land use policies and processes to meet these strategic goals, and align with the shared future and community priorities as outlined in Part 2.

POLICY 1–1 Planning Priorities

Council may, through the MPS, set out policies to:

1. *Protect and conserve the natural environment.*
2. *Ensure economic prosperity.*
3. *Improve community services.*
4. *Plan for community growth, and*
5. *Capitalize on rural assets.*

Figure 1.B Planning Priorities for 2021-2031



1.2.2 PLAN STRUCTURE

This MPS consists of policies and maps which provide the policy framework for the Municipality and which are implemented primarily through the accompanying LUB. While this MPS is organized into distinct parts, for any part to be properly understood it must be read in the context of the whole document, mapping, and LUB.

Through this MPS, the Municipality outlines what changes will be implemented in the future in order to improve current land use planning policies and regulations. These future changes include:

Variable Land Uses - The Municipality will use a well-developed land use planning approach to plan a diverse range of land uses in order to encourage the expansion of current economic and cultural opportunities in the community.

Land Development Opportunities - The Municipality will consider the current pattern of land use and analyze potential for new development opportunities, especially regarding commercial land use zones.

Clarity of Regulations - The Municipality will establish clear and concise land use policies and regulations that eliminate confusion by improving the current land use zoning approach and utilizing tools (e.g. secondary planning strategies) to better manage community expectations.

1.2.3 PLANNING PROCESS

This MPS and accompanying LUB were developed over the course of intensive research, analysis, stakeholder and community engagement, and a rigorous review by the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Throughout the creation of these documents, the process was guided by constant communication with residents and business owners in St. Mary's. The development of this MPS commenced during April 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which dictated that the process follow strict public health guidelines.

The first phase of development involved a careful analysis of existing conditions in St. Mary's, including historical, economic, and demographic data. During this phase, a thorough overview of existing municipal policies and regulations was also undertaken.

The second phase involved consultation with residents, community business owners, and key stakeholders to gather input regarding the most important challenges and opportunities for future planning. The potential impacts on adjacent municipalities were also explored during this stage.

Drafts of both documents were created during the third stage, and submitted to staff and Municipal Council for discussion and to the Province for review. Final versions of both documents were created based on recommended revisions.

The fourth and final stage of the planning process involved the approval of this MPS and the accompanying LUB by Municipal Council.

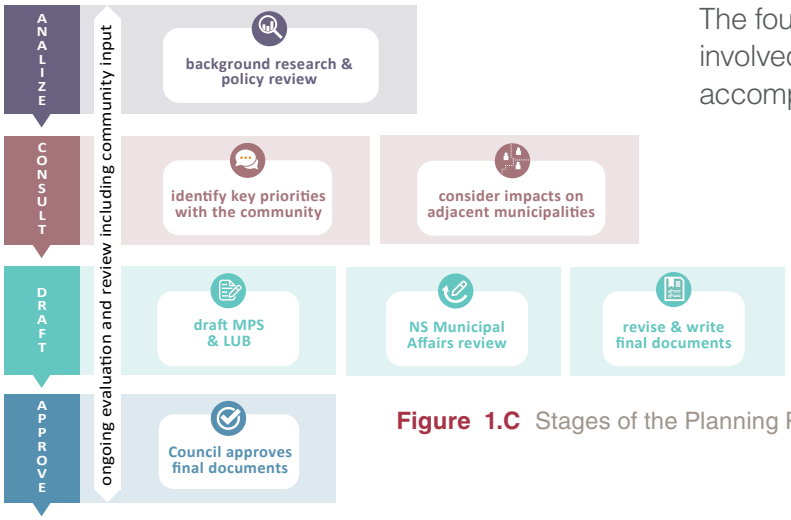


Figure 1.C Stages of the Planning Process

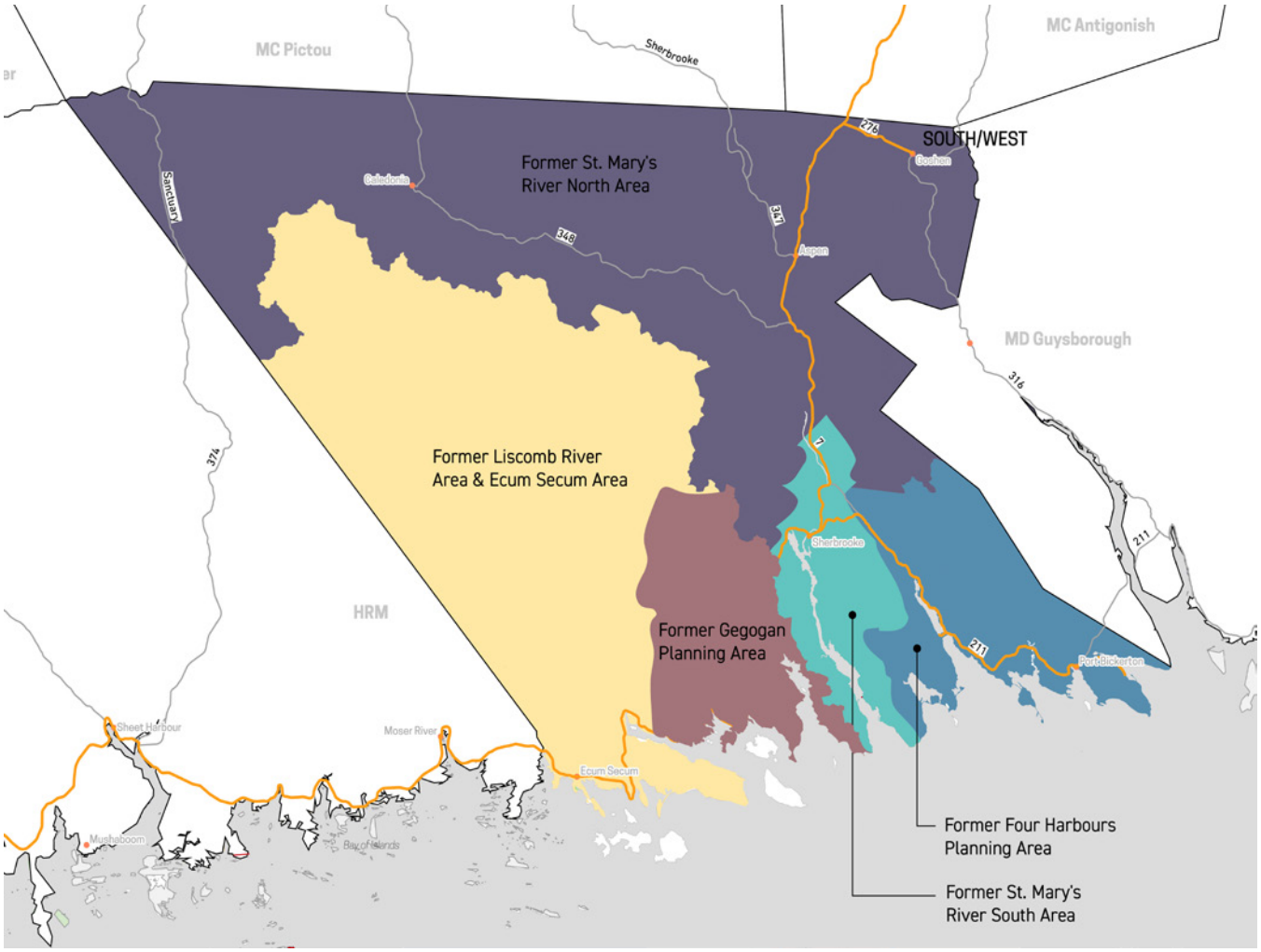
1.2.4 FORMER PLANNING AREAS

The former MPS identified five planning areas:

- St. Mary's River South Area
- Four Harbours Area
- Gegogan Planning Area
- St. Mary's River North Area
- Liscomb River Area & Ecum Secum Area

These planning areas were separated on the basis of watersheds in the Municipality. There were no administrative differences between the planning areas and the zones were uniform throughout the Municipality. The practicality of five administering planning areas in such a sparsely populated municipality was questioned at the beginning of the process and the planning team decided there were no longer any benefits to continuing with five different areas. This means that planning policies and zones can now be applied consistently across the Municipality.

Figure 1.D Former Planning Areas



1.3 Community Profile

1.3.1 ST. MARY'S PAST

Evidence of human subsistence in the St. Mary's area dates back to the Late Archaic period, around 5,000 years Before Present (BP), with many found artifacts from that time indicating a mixed terrestrial-marine subsistence system. Ceramics dating from around 2,000 years BP indicate a shift towards a more shellfish-dependent lifestyle, and the use of new technologies such as pottery. The Mi'kmaw Nation are the descendants of this long legacy of habitation that occurred in the St. Mary's area before European colonization.[1]

In 1650, the French established Fort Sainte-Marie along the banks of the St. Mary's River. The fort was seized by the British in 1669 as part of a decades-long struggle for control of Nova Scotia, and in 1805 the community was renamed Sherbrooke in honour of Sir John Coape Sherbrooke.[2]

In 1861 gold was discovered at Goldenville and the area saw a dramatic increase in population. People from across Canada and the United States flocked to Sherbrooke and adjacent settlements in the hopes of striking it rich. Sherbrooke Village was the most important boom town in the region until the late nineteenth century. The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's was incorporated in 1879.[3]

Sherbrooke Village (part of the Nova Scotia Museum) retains its historic importance as a demonstration ground for life during the height of mining activity, and visitors to the Village can enjoy exploring historic buildings while learning about traditional trades, agricultural practices and cultural activities. The Village is a significant heritage site and source of visitors to St. Mary's.[4]

1 Poliandri, Simone. First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life of the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. University of Nebraska Press, 2011.

2 "Place-Names and Places of Nova Scotia." Nova Scotia Archives, https://novascotia.ca/archives/places/page.asp?ID=620.

3 "Goldenville Gold District." Virtual Museum of Canada, http://novascotiagold.ca/theme/exploitation_de_lor-mining/goldenville-eng.php.

4 "Transforming Sherbrooke into a Tourism Gateway." Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, 14 Jan. 2019, https://www.canada.ca/en/atlantic-canada-opportunities/news/2019/01/transforming-sherbrooke-into-a-tourism-gateway.html.

Left: McDonald Brothers Sawmill Historic Site.

Right: Main Street, Sherbrooke Village.





1.3.2 ST. MARY'S PRESENT

On April 17, 1879, a system of county and district municipalities was established in Nova Scotia, including the District of St. Mary's and its parent county, Guysborough County.

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's has the smallest population of any district in Nova Scotia, with an area that covers about 1,909 square kilometers. As a result, it has the smallest population density of all 50 municipalities in the province, at approximately 1.17 persons per km^2.

The 'ruralness' of St. Mary's is celebrated by permanent and temporary residents alike. In 2021, there were 1,538 private dwellings in the Municipality (1.4 people per dwelling on average), and 491 (or 32%) of those dwellings were home to temporary residents. There was a slow but steady drop in permanent resident dwelling counts between 2011 and 2016, from 1,117 down to 1,042. Since 2016 there has been a slight increase in the number of private dwellings. Meanwhile, the temporary resident dwelling count has declined more substantially over the last two census periods, including a steep drop in the number of temporary dwellings from 2016 to 2021. Still, the proportion of temporary versus permanent resident dwellings is high when compared to other Nova Scotia municipalities. The availability of relatively inexpensive land and its relative proximity to urban centres in HRM, Truro, New Glasgow, and Antigonish are likely factors that attract cottage owners and other temporary residents to the area.

The St. Mary's River flows through the Municipality to Sonora, south of Sherbrooke, where it empties into the Atlantic Ocean. The River is a notable landmark, and serves as important habitat for riparian and aquatic species, notably the Atlantic salmon. The river is one in a small handful of rivers in Nova Scotia that salmon still return to, therefore river health is vitally important to the Municipality.

By road, St. Mary's is connected to the rest of Nova Scotia via Highway 7, which links Halifax and Antigonish through Sherbrooke. Highways 348 and 347 offer westerly connections to Stellarton, New Glasgow, and beyond.

Most civil, educational, and health services are located in Sherbrooke, and the Historic Sherbrooke Village attracts the majority of visitors to the Municipality.

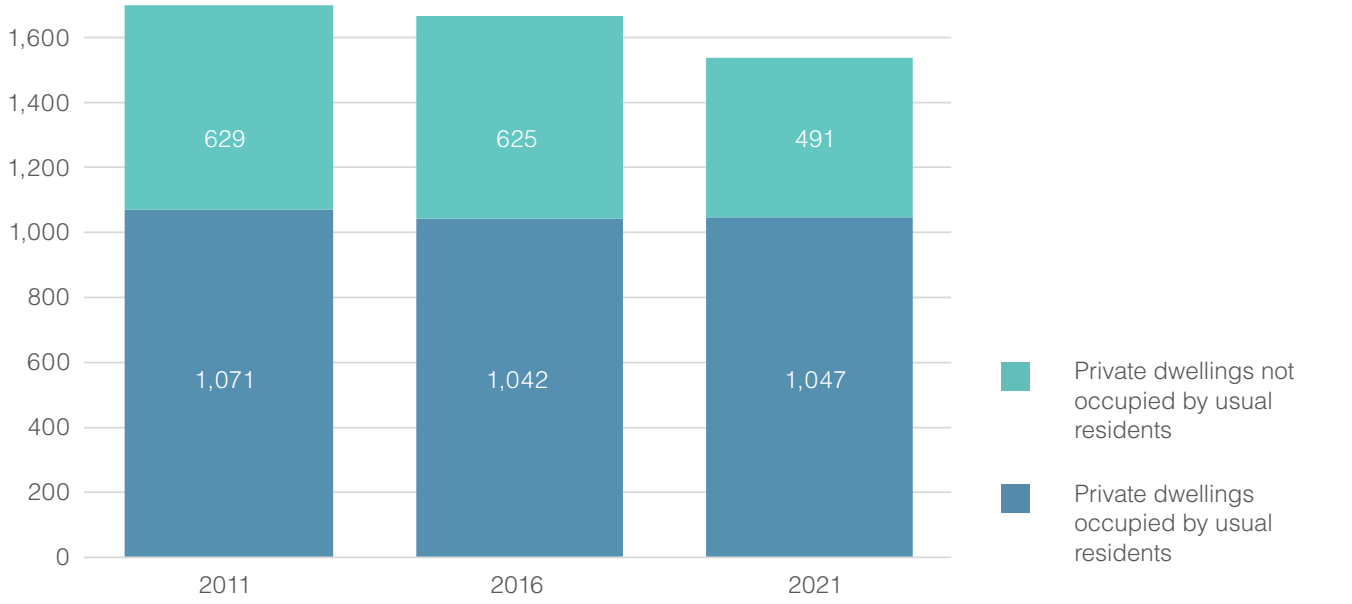


Figure 1.E Number of Dwelling in St. Mary's, 2011 - 2021

Population Dynamics

The 2021 Statistics Canada Census reported the resident population of St. Mary's as 2,161 people, or 22% less than it was in 2001 when 2,766 residents were reported. Statistics Canada reported a steady population decline in St. Mary's over that period: -6.5% in 2006, -9% in 2011, -5.1% in 2016, and -3.2% in 2021. For context, the population of Nova Scotia declined by 1% over that same time period.

Population decline is common in many rural areas of Nova Scotia, but it is a concerning trend because it impacts the level of services and facilities in the community, the businesses that will locate there, and the prospects for jobs and economic development.

The majority of individuals in St. Mary's are working-aged adults between 15 and 64 years of age. The age distribution trends slightly older, with only 10.6% of the population below the age of 15.

The majority of St. Mary's residents identify as Non-Aboriginal. The largest self-identifying aboriginal population is comprised by Métis. There is also a small percentage of Inuk living in the District. Taken together, the presence of residents identifying with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada is less than 4% of the total population.

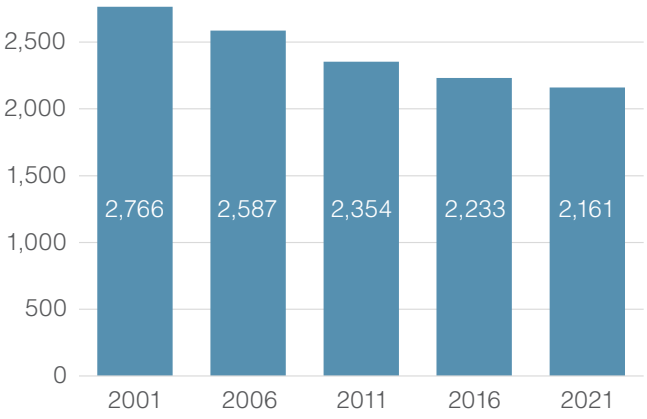


Figure 1.G St. Mary's Population, 2001 - 2021

Figure 1.F Age distribution in St. Mary's, 2021

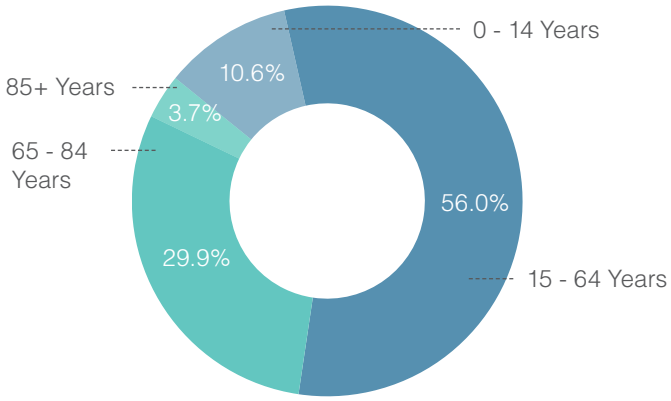


Figure 1.H Aboriginal Identity in St. Mary's, 2016

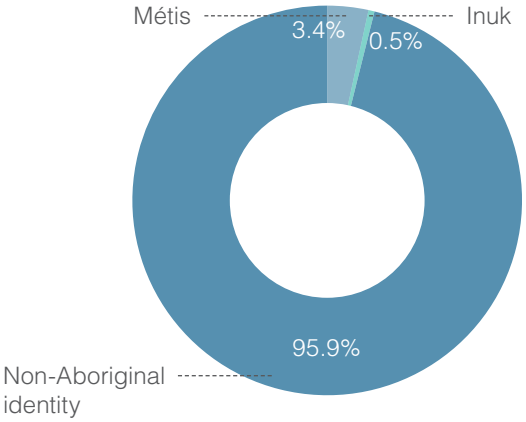
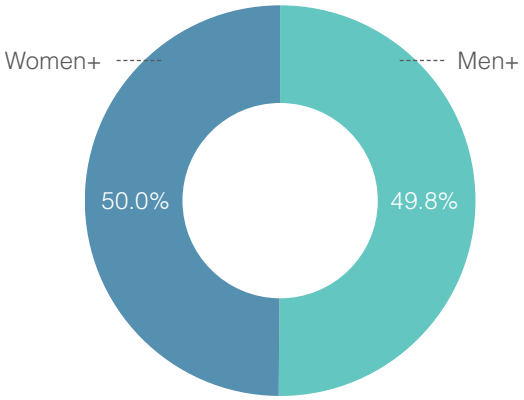


Figure 1.I Gender in St. Mary's, 2021



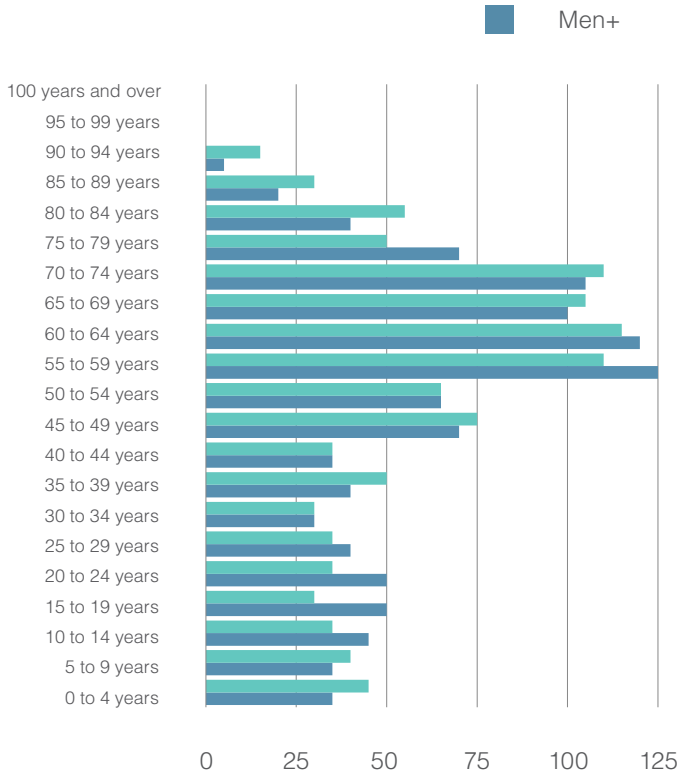


Figure 1.J St. Mary's Population Curve 2021

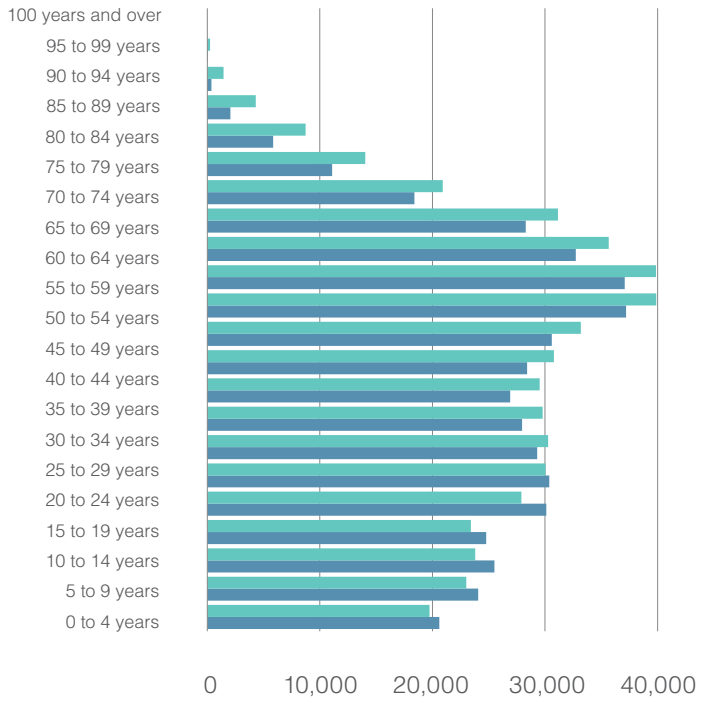


Figure 1.K Nova Scotia Population Curve 2021

The distribution of male and female residents in St. Mary's is quite even, with women outnumbering men by 5 people. The 15 to 19 year old and the 75 to 79 year old age cohorts exhibit the largest discrepancies, each with a difference of 20 people between the sexes. The most prominent age group is between the ages 60 to 64 years old, comprising 11.1% of the population.

2021 population curves show that in St. Mary's there is a greater share of residents above the age of 54 as compared to Nova Scotia as a whole. These graphs also show that in St. Mary's there is a lower proportion of people below 55 years of age relative to the province.

The remoteness of the Municipality coupled with the large percentage of temporary residents suggest that there is a larger population of seniors and a much smaller population of young families. This means there is a lower proportion of jobs and a higher demand on health services when compared to other parts of the province.

Opportunities and Challenges:

Like many rural Maritime communities, the Municipality has experienced gradual but constant population decline over the past two decades. The population is also aging, which indicates a potential higher demand for affordable housing and healthcare. The Municipality has an opportunity to counteract these challenges by attracting new, working-aged residents and families with employment opportunities that encourage business attraction, expansion and retention. Promotion of the St. Mary's brand could also serve to attract people and business to settle in the municipality.

There is also an opportunity to continue to grow the second home community in the Municipality, increasing the tax base and attracting new residents to encourage new service businesses. Incentivizing people to move to the Municipality could also enrich the ethnic and cultural make-up of the community.

Household Characteristics

In the District of St. Mary's, the majority of residents that are over the age of 15 are either married or in a common-law relationship, while 35.7% of the population have never married, are widowed, or divorced or separated. The percentage of married or common-law individuals is higher in St. Mary's as compared to the provincial rate, which may be a reflection of the slightly older adult population in the District.

Two-person households are most common in St. Mary's, followed closely by single-person households. Households of three or more individuals make up the remaining 22% of the population. This indicates that the majority of households either do not have children or are part of the fraction of the 10.3% of lone-parent households that have only one child.

Opportunities and Challenges:

In St. Mary's there is a high incidence of married and common-law partnerships, and a low incidence of households with children. This indicates that the Municipality could benefit from a focus on attracting families with children to settle in the area. This would be beneficial for boosting the overall population and enrolment in local schools, while also contributing to create a more robust labour force.

Nearly one third of households consist of a single person, which emphasizes the need to provide ample socialization opportunities, especially for seniors. Isolation, including amongst older generations, is a common occurrence in rural Nova Scotia that has the potential to negatively impact individual health and happiness. The Municipality has the opportunity to expand social and cultural services to combat loneliness and help promote greater interaction amongst community members.

Figure 1.L Marital Status in St. Mary's, 2021

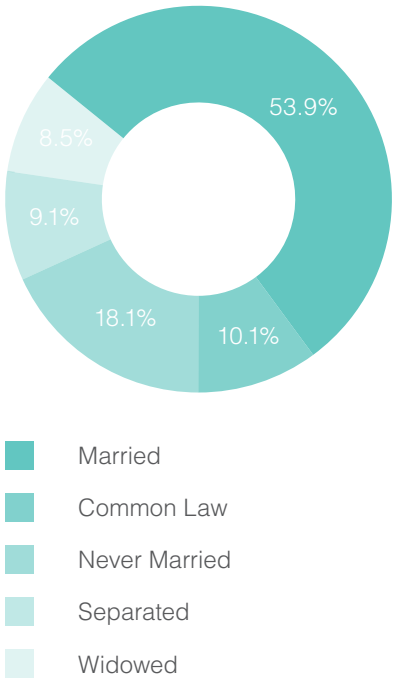
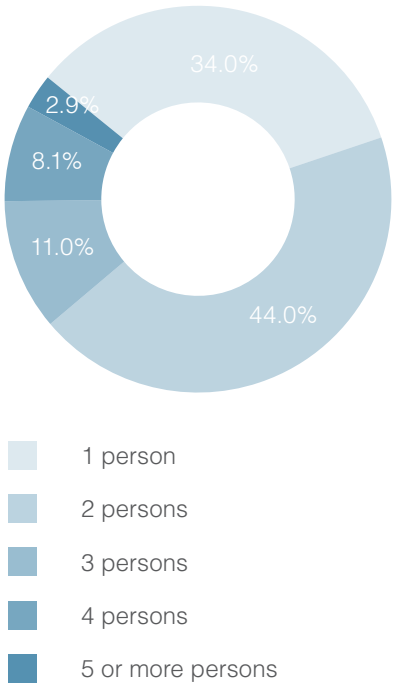


Figure 1.M Household Size in St. Mary's



Economics

The median income in St. Mary's was $49,920 in 2016, which is significantly less than the provincial median of $57,294.

More than 38% of St. Mary's residents spend less than 15 minutes on their journey to work, while another 10% of residents have a commute that takes more than an hour.

The industry that employs the most people is sales and service, closely followed by trades, transportation, and equipment services as well as natural resources and agriculture.

Opportunities and Challenges:

The District of St. Mary's currently has a lower median income as compared to the provincial average, which indicates a need to focus on creating higher-paid employment opportunities. The Municipality has a comparative advantage in terms of its relatively short commute times. This should be incorporated into efforts to attract new working-aged residents to the community.

The recent proliferation of remote work resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic also presents an opportunity for the Municipality to attract a digital workforce to St. Mary's. With the appropriate infrastructure in place, the Municipality could encourage IT related businesses and other new and expanding businesses to the area. There is potential to establish a vibrant startup culture that would aid in the retention of highly trained local workers, and future growth in St. Mary's.

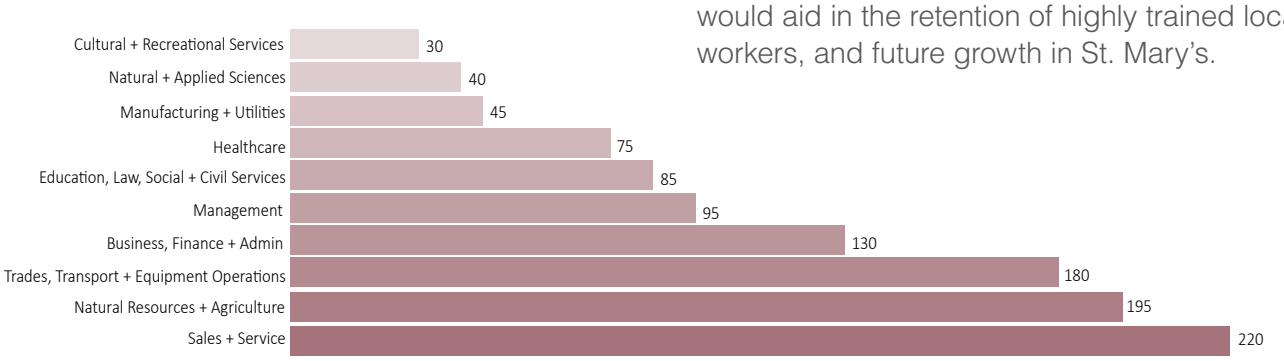


Figure 1.N Industries of Employment, 2016

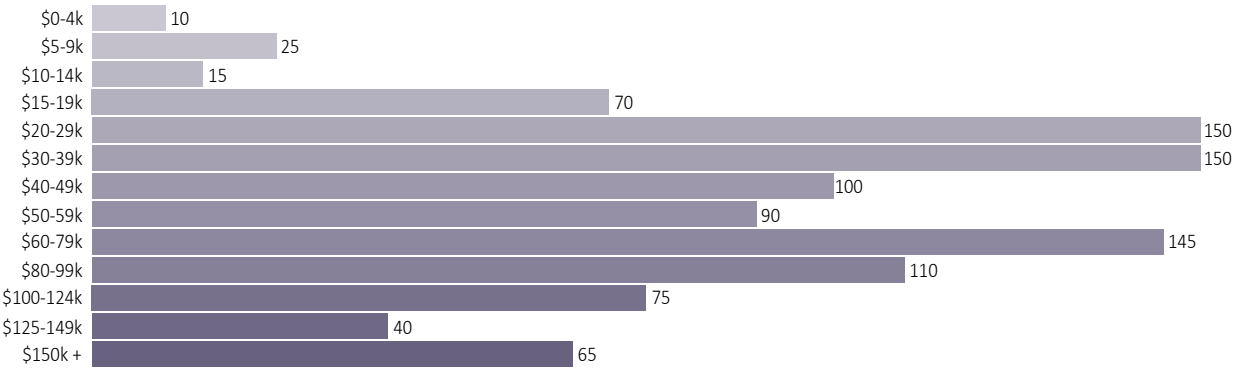


Figure 1.O Median Household Income, 2016

Building Construction

Since 2012, new housing starts in the Municipality range from a low of 6 in 2016 up to 19 in 2015 with an average of 11.7 new starts per year since 2012.

There have been an average of 35 permit applications per year in this same time period, which includes new builds, additions, new detached dwellings, and dwelling relocations. In St. Mary's, the average annual construction value per year is $2,392,862.

Opportunities and Challenges:

As the population of St. Mary's continues to decline and the pace of new construction remains slow, St. Mary's faces the challenge of attracting new residents to the municipality. These could be part-time residents (often second home, summer home, or cottage owners) or full-time residents. While employment opportunities are usually a prerequisite for people considering full-time residency in St. Mary's, part-time residents may be retired or employed in nearby urban areas, such as Halifax.

Both full-time and part-time residents present opportunities for the Municipality by contributing tax revenue that can be used for a range of municipal services and amenities. Part-time residents tend to place a lighter burden on municipal infrastructure over the course of a year, as compared with their full-time counterparts. As a result, their contributions to the municipal tax base goes further per capita. Conversely, full-time residents may be more engaged in local issues, and their consistent presence makes them easier to plan services around.

The Municipality faces the challenge of attracting a healthy mix of part-time and full-time residents, and providing services and amenities that are suitable for both.

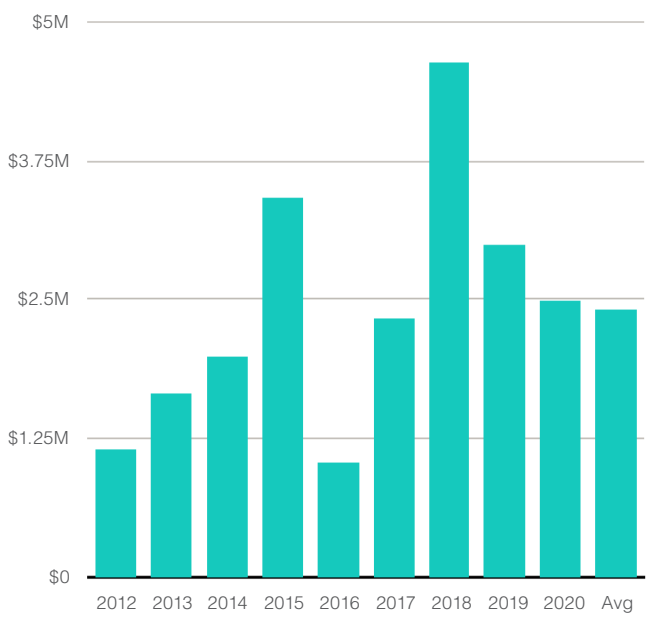


Figure 1.P Value of New Construction

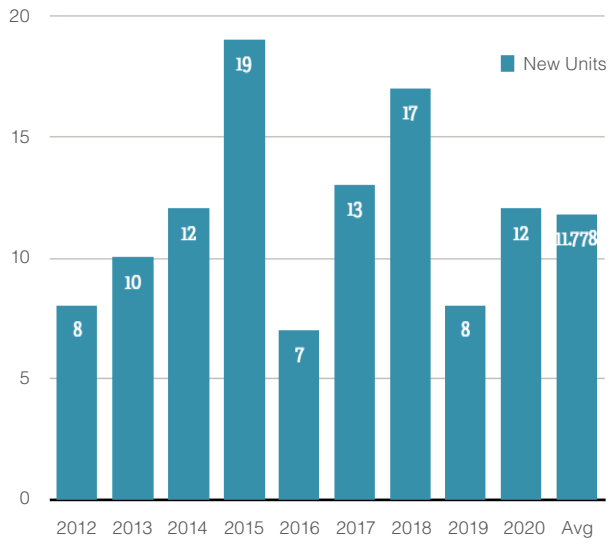


Figure 1.Q New Units Built

Operating Budget

The total generating operating revenue for 2017-18 was $2.3 million. The District of St. Mary's is self-financing, deriving most of their revenue from own source revenue instruments.

As shown in Figure 1.R, revenue sources for St. Mary's are comprised of:

- 1.8 million (79%) Net property taxes and payments in lieu of taxes
- 0.2 million (8%) Unconditional transfers from other governments
- 0.2 million (7%) Grants in lieu of taxes
- 0.1 million (6%) Other revenue from own sources

Operating Expenses

The total generating operating expenses for 2017-18 was $2.3 million. As shown in Figure 1.S, expenses for St. Mary's are comprised of:

- 0.7 million (31%) General government services
- 0.6 million (25%) Environmental health services
- 0.6 million (24%) Protective services
- 0.2 million (9%) Recreation and cultural services
- 0.2 million (7%) Environmental development services
- 0.1 million (4%) Transportation services

Opportunities and Challenges:

With almost 80% of the Municipality's revenue coming from property taxes, continued declines in population risk continued declines to revenue; however, operating expenses will not necessarily decline in proportion. To maintain existing services it will be important to maintain or grow the population.

The Municipality is running a balanced budget but there is very little surplus to support an unanticipated cost. If the Municipality could increase their commercial base (which pays higher taxes than residential rates), the Municipality would have a greater buffer and more jobs to attract more residents.

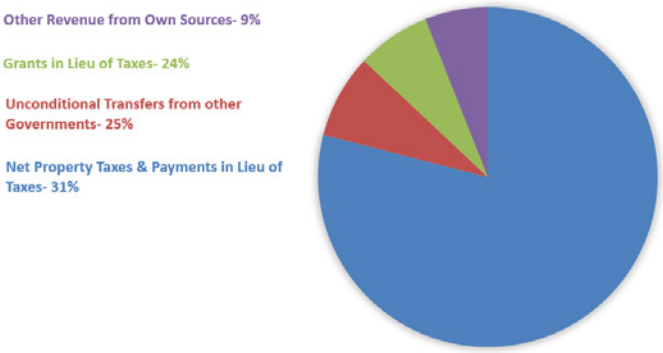


Figure 1.R 2018 Revenues

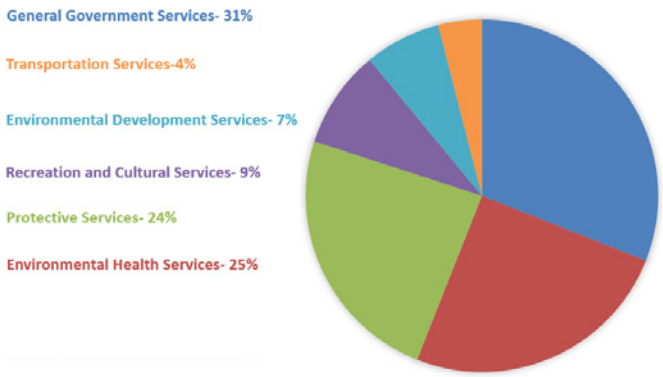


Figure 1.S 2018 Expenses



1.4 What We Heard

1.4.1 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Planning within the Municipality has real-world implications for citizens through governing where individuals may build their homes, run their businesses, and recreate. In order to ensure that this MPS and associated LUB accurately reflect the concerns and wishes of residents and stakeholders in the community, engagement strategies were adopted over several months in order to gather as much participant input as possible.

The consultants employed various techniques to gather feedback including:

- 25 one-on-one interviews with business and advocacy stakeholders provided by the Municipality,
- a dedicated planning website at www.planstmarys.ca,
- an online survey, which gathered more than 113 responses,
- a social media strategy using Instagram and Facebook,
- a council working session,
- a business stakeholders workshop,
- a public workshop,
- presentations of the draft reports, and
- interviews with other government stakeholders.

The Municipality's dedicated planning website and Instagram and Facebook accounts were used to advertise the planning process and the online survey during the summer and fall of 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic), and provided avenues for public to provide additional feedback.

The online survey was prepared in response to the 2020 public health restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and physical copies of the survey were made available by request for those without internet access. The survey was structured to understand what residents and businesses saw as the strengths and weaknesses in St. Mary's, and the questions were structured to be direct and open, as well as to provide a space for individuals to inform the Municipality of personal concerns or hopes for the future. The Municipality spread word to the community about the survey through social media as well as on the municipal website and the local newsletter.

Further work on the project was put on hold during the depths of the pandemic. When the project was re-launched, Council released drafts of this MPS and the associated LUB for public review and hosted two rounds of Public Hearings to hear public comments and make adjustments to the documents before adopting them.



Above: Advertisement of the public workshop held at St. Mary's Recplex.

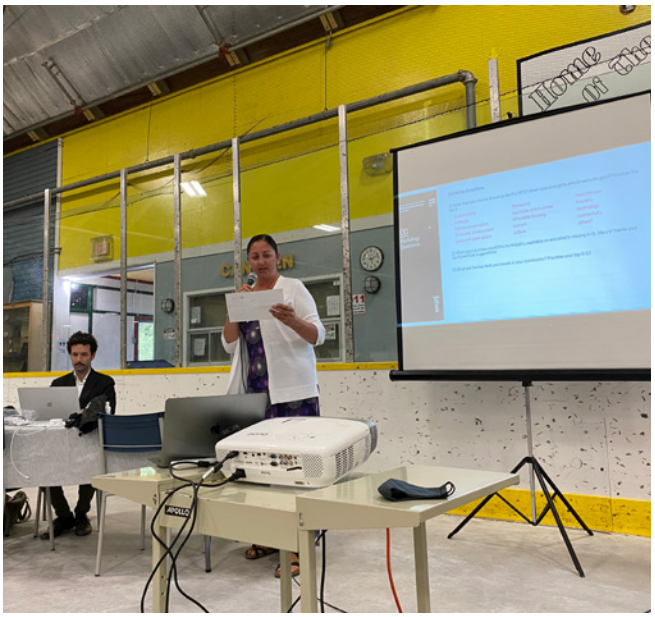
1.4.2 ONLINE SURVEY FEEDBACK

A total of 85 people responded to the online survey over a 2 month period during the summer of 2020. At 3.8% of the population (85 / 2233), the sample size has a margin of error of 9%.

The survey revealed several key planning concerns held by the majority of respondents The top priority shared by the most people was continued stewardship of the natural environment, including coastal areas. Preserving St. Mary's unique rural lifestyle was the second most-shared concern. Many respondents additionally voiced support for cultural facilities in the Municipality and continuing to foster strong relationships with family and friends. Natural resources and job growth were also listed as secondary priorities.

Many individuals voiced their support of tourism development and improved parks and recreation infrastructure. Additionally, respondents shared concern over the need to attract young people and provide additional services to support full-time residency.

It is important to note that 18% of responses were from non-residents and 24% were from part-time residents (cottage owners or temporary residents). The responses from part-time and full-time residents (82%) were analyzed separately and as part of the total value to ensure the wishes of individuals living permanently in St. Mary's were prioritized.

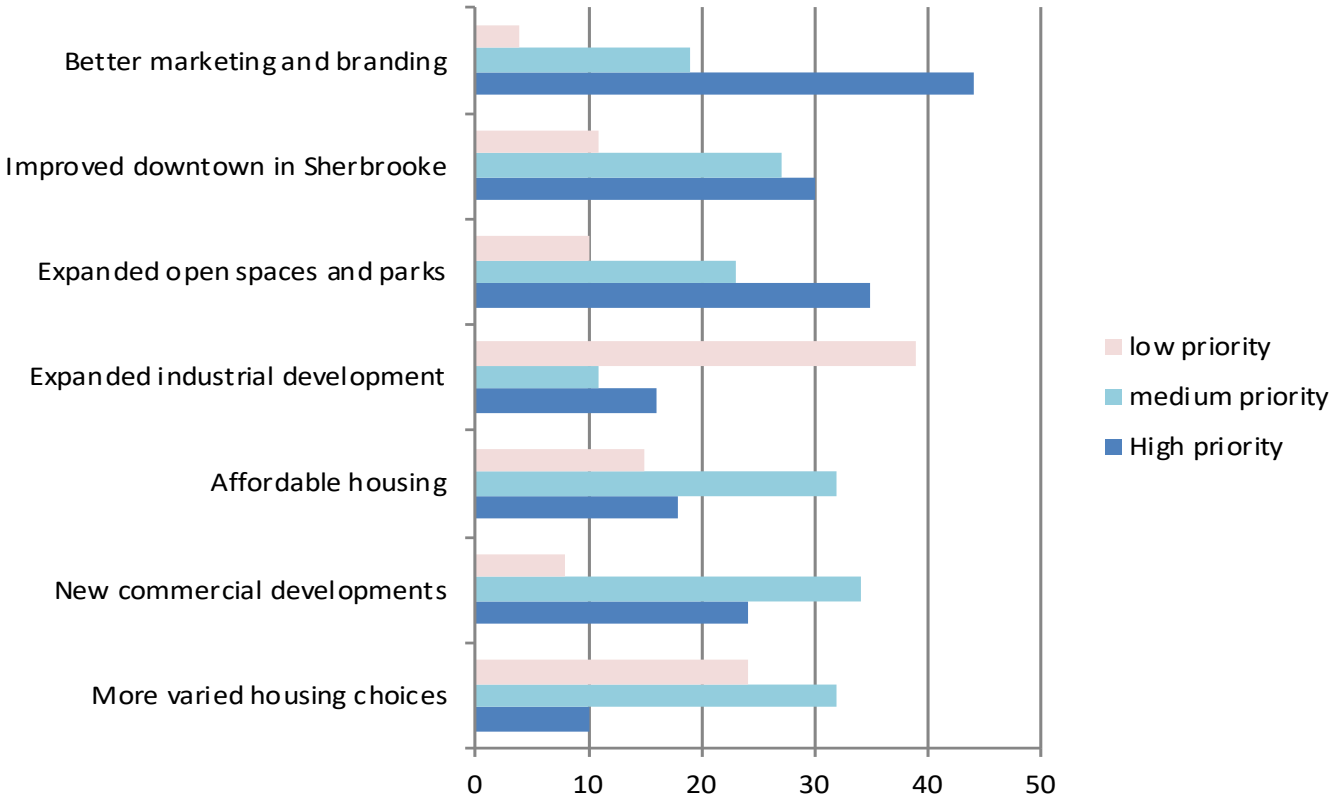


Right: Presentation at the public workshop held at the St. Mary's Recplex.

Below: Group discussions at the public workshop held at the St. Mary's Recplex.



What type of new development would you like to see in St. Mary's?



What should the municipality focus on?

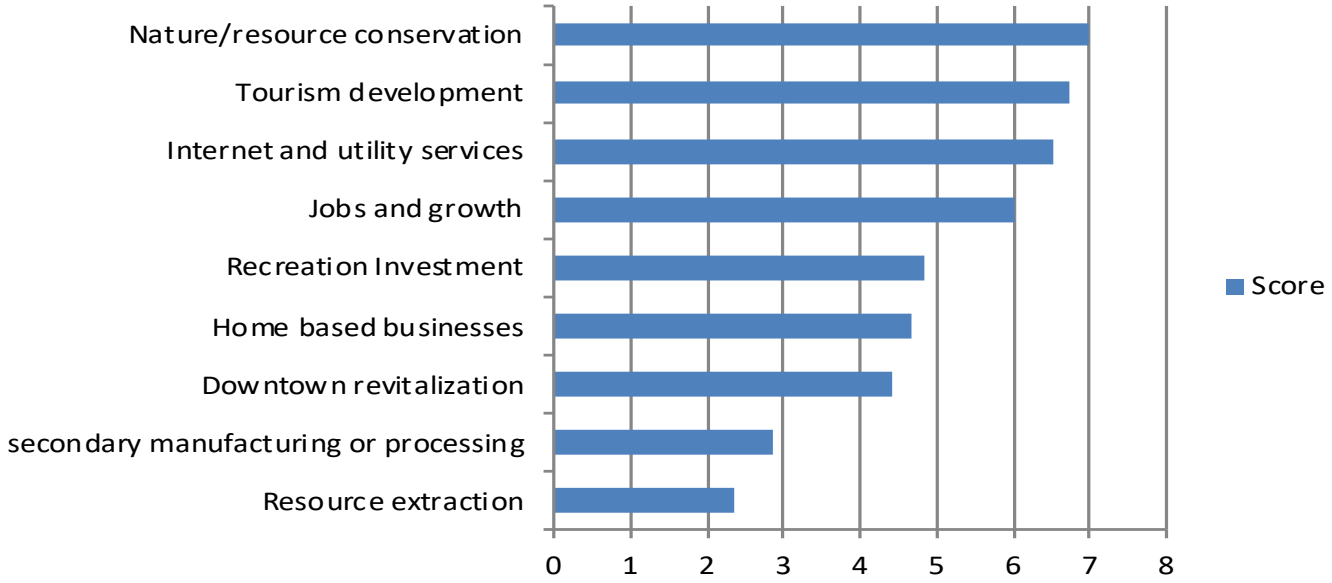


The key differences between the analysis of residents versus non-residents include:

- residents rated the overall quality of life in St. Mary's as being higher,
- non-residents more strongly agreed that St. Mary's has a strong and clearly defined identity,
- non-residents more strongly agreed that there is a need to broaden the tax base,
- non-residents more strongly agreed that people in St. Mary's are accepting of new ideas,
- residents showed stronger support for a marine reserve,
- residents gave a poorer rating to the quality of recreational experiences, with the exception of ATV trails,
- non-residents more strongly prioritized improving community services,
- residents more strongly prioritized the expansion of economic development opportunities, resource extraction, and secondary manufacturing,
- non-residents more strongly supported new commercial developments and affordable housing,
- residents more strongly supported expanded open space and parks

The analysis of the two survey groups indicates that there are discrepancies between the wishes and needs of residents and non-residents, and it will be up to the Municipality to work to reconcile these differences and create a shared future that is beneficial for all stakeholders while continuing to provide strong support to residents.

What should the municipality prioritize?



1.4.3 INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

The consultants for this planning process also conducted in-person and telephone interviews with 25 individuals identified as key stakeholders within the community.

The interviews indicated that many stakeholder concerns aligned with those of the survey respondents. Many interviewees expressed the need to balance care of the natural environment with economic development. Natural resources, forestry, aquaculture, and secondary manufacturing and processing were common themes raised by interviewees. Regarding community infrastructure, the majority of stakeholders indicated their frustration with the low-quality of available internet and cell phone services. The need to upgrade roads and improve safety was also raised by multiple interviewees.

Many individuals shared concern regarding the need to prevent outmigration from the Municipality by young adults and families by focusing on fostering sustainable, long-term economic growth. Recurring ideas for developing the economy included promoting tourism, heritage tourism and recreation-focused ecotourism, supporting local businesses and expanding currently available services and conveniences, and supporting sustainable forestry.

Several interviewees expressed a desire to build off the caring and welcoming nature of the community to develop a strong vision for what the needs of the community are in the coming years. The majority of individuals believe that the Municipality is a wonderful place to live, and they indicated the need to encourage citizens to work together alongside the Municipality to improve the quality of life for everyone.

Below: Presentation at the public workshop held at the St. Mary's Recplex.



1.4.4 WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

Two public engagement meetings were held on August 19th, 2020 at the municipally-owned RecPlex building. The meetings were advertised in the Chronicle Herald and the Guysborough Journal, as well as the local St. Mary's community newsletter at least 2 weeks in advance. The afternoon workshop was by invitation-only for local business owners, and the evening meeting was open to all interested members of the public. Meeting participants were led through a series of visioning exercises to address key planning themes and issues within St. Mary's.

The workshop held exclusively for local business owners led participants through a series of critical thinking exercises to determine key planning concerns and aims, and many of the issues raised during the event were also reflected in the survey results and stakeholder interviews. Principally, business owners addressed the need to encourage economic growth that is sustainable, prosperous and that will contribute to support the unique rural setting of St. Mary's.

The need to improve essential services and communication infrastructure was also raised as a strategy to improve the quality of life for residents and simultaneously attract greater tourism interest to the area. Many participants agreed that the lack of amenities currently poses a significant challenge to the development of year-round tourism-based businesses. Participants also voiced concern that resource extraction needs a long-term vision that will prevent harm to citizens or natural amenities such as the St. Mary's River. Additionally, business owners expressed the desire to allow the Municipality to rezone and support the establishment of industrial developments.

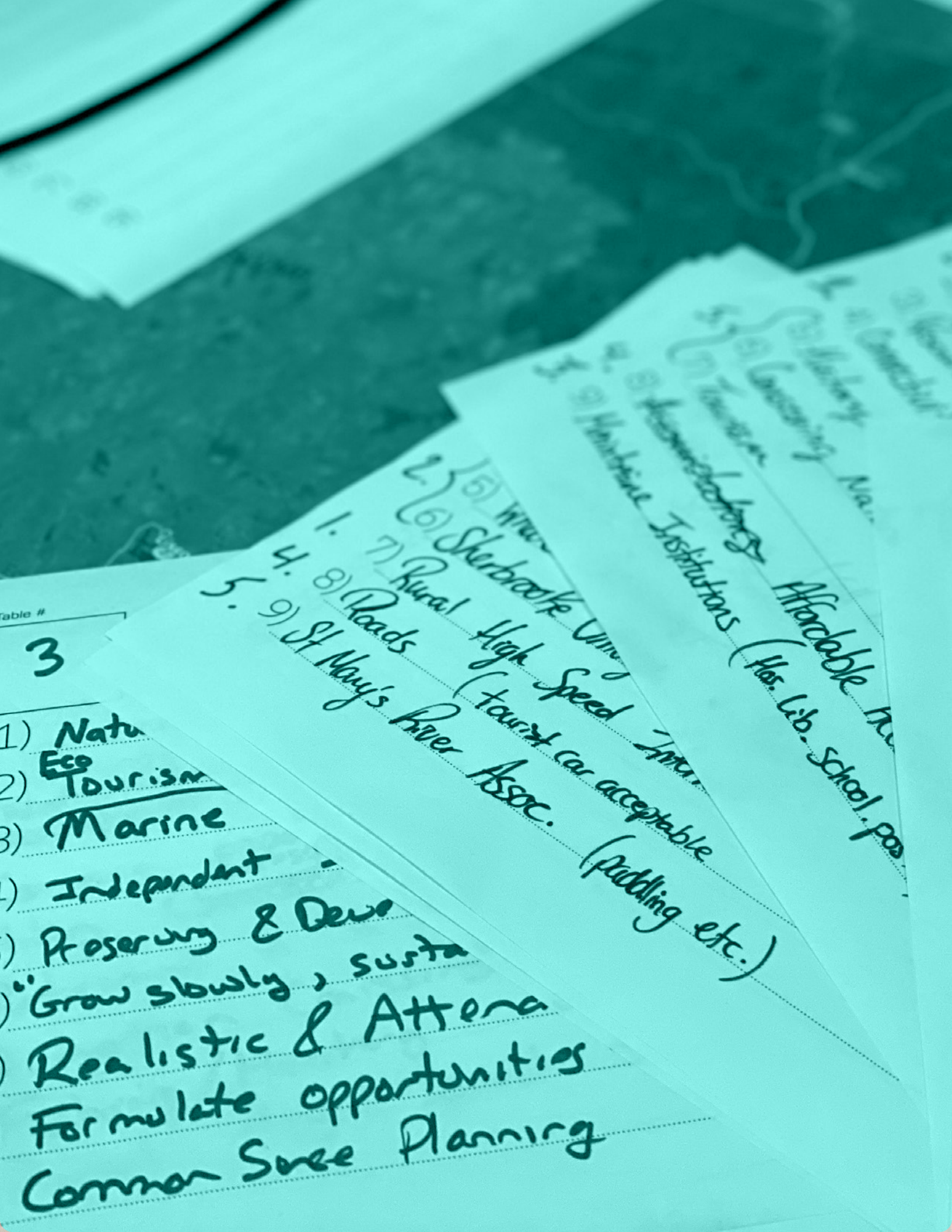
Business owners strongly agreed that St. Mary's has a unique culture and heritage that should be celebrated through any future planning changes. Some participants indicated the need to develop a strategy to promote local identity and icons outside of the Municipality to attract more interest and investment.

The public workshop held in the afternoon was structured in the same manner as the business-owners workshop. An important topic raised by every group was the need to conserve the natural environment and protect the rural beauty of St. Mary's. Most individuals agreed with the need to protect the health of watersheds within the Municipality. Some participants expressed concern about the potential for resource extraction to negatively impact the community. There was, however; an interest in sustainable forestry as a potential avenue of economic growth. Participants identified the lack of reliable internet and cell phone service as a principal barrier to economic and demographic growth. Some individuals also voiced the need for more financially and physically-accessible housing, especially for at-risk groups including seniors.

Most participants agreed that the Municipality should focus on further developing tourism and ecotourism. Specific measures mentioned under this theme included support for the proposed whale sanctuary, the desire to develop a dark skies tourism program and the wish to see the Municipality continuing to work with local community groups and businesses to promote more recreation-focused tourist amenities that highlight the community's unique, rural lifestyle.

There was general consent that the Municipality could benefit from beautification and visual improvements. The participants also agreed that the culture and heritage of St. Mary's is a valuable asset for the community and local economy, and some individuals argued for greater involvement between the Municipality and Sherbrooke Village.

The workshop revealed a need for the Municipality to work to provide greater support to small businesses within the community. Participants also expressed a wish to see a more cohesive marketing strategy developed that would connect St. Mary's to existing tourism promotion for the Eastern Shore. Some participants also voiced the desire to foster more openness between the municipal government and residents of the Municipality.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PART 2
OUR SHARED FUTURE

2.1 Sustainability and Resiliency

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's is committed to ensuring the long-term wellbeing of its residents through developing community-wide resiliency. The Municipality accepts the realities of climate change as a significant potential threat to the future health and prosperity of the community. The Municipality embraces sustainability as a lens to create an integrated and effective approach to addressing this challenge.

Figure 2.A below illustrates the 'nested circle' sustainability framework which reflects the reality that human society is dependent on the environment for survival since it provides us with essential services such as drinking water, clean air, and material resources. The framework also shows that people in communities determine how goods and services will be used and exchanged. This model of conceptualizing sustainability supports Council's belief that social and economic activity occur within ecological limits.

This concept of sustainability contrasts with other approaches that are based on the premise that the social, ecological and economic aspects are independent and all equally important. The nested circle framework recognizes that social and economic activity occurs within ecological limits.

The Municipality is also committed to being a resilient community where 'disruptions' can be managed effectively.

It will be important to adapt to change while maintaining stability into the future. Community stability allows for innovation and a path forward whereby Council can take actions that reflect the values of the community.

The sustainability framework is particularly useful for St. Mary's, as the community is uniquely positioned to steward the land and ensure economic and social success by protecting the natural environment and its many ecological services.

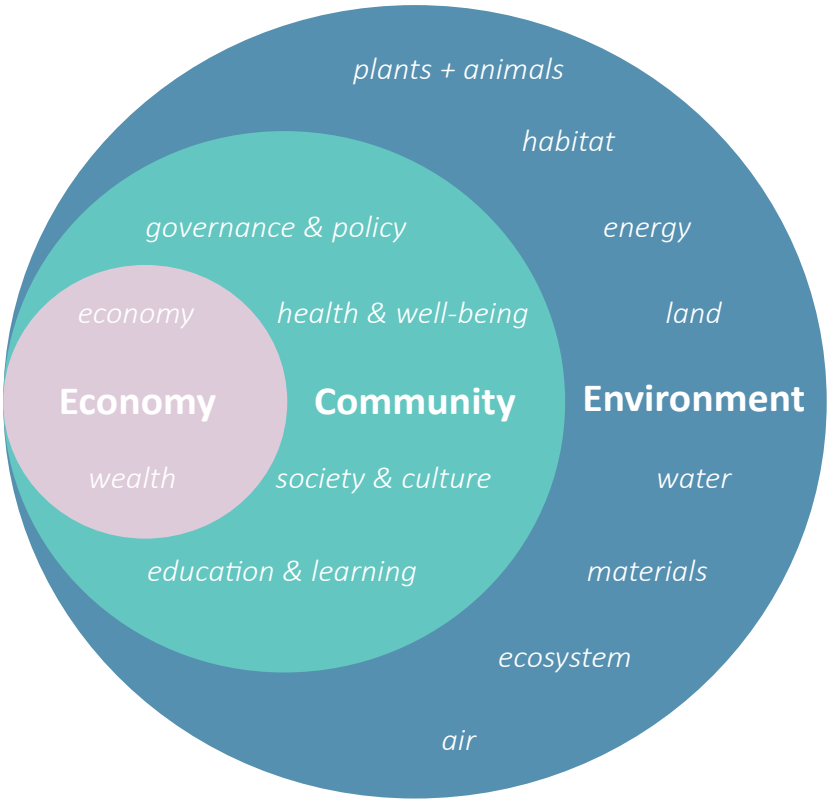


Figure 2.A Core Concept: "Nested Circle" Sustainability Framework

2.2 Community Vision

The Municipality is an aspirational community working towards a better future for all of its residents, businesses, and visitors. "Our Shared Future" is a vision for the Municipality's desired outcome during the lifetime of this MPS. The community vision is a statement intended to capture St. Mary's desires for the future. The vision was crafted after many weeks of consultation with community leaders and stakeholders. It provides the foundation from which future planning efforts will develop.

The remainder of this MPS outlines the objectives and policies the Municipality will use to realize the vision statement. Achieving this will require a consistent and thoughtful approach to land use planning that has the community's future at its core. The vision will serve as an aspirational call-to-action for both the Municipality and residents alike to work together in the coming years to improve quality of life.

St. Mary's will capitalize on its rural and coastal character, its natural beauty, its bountiful natural resources and its proximity to the province's densest urban centre. The Municipality will be a place of prosperity, inclusiveness, and resiliency. Residents will continue to enjoy a unique, rural lifestyle complimented by plentiful amenities for working, living, learning and playing. Young people will enjoy ample opportunities to make a livelihood and raise children in local communities. Local businesses will be supported and celebrated, and community services will be reliable, accessible, and high-quality. There will be a strong commitment to sustainability and economic development, and natural areas and scenic landscapes will be protected. The community will celebrate and remember our coastal heritage.

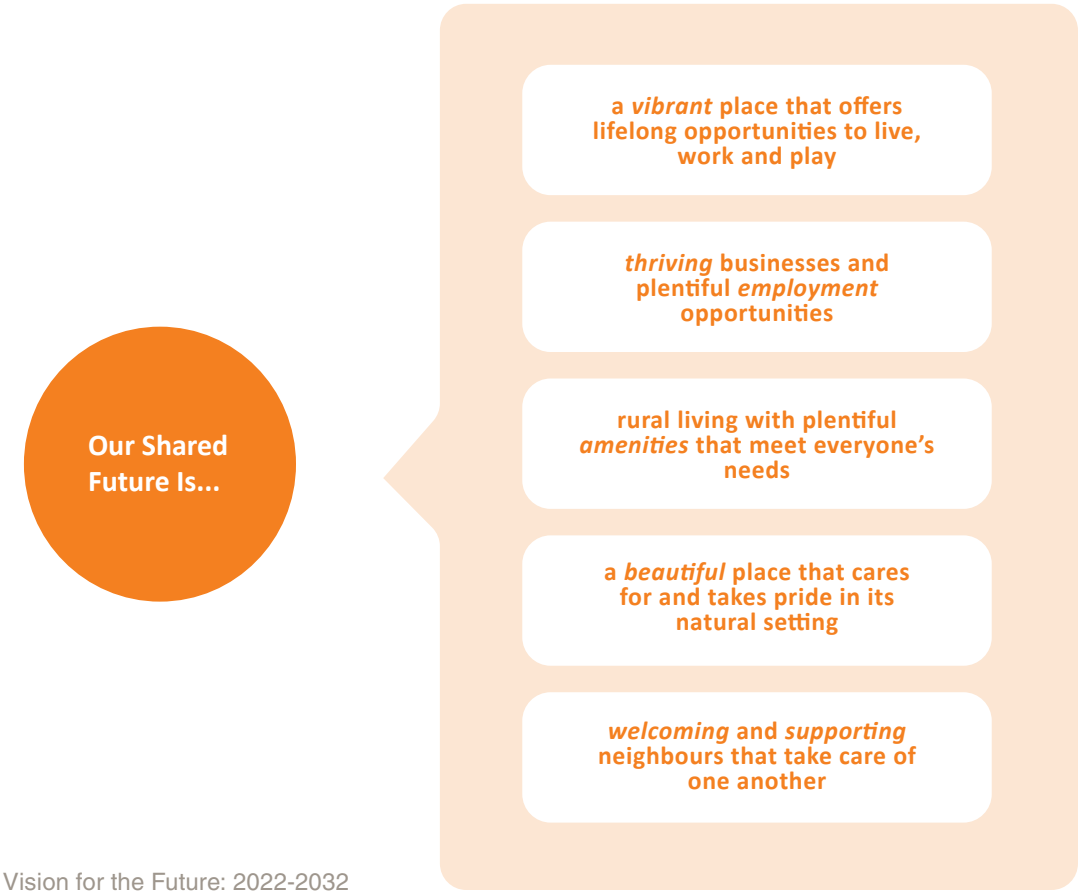


Figure 2.B Community Vision for the Future: 2022-2032

2.1.1 KEY CONSIDERATIONS

This MPS is the guiding plan for future development and investment in the District of St. Mary's. It sets out how public investment and targeted policies can spur private investment, economic development, and expansion of the private sector. The key considerations for this plan include:

- Ensuring that the serviced area of Sherbrooke is ideally suited to density, different housing forms, and continued commercial expansion. Mixed uses and multi-unit housing will be permitted and encouraged in this area.
- Providing regulations that are easy to understand and administer.
- Capitalizing on the pastoral qualities of rural living to encourage population growth and development.
- Balancing the need for quality employment and jobs with the sustainable use of the plentiful and unique natural resources.
- Enabling more affordable housing options using inclusive planning principles to allow new forms of housing on existing lots.
- Working with other levels of government to meet the objectives of residents and business owners when considering projects beyond municipal jurisdiction (e.g., fisheries, mining, forestry.)
- Expanding opportunities for tourism within the District of St. Mary's.
- Working with the provincial and federal governments to improve rural communication services and transportation linkages (e.g., broadband internet, cellular service, road conditions).
- Improving marketing and place-branding capacity.
- Improving communication and engagement with residents and businesses.
- Working together to stabilize the population and then work to grow it.
- Recognizing and protecting the St. Mary's River as a significant provincial ecological feature and an opportunity for expanded ecotourism.
- Expanding opportunities for coastal tourism.

Community priorities are specific statements of what the Municipality intends to do to achieve the vision outlined in this MPS. They are the WHAT and the HOW—split into distinct priorities with objectives and associated strategies within each (see Part 3). Taken together, these priorities provide a "road map" to achieving the Community Vision. The priorities are guided by the Municipality's commitment to sustainable community development, resiliency, community consultation, and evidence-based decision making.

The policies of this MPS shall be consistent with and supportive of these priorities. Council acknowledges that priorities and/or specific objectives must be monitored and may change over time. Council is committed to tracking the effectiveness of these policies and adapting the objectives and policies as appropriate, as this MPS is a living document. It is important to acknowledge that some of these priorities will and do compete with each other.

The challenge Council is tasked with will be to find an appropriate balance amongst the different priorities which is consistent with the community's overarching aspirations and the opportunities that present themselves for economic development over time.

2.1.2 ISSUES & TRENDS

The significant community feedback and stakeholder interviews throughout the planning process identified several issues that will impact the prosperity and livability of the Municipality over the coming years. Recognition of these issues and trends will be central in developing policies to mitigate negative impacts while realizing new potential opportunities.

Back to Growth

For at least the last four census periods, the Municipality has seen a significant decline in population. At the same time, the population curve shows that the profile of age groups is characterized by a larger proportion of older residents and a significant shortage of young families.

This means that there is declining demand for housing, schools, and retail, and an increasing demand for health services. It also means that the Municipality should expect decreasing revenue from property taxes but an increasing need for expensive services.

For municipalities in this difficult position, it usually leads to a lower quality of life for residents, and a decrease in services, which creates a positive feedback loop for more outmigration. This is a complex situation that requires a focus on job creation, new business creation, encouraging immigration, partnering with higher levels of government on strategic initiatives, and attracting new industries.

The following policies are geared towards halting population migration out of the Municipality and growing the population over the next census period.

POLICY 2–1 Attract new families

Council shall actively endorse new opportunities to attract young families and new population growth to the Municipality through dedicated marketing campaigns, a modernized website, improved signage and wayfinding, a modernized Land Use By-Law, recreational amenities and support for new job creation initiatives.

POLICY 2–2 Enhance seniors' quality of life

Council shall, through its Community Development and Recreation Department, continue to support events for seniors to promote physical and social activity and improve their quality of life.

POLICY 2–3 Housing affordability and housing variety

Council shall support new initiatives for new affordable housing and for greater housing diversity.

POLICY 2–4 Work with the Province to increase immigration

Council shall work with the government of Canada and Province of Nova Scotia to attract new immigrant families to St. Mary's.

POLICY 2–5 Grow the second-home housing market

Council shall, through marketing and land use controls, support the promotion of second-home housing espousing the benefits of rural living in St. Mary's.

POLICY 2–6 Host citizen engagement forums

Council shall host citizen engagement forums periodically to solicit ideas and feedback from residents and businesses for growing the Municipality by stabilizing the current population over the next census period (2021-2026) and growing the population by 2% over the following census period (2026-2031).

POLICY 2–7 Host high profile events

Council shall work to create unique high profile events in the Municipality that will attract visitors.

Economic Development

With lower than average employment and mean family wages, the lack of job opportunities are a factor in population decline, particularly with young families. The Municipality needs to foster economic development without compromising its pristine natural environment. There will need to be a careful balance of new economic development and conservation, and the financial sustainability of the Municipality hinges on finding the right equilibrium.

New potential initiatives include the proposed whale sanctuary, wind farms, mines and quarries, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, coastal resorts, marinas and ports, new industrial park, provincial parks and reserves, and more.

A key hindrance for growth and economic development has been internet access. Build Nova Scotia is currently investing in significant internet upgrades in the Municipality in their Round 2 upgrades targeting communities like Stillwater, Sherbrooke, Goldenville, Port Hilford, Wine Harbour, Sonora, Liscomb, Spanish Ship Bay, Liscomb Mills, Little Liscomb, Port Bickerton, Harpellville, Holland Harbour, and Fisherman's Harbour. New private satellite internet providers launched in 2020 to provide high speed rural bandwidth.

POLICY 2–8 Investigate feasibility of a municipal industrial park

Council shall investigate the feasibility of a new municipal industrial park and/or commercial hub to encourage new jobs and opportunities for working residents in St. Mary's.

POLICY 2–9 New development land banking

Council shall seek opportunities to acquire land in strategic growth areas for the purpose of future development or public uses.

POLICY 2–10 Support the proposed whale sanctuary project

Council shall support in principal the proposed whale sanctuary project pending final environmental approvals.

POLICY 2–11 Support tourism and ecotourism investment

Council shall work to support ecotourism initiatives like walking trails, cycling trails, tourism infrastructure, river restoration, shoreline enhancements, and other projects that support improved ecotourism infrastructure.

POLICY 2–12 Create a signage and wayfinding program

Council shall support the creation of a signage and wayfinding plan for development initiatives throughout the Municipality.

POLICY 2–13 Modernize the municipal website

Council shall modernize and update its website to provide accurate and up-to-date information for business development and expansion purposes.

POLICY 2–14 Municipal marketing plan

Council shall develop a marketing plan to encourage new second home markets, new tourism markets and new business markets for the Municipality.

POLICY 2–15 Work-from-home marketing strategy

Council shall explore the creation of a work-from-home marketing strategy as a potential component of the municipal marketing plan.

POLICY 2–16 Collaborate with neighbouring municipalities

Council may partner with neighbouring municipalities on regional economic development opportunities.

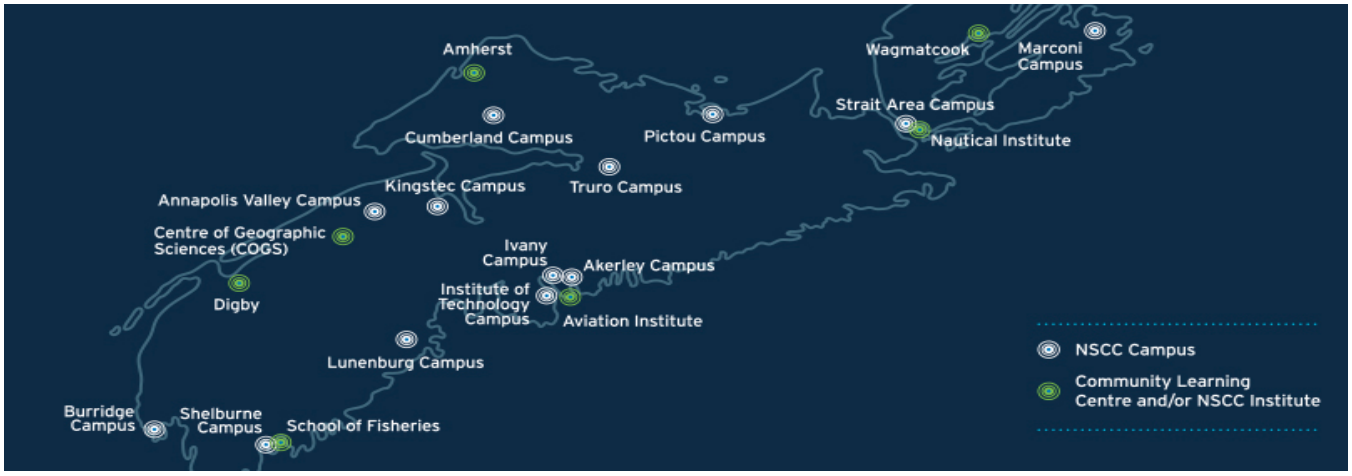


Figure 2.C Existing NSCC Campuses in NS; Guysborough County is a noticeable gap.

POLICY 2–17 Support high-speed internet investment

Council shall work with Build Nova Scotia to ensure the expansion of high speed internet infrastructure in the Municipality and work with internet providers for increased bandwidth.

POLICY 2–18 Attract IT related businesses

Council shall encourage tech startup organizations by exploring ways to establish the required infrastructure for such growth.

POLICY 2–19 NSCC satellite campus

Council shall encourage NSCC to consider the potential of a small NSCC satellite campus in St. Mary's.

POLICY 2–20 Explore a dark sky initiative

Council shall investigate the potential of creating a Dark Sky Reserve as part of enhancing the tourism destination potential of St. Mary's.

Affordable Housing

Housing affordability is becoming an issue in urban and rural areas across Canada. In coastal communities across Atlantic Canada, it is important to preserve the rural way of life that may be foreign to urban areas. These include allowing boats and boat sheds in yards, limited industrial uses relating to marine jobs, agricultural uses, etc. Preserving the rural way of life is important to St. Mary's residents.

POLICY 2–21 Affordable housing program

Council shall work with other provincial departments and organizations to support housing affordability in St. Mary's.

POLICY 2–22 Housing diversity

Council shall, through the policies of this Plan, support a variety of housing types and scales throughout the Municipality.

Sea Level Rise, Flooding, and Climate Change

The Municipality has not undertaken any sea level rise (SLR) studies for its ports or harbours, but other studies in Atlantic Canada suggest that a combination of SLR and coastal subsidence, could lead to 1-1.5 metres of SLR by 2100, impacting many of the Municipality's coastal areas. The increased frequency of storm events will make the coastal areas much less safe and could increase inland coastal flooding.

The Municipality's Climate Change Action Plan sets out a series of climate change adaptation and mitigation actions. They include transportation and infrastructure, forest and land management, and other nature-based solutions, and are intended to be carried out based on available funds, staff, and Municipal guidelines.

The impacts of climate change are also economic. Residents in St. Mary's continue to face increases in the cost of commodities, including energy. Energy poverty has become a challenge in St. Mary's, where many households are spending more than 10% of their income on energy services. This can force a household to choose between paying energy bills, purchasing medication, or putting food on the table.

POLICY 2–23 Floodplain mapping

Council may work with the Province of Nova Scotia to prepare floodplain mapping for potential flood-prone areas of the Municipality and develop policy consistent with the provisions of the Provincial Statement of Interest on Flood Risk Areas.

POLICY 2–24 Climate change implementation

Council shall consider implementing action items from the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan for St. Mary's.

POLICY 2–25 Energy efficiency

Council shall ensure that existing and future Municipal buildings are constructed to meet the Provincial energy standards and targets.

POLICY 2–26 Wind farms and renewable energy

Council shall look for opportunities for renewable energy (e.g. wind or solar), either by partnering with third parties or by looking into the feasibility of a municipal utility partnering with Nova Scotia Power.

POLICY 2–27 Work with NGOs

Council may work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support environmental initiatives that address sea level rise, flooding, and climate change.

Conservation of Natural Resources

The Municipality is endowed with an abundance of coastal and inland resources including unique geology, flora, and fauna. Mining, aquaculture, and forestry offer opportunities for economic growth, but must be undertaken without jeopardizing other important natural resources such as fish habitat and wetland areas.

Tourism is currently relatively untapped in the Municipality, and could be instrumental in preserving sensitive ecological areas while improving economic development.

POLICY 2–28 Forest management plan

Council may work with NS Lands and Forestry to prepare a forest management plan for the St. Mary's River watershed.

POLICY 2–29 Fish populations and fish habitat in the St. Mary's watershed

Council shall work with and support all relevant agencies and organizations to identify and implement best practices for the conservation, protection, and restoration of Atlantic salmon, brook trout, and their habitat within the St Mary's watershed.

POLICY 2–30 Natural resource utilization

Council shall recognize the value of sustainable resource management practices within the municipality so long as the proper environmental assessments support the proposed developments.

2.3 Authority and Scope

This MPS and the associated LUB replace the existing Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law adopted by Council in 2007. The revised planning documents were produced in accordance with the public review process as outlined in the *Municipal Government Act*, 1998, c. 18, s. 204. The *Municipal Government Act* gives Council the power to develop policies regarding various issues regarding land use, future development, municipal infrastructure, public programs, public lands and other municipal concerns relating to economic, social and physical development.

This Municipal Planning Strategy provides policy statements to establish basic requirements for future planning and development within the Municipality. These policies are designed to provide a framework to steer the community in its efforts to improve the quality of life in St. Mary's and outline specific concerns and opportunities. The policies are aligned with both the Statements of Provincial Interest and the regional interests outlined in Part 1. Part 4 of this MPS outlines the implementation and review process as required by the *Municipal Government Act*.

The Land Use By-Law is the document that establishes specific planning regulations enforced by the Municipality. The development of the Land Use By-Law was guided by the planning requirements established in the *Municipal Government Act*. The Land Use By-Law is adopted as a necessary measure to carry out the objectives outlined in this MPS.

POLICY 2–31 Adopt the MPS and LUB

Council shall adopt the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use By-Law. Both documents will apply to the entirety of the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's.





This planning strategy
is how we,
as human beings,
organize ourselves...

...It's how we physically
embody our values
in the built environment.

2.4 Provincial + Regional Considerations

2.3.1 PROVINCIAL COORDINATION

A Municipal Planning Strategy provides the policy framework for land use and development control. The *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) provides Council with the power to make statements of policy with respect to a broad range of activities including future development, land use, public lands, transportation, municipal services, municipal development, coordination of public programs, and any other matters related to the physical, social or economic development of the town. Section VIII of the MGA addresses planning and development, and Section IX addresses subdivision of land.

Alongside the MGA, the Province includes *Statements of Provincial Interest* to ensure municipalities are complying with issues of province-wide significance. All NS municipalities must take the statements into account when creating or reviewing land use planning policies and regulations.

1. Drinking Water

Goal: To protect the quality of drinking water within municipal water supply watersheds.

St. Mary's is comprised of five major watersheds including the Country Harbour watershed, the South/West Watershed, the St. Mary's Watershed, the Liscomb Watershed and the Sheet Harbour Watershed. Most properties in the Municipality get their potable water from wells, with the exception of the Sherbrooke municipal water boundary which gets its water from Sherbrooke Lake through a chain of five lakes. The Municipality's only water treatment plant can provide up to 109,000 US gallons per day and there has not been any reported issues of poor water quality or quantity. Ensuring the water quality of Sherbrooke Lake is important, as well as the quality and quantity of groundwater in the Municipality for non-serviced residents and businesses.

Applicable MPS Policies:

Policy 3-12, 3-13, 3-14, 3-15, 3-16,

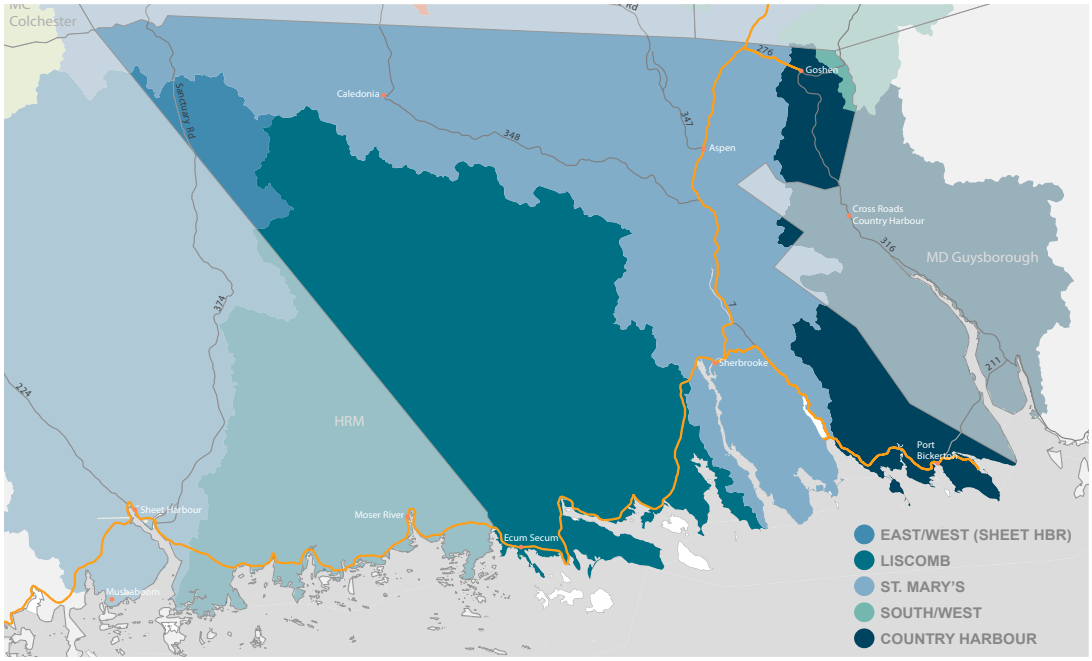


Figure 2.D St Mary's Watersheds

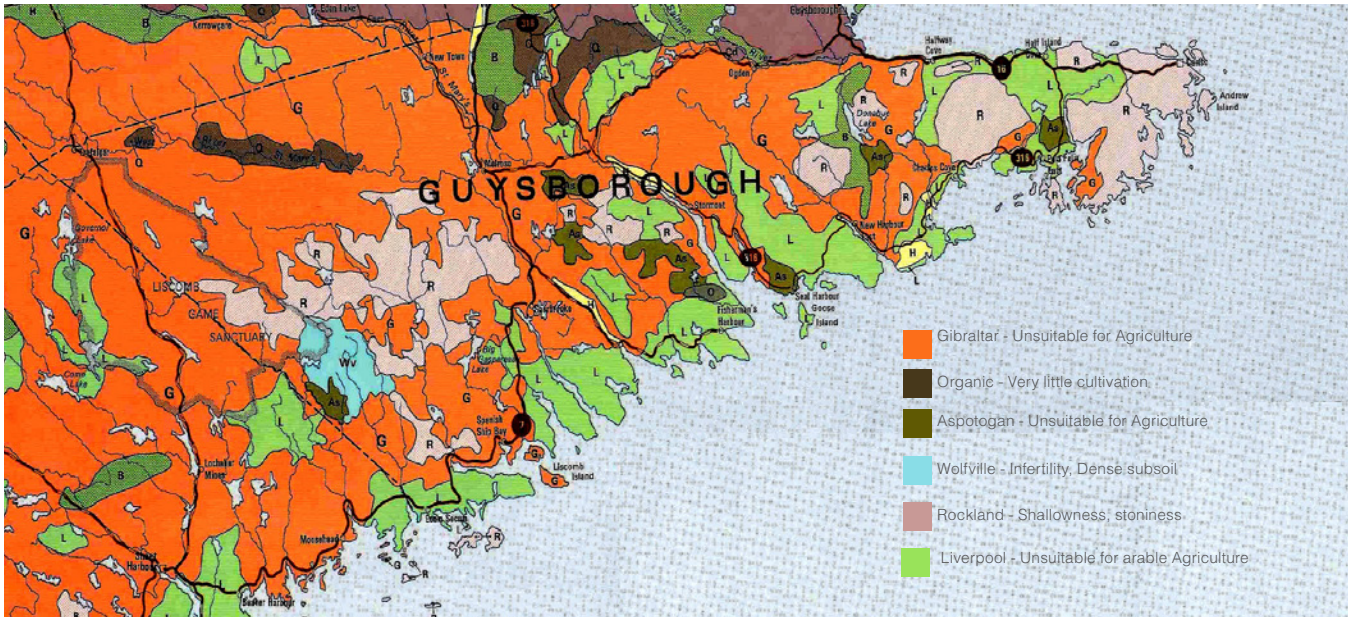


Figure 2.E St Mary's Soil Series

2. Flood-Risk Areas

Goal: To protect public safety and property and to reduce the requirement for flood control works and flood damage restoration in floodplains.

Unlike other flatter areas in the province that are prone to frequent flooding, the varied topography in St. Mary's leads to flooding being concentrated along the main river branches and in coastal lowlands. The Municipality has not undertaken any floodplain mapping in the past, but is interested in partnering with the Province on mapping of the St. Mary's River watershed. The Municipality has identified several flood potential hazard areas as part of its Municipal Climate Change Action Plan including pluvial flooding, fluvial flooding, and coastal flooding.

Applicable MPS Policies:

Policy 2-23, 3-28, 3-67, 3-69

3. Agricultural Land

Goal: To protect agricultural land for the development of a viable and sustainable agriculture and food industry.

The coastal microclimate, soil conditions and remoteness of the Municipality are not as conducive to agriculture as other more fertile parts of the province but there are a few large dairy farms in the Municipality. Appendix 'B' includes identification of Class 2, 3, and 4 soils in the municipality, while the Agriculture Zone promotes agriculture in these areas.

Applicable MPS Policies:

Policy 3-53, 3-54, 3-55, 3-56, 3-57

4. Infrastructure

Goal: To make efficient use of municipal water supply and municipal wastewater disposal systems.

Sherbrooke is the only centrally serviced (water, stormwater and waste water) district in St. Mary's and there are no current plans for additional central water or wastewater services. The wastewater plant (an extended aeration package plant) can accommodate flows of up to 80,000 US gallons per day and there is ample capacity for new development. There are four lift stations and there are no cross connections with storm and wastewater. The water treatment plant can provide up to 109,000 US gallons per day, and there have been no drought impacts and no known shortfalls in the water supply.

As the only serviced area in the Municipality, density is well suited to this area, in the walkable vicinity of the downtown, school, Municipal Office, retail and Sherbrooke Village.

Applicable MPS Policies:

Policy 3-1, 3-2, 3-4, 3-11, 3-12, 3-13

5. Housing

Goal: To provide housing opportunities to meet the needs of all Nova Scotians.

As the least dense municipality in Nova Scotia, St. Mary's could make significant strides in increasing density if the land use policies encouraged it and the market could support it. The Municipality supports higher densities in the serviced area, and in the unserviced area, it will support smaller lot sizes, affordable accessory housing options and reduced yard requirements that encourage a range of housing types. The Municipality is also supportive of affordable housing, special-needs housing and rental accommodations.

Applicable MPS Policies:

Policy 2-3, 2-21, 2-22, 3-38, 3-39, 3-40, 3-41, 3-43, 3-44, 3-45



Figure 2.F Sherbrooke Water and Sewer Services

2.3.2 REGIONAL COORDINATION

In order to align this MPS with regional interests, background research was conducted to determine the key issues on the Eastern Shore.

The *One Nova Scotia* report by the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy outlines the need to address the economic hardship and demographic decline in rural communities. In order to begin to solve these problems, communities must work together to create resilient economies that support small business owners and encourage a spirit of entrepreneurship. Creating a stronger economy will encourage new residents to settle in rural areas such as St. Mary's which will, in turn, further fuel economic growth. Thus, the two issues are related and can be considered under the umbrella term of "community prosperity".

Environmental issues are also of prominent concern in the Eastern Shore region. Specific concerns raised by community members and non-profit stakeholders centred around protection and restoration of the St. Mary's River. The River is an asset for the community that requires careful stewardship. Protection of coastal regions was also raised by stakeholders and is reflected in the financial partnership with the federal Coastal Restoration Fund to protect coastal and marine resources.

Land Use is a recurring theme throughout discussions with regional partners and neighbouring municipalities. There is a definite need to create clear land use regulations to protect community interests and control future development.

In order to successfully address the different regional concerns, the Municipality of St. Mary's will need to partner with neighbouring municipalities to ensure an effective and coordinated response.

Guysborough Municipality Coordination:

The Municipality of the District of Guysborough (MODG), neighbouring to the east, provides planning and Development Officer services to St. Mary's so they are keen to streamline and coordinate planning and development amongst the municipal units. The MODG raised issues with controlling shipping container accessory buildings, multiple RVs on a single lot, and coordinating resource extraction and environmental controls. MODG's coastal community zones allow up to 7500 sq.ft of commercial or industrial to accommodate the fishery. Since MODG planners and development officers oversee the implementation of the St. Mary's planning documents, it makes sense to coordinate the documents as much as possible for better efficiencies in delivery.

Pictou Municipality Coordination:

The consulting team spoke with CAO for Municipality of the County of Pictou (Brian Cullen) about neighbouring concerns or opportunities. The Municipality operates 6 small 50 kW wind turbines outside Stellarton. Solid waste in the Municipality is handled through Pictou County Shared Services Authority where solid waste is shipped to Guysborough and recyclables are shipped to Colchester County. The only overlapping services is the Fire Department in East River which services a small portion of northern St. Mary's. There have been no issues relating to planning or servicing on the border of the two counties which should be addressed in the new MPS and LUB.

HRM Municipality Coordination:

The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), neighbours St. Mary's to the west. Much of the shared border is undeveloped and difficult to access. However, the community of Ecum Secum sits along the border.

The consulting team met with Leah Perrin and Kathleen Fralic on HRM's Regional Policy team to discuss shared planning issues. They noted that the extremely remote nature of the shared border minimizes the extent of development and its potential for impact. However, they did identify the Halifax Green Network Plan as an important policy document for HRM, and pointed out that natural systems do not conform to political boundaries. Any planning decisions in St. Mary's should be respectful of shared natural systems, such as watersheds and wildlife corridors.

Antigonish Municipality Coordination:

St. Mary's shares a small portion of its northern border with the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. The consulting team reached out formally to the Municipality of the County of Antigonish by letter to the CAO, Glenn Horne and received no formal response. However, the consulting team was concurrently involved with a review of the Antigonish planning documents and through that process was able to determine that there are no shared planning issues of concern.


Chey Haggas
101411



PART 3 COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

3.1 Planning Context

St. Mary's is a unique community unlike any other rural municipality in Nova Scotia. The community is defined by its abundant wilderness areas, heritage, and welcoming and supportive neighbours. Looking towards the future, Council is dedicated to preserving the special rural lifestyle while also improving everyday quality of living for residents.

In order to move the community forward, the Municipality must proactively plan for future challenges and opportunities while also embracing change as a positive force for bettering the Municipality. St. Mary's aspires to lead by example by developing thoughtful, practical planning regulations that prioritize the prosperity of the community and sustainable development for generations to come.

The Municipality recognizes that previous planning challenges stemmed from land use policies that did not always reflect the lived experience of residents and visitors. This MPS and Land Use By-Law specifically set about correcting these issues by adopting a straightforward community-based planning approach founded on the feedback of community stakeholders. The Municipality is committed to continuing the engagement process throughout the life of this MPS and Land Use By-Law to ensure the implementation of the community priorities continues to reflect the needs and wishes of citizens.

St. Mary's wishes to become a leader amongst rural municipalities to promote its strong community values and high quality of life with new residents and visitors. The Municipality will work in the coming years to promote a strong image of the community as a welcoming, inclusive, and prosperous place guided by its unique heritage and focused on creating a bright future for all its citizens.



3.2 Overview of Approach

The following pages provide detailed strategies and policies that will guide Council in its planning efforts to realize the community vision and achieve improvements in the quality of life for residents and businesses. Each community priority is introduced through an exploration of the context of each issue as well as the strategic areas that must be addressed to realize meaningful, long-term change.

This chapter is organized to address:

- Public Lands and Services (roads, government owned lands,parks and recreation, main streets, services, renewable energy, etc.)
- Private Lands and Services (residential, commercial, industrial, agriculture, etc.)
- Broader Municipal issues like climate change.

Policies in this chapter are either regulatory or strategic. Regulatory policies establish basic land use regulations and restrictions that ensure the safety and prosperity of the community, and these policies are reflected in the Land Use By-Law. Strategic policies apply to the Municipality's internal efforts to improve the delivery of services to its citizens, and these policies outline ways in which Council can improve municipal operations during the lifetime of this Municipal Planning Strategy.

Some of the benefits of a rural municipality compared to urban municipalities is the affordability, direct access to nature, the abundance of natural resources, the rural lifestyle, and the potential for reduced development complexity and red tape. On this later point, it becomes more important to provide clarity and certainty in the Land Use By-Law since rural municipalities don't have the capacity for the same level of oversight as urban municipalities.

Beyond the requirements of this MPS and Land Use By-Law, developments still need to meet provincial standards for sub-division, for potable water quality and quantity, for sanitary water treatment, for wetland and watercourse protection, for coastal area protection, for flood mitigation, for building codes, and for natural resource extraction. So there is another higher level of land use controls which need to be considered from higher levels of government.

These documents have been coordinated with higher level land use controls to provide greater clarity, but residents should understand that the Province still has a great deal of control, especially as it relates to mineral extraction, natural resource use, and water uses. That said, the Municipality has the capacity to manage many aspects of public and private land uses in the Municipality and to establish a vision and pathway for growth and prosperity.

3.3 Public Lands and Services

The Municipality manages and, in some cases owns, a range of public resources from roads and treatment plants to libraries and public offices. The Municipality also coordinates with other provincial and federal jurisdictions who oversee other public resources and lands in the Municipality.

Some aspects of road development are controlled at the time of subdivision through the Subdivision By-law. Currently, the Municipality has adopted the Provincial Subdivision Regulations as its Subdivision By-law, and is subject to the regulations for roads contained within those Regulations. However, Council may choose to adopt a stand-alone Subdivision By-law in the future, at which time certain aspects of road development would be further regulated.

3.3.1 INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

Most of the roads in the Municipality are owned and managed by the NS Department of Public Works (NSPW). These include several road classifications designed to support the weight of different vehicle classes, which range from standard vehicles up to large B-train trucks. “K” class roads do not receive any maintenance and "J" class roads are maintained by the Province. Maintaining these roads (snow and ice removal, and repair) is a major cost for the Province. As part of the municipal service exchange, St. Mary's is responsible for the maintenance of about five kilometres of public “J” class roads in Sherbrooke. The Municipality pays a fee to the Province for maintenance of these roads but repairs and upgrades are the Municipality's responsibility, with the possibility of 50/50 cost sharing between the Municipality and higher levels of government.

In order to subdivide and develop land in the Municipality, land owners must have adequate road frontage as specified in the Land Use By-Law. If a road does not already exist, developers must build roads to meet NSPW standards at their own expense. Before 1995, new roads were handed over to the Province to maintain. Following 1995, new roads are the jurisdiction of the Municipality, and their long-term maintenance creates long-term costs.

The more road frontage that is required for development, the longer the roads must be built and the more expensive they are to maintain once they are handed over to the Municipality. Compact development is the most economical and environmentally sustainable form of development, and Council wishes to enable such development.

Figure 3.G Public Roads in St. Mary's



POLICY 3–1 Reduced road frontage

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish lot standards with lower minimum frontage requirements than is historically typical within the Municipality.

POLICY 3–2 Road reserves

Council shall, when establishing a municipal Subdivision By-law, require lands to be set aside as "road reserves" to connect new streets to adjacent lands that have the potential to be subdivided and developed with future streets.

POLICY 3–3 Meet with NSPW

Council may hold regular meetings with NSPW (or its future designate) to address maintenance and road upgrades in the Municipality.

3.3.2 PRIVATE ROADS

Private roads in St Mary's are sometimes built to access forestry, resource extraction or cottage/ residential developments. Private roads are maintained by land owners and as such do not represent a cost to the Municipality. However, they can cause conflicts where resource uses overlap with residential uses, or where landowners have differing expectations for maintenance.

POLICY 3–4 Private roads

Council shall, when establishing a municipal Subdivision By-law, require private roads to be created on their own, separate, lots.

POLICY 3–5 Private to public roads

Council may consider the transfer of private roads to municipal public roads if the economic benefit of taking over the road outweighs the public cost of maintaining it.

3.3.3 MAIN STREETS

St. Mary's has two "main street" communities at Sherbrooke and Port Bickerton. These main streets are characterized by increased residential density; some commercial uses; and institutional facilities like schools, churches, and community centres.

Sherbrooke Main Street

Sherbrooke already has a Streetscape Plan document, which includes various recommendations to make the street more walkable; make the street safer for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists; and to realize new park opportunities. The Streetscape Plan includes new sidewalks linking Court Street (Sherbrooke Village) to the Trunk 7 intersection, new paved shoulders from the Trunk 7 and Main Street intersection to Old Road Hill, and intersection upgrades to Old Road Hill (a roundabout or a new T-Intersection). The Main Street segment (Trunk 7 intersection to Court Street), could be widened to allow for on-street parking on one or both sides and sidewalk on both sides.

POLICY 3–6 Sherbrooke Streetscape Plan

Council shall implement the Sherbrooke Streetscape Plan as funding becomes available for its phased implementation.

POLICY 3–7 Dark sky lighting

Council may consider dark-sky compliant lighting for future lighting plans within the Sherbrooke Streetscape improvements.

Port Bickerton Main Street

Port Bickerton is a scenic community with enough density and businesses/institutions to consider a main street plan for future streetscape upgrades. Such a project, if implemented, would increase the tourism potential of the region and the quality of the community for residents. Such a streetscape plan should address streetscape improvements from Harbourview Drive to the Coast Guard Wharf and should also investigate the feasibility of a facade enhancement program.

POLICY 3–8 Port Bickerton main street plan

Council may consider creating a streetscape plan for Port Bickerton. The plan should include consideration of road improvements, sidewalk improvements, AT lanes, trail connections, signage and wayfinding, and a facade improvement program.



**Sherbrooke Main Street &
HWY 7**



**Port Bickerton Village Road &
Harbour View Dr.**

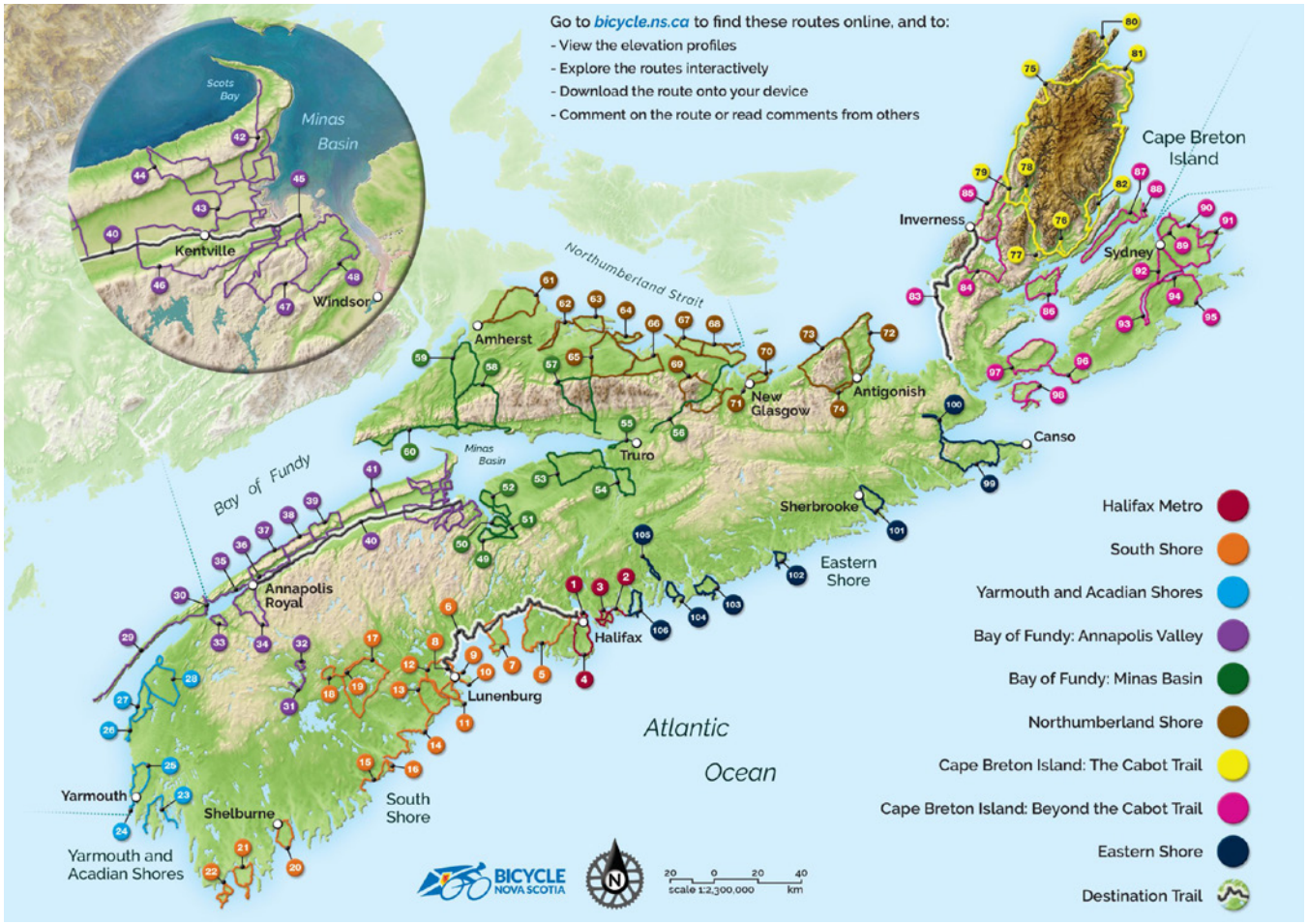


Figure 3.H Bicycle routes in Nova Scotia. Source: Bicycle Nova Scotia

3.3.4 ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Many municipalities in Nova Scotia are actively investing in active transportation (AT = human powered transportation including walking, running, bicycling, kayaking, canoing, skiing, snowshoeing, wheelchairing, *etc.*). AT projects improve the mental and physical health of local communities while reducing reliance on vehicles to provide improved mobility options.

Cycling in Nova Scotia has become a major tourist attraction especially in scenic coastal locations like the Cabot Trail and the Annapolis Trails but there is a noticeable absence of AT infrastructure in St. Mary's. Bicycle Nova Scotia has only identified the 39.5 km Sherbrooke Loop as the one route in St. Mary's.

To be successful, AT routes require investment in safe infrastructure including paved road shoulders, multi-use trails, or wide highway lanes, as well as roadside pull-offs and rest areas, water fountains and washrooms, scenic destinations, and food services.

POLICY 3–9 AT Plan for the Municipality

Council shall consider expanding the existing Sherbrooke AT Plan to encompass other areas of the Municipality.

POLICY 3–10 Bike friendly routes

Council shall encourage NSPW, Tourism NS, and Bicycle Nova Scotia to implement new bicycle friendly routes in St. Mary's, especially in scenic coastal areas.

3.3.5 CENTRAL SERVICES

St. Mary's only has one centrally-serviced community (Sherbrooke) and the services include sanitary sewer, water, and stormwater. The current sewage treatment plant and water treatment plant in Sherbrooke have ample capacity to service the community and extra capacity for some additional developments. The St. Mary's River Smokehouse facility, which was a large user of water and sewer, recently closed, freeing up additional capacity for a small expansion or for some multi-unit residential developments.

There was a plebiscite done in Port Bickerton in the 1990's to build central services but the community voted it down due to proposed tax increases.

The advantage of central services is that the community can increase density, and for the most part, central services are safer and more reliable than on-site systems and wells. However, they are a significant longterm investment for a community that must be repaid through taxes or user fees.

POLICY 3–11 Support density in serviced areas

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, encourage density in Sherbrooke to maximize the use of existing central services.

POLICY 3–12 Connect to sewer

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, require any new developments in the area with central services to connect to sewer.

POLICY 3–13 New central service areas

Council may consider new central service facilities in communities if a business case can demonstrate that the economic, social, and/or environmental benefits outweigh the ongoing cost of maintenance and capital upgrades.

3.3.6 SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

Sherbrooke's municipal drinking water supply is drawn from a series of nine lakes, which make up the Sherbrooke Lake Watershed, with water ultimately drawn from an inlet on Sherbrooke Lake. In the mid-2000s the Municipality undertook a Source Water Protection plan to identify the risks to the municipal water supply and establish approaches to limiting these risks. Recommendations within the Source Water Protection Plan include establishing zoning restrictions on the watershed.

POLICY 3–14 Drinking Water Designation

Council shall, on the Future Land Use Map of this Plan, establish a Drinking Water Designation on the lands identified within the Sherbrooke Source Water Protection Plan. The only permitted zone within the Drinking Water Designation shall be the Drinking Water Zone

POLICY 3–15 Drinking Water Zone

Council shall, in the Land Use By-Law, establish the Drinking Water Zone, intended to limit the density and types of development within the Sherbrooke Lake Watershed to those that are low risk to the quality of the municipal drinking water supply.

POLICY 3–16 Re-zoning in the Drinking Water Designation

Lands within the Drinking Water Designation shall not be re-zoned without an amendment to this Plan.

3.3.7 WASTE MANAGEMENT

The St. Mary's Transfer Station is owned and operated by the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's as part of Eastern Region Solid Waste Management. The facility transfers solid waste and organics to the Guysborough Waste Management Facility, which is the second largest in Nova Scotia.

POLICY 3–17 Waste transfer improvements

Council shall work to improve the efficiency of municipal waste management to ensure greater sustainability and economic opportunities.

3.3.8 RENEWABLE ENERGY

In October of 2019, the Province of Nova Scotia passed the *Sustainable Development Goals Act*, which required the province to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 53 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

St. Mary's has little tidal, solar, or hydro potential but it does have potential for wind and solar energy projects. Nova Scotia has 78 wind projects (309 wind turbines) that provide a generation capacity of 616 MW (December, 2019). Many wind farms across Nova Scotia are owned by Independent Power Producers with contracts to sell their electricity back to NS Power.

Wind Energy

St. Mary's currently (2022) has no wind energy facilities but there is good potential for future development so long as the energy can be stored and transferred to the electrical grid efficiently. To ensure compatibility of future turbines with existing communities, the Municipality has identified two scales of turbine developments:

- "Utility or Large Scale" wind turbines are machines in excess of 60 metres in height, being the measurement from the base of the tower to the highest point of the blade's arc, and/or have the potential to generate 100 kilowatts or more. Council will consider throughout the Municipality proposals for wind turbines or wind farms on a site-specific basis and consider permitting large turbines each on its merits and in consideration of the mitigation of potential adverse impacts.
- "Small Scale" wind turbines are less than 60 meters in height and generate less than 100 kilowatts. They are intended to meet the electricity needs of on-site uses, but may export energy to the grid through "net-metering".

POLICY 3–18 Small scale wind turbines

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, broadly permit small scale wind turbines, subject to specific separation distance and signage requirements intended to minimize impacts on adjacent uses.

POLICY 3–19 Wind turbines by development agreement

Council shall consider entering into a development agreement to permit large scale wind turbines in the Industrial Zone and the Rural Resource Zone, subject to Policy 3-20 and the implementing Policy 4-12 and 4-13.

POLICY 3–20 Environmental impact for large scale wind turbines

Council shall require an environmental impact registration document for all proposed large scale wind turbines following the most recent provincial guidelines.

Solar Energy

Solar farms and individual home solar panels are gaining widespread adoption through improved battery and solar panel technologies. Though St. Mary's is not ideally suited for large scale solar installations near its coastal areas, the large undeveloped inland areas and the high proportion of detached dwellings (each with their own roof) make St. Mary's a welcoming landscape for solar projects large and small.

POLICY 3–21 Solar collectors

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, permit small-scale solar collectors as an accessory use in all zones.

POLICY 3–22 Solar farms

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, permit solar collector arrays that exceed 1 megawatt of nameplate capacity ("solar farms") in the Industrial Zone and the Rural Resource Zone.

3.3.9 PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks and public recreation facilities improve the quality of life and the mental and physical health of residents in St. Mary's. These facilities reduce the strain on public health facilities and are important factors in attracting new residents, businesses, and tourists to the Municipality. Parks can be instrumental in relating the cultural history of an area or to educate people on the natural history of the area.

Parks can range from municipal parks and conservation areas and playgrounds up to provincial and national parks.

POLICY 3–23 Parks and Recreation Zone

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish the Parks and Recreation (PR) Zone to identify parkland and permit a range of parks and open space uses.

Municipal Parks

St. Mary's has assembled a wide range of lands (almost 17 acres) for parkland areas in the Municipality. There is currently no parkland dedication requirements because the Municipality utilizes the Provincial Subdivision Regulations as its Subdivision By-Law. However, if the Municipality established a stand-alone Subdivision By-law in the future Council intends to require a parkland dedication as part of the subdivision process.

POLICY 3–24 Parks and recreation master plan

Council may complete a Community Development and Recreation master plan for the Municipality to guide the future development of parks and recreation facilities.

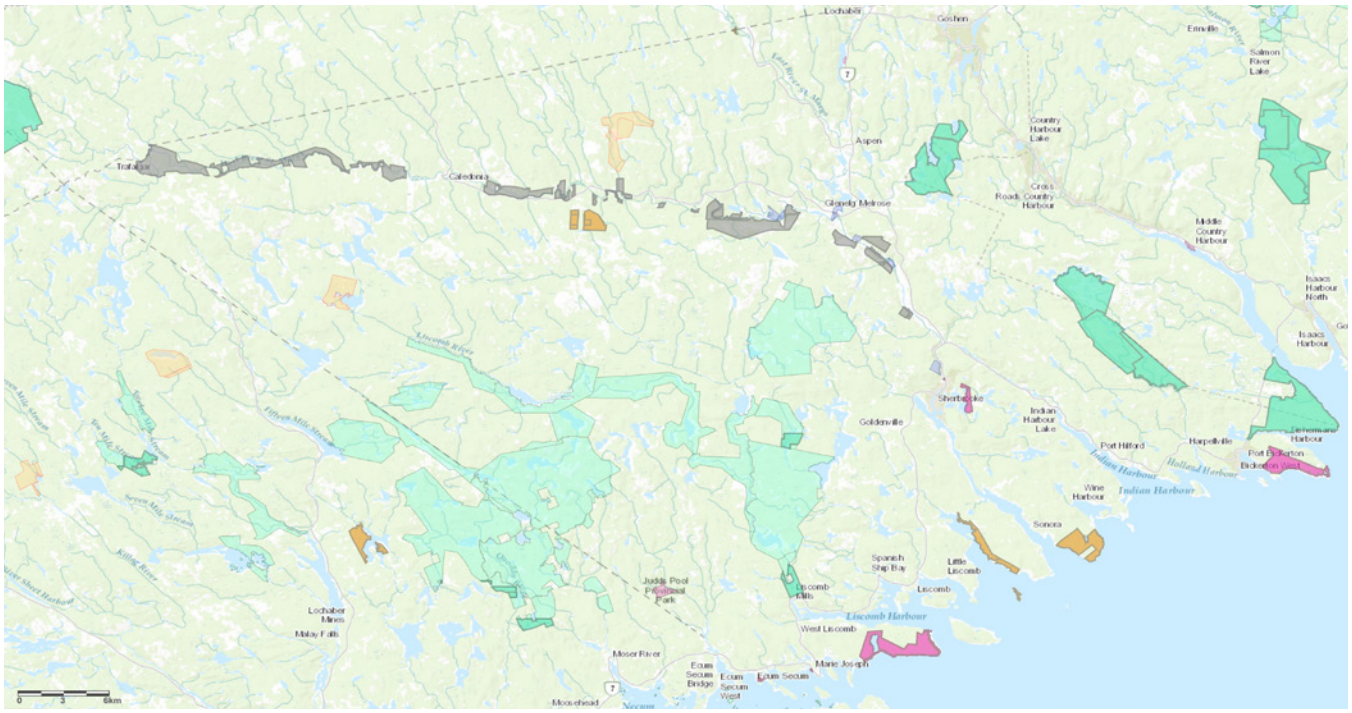
POLICY 3–25 Passive parks in all zones

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, permit passive parks and recreation uses in all zones.

POLICY 3–26 Parkland dedication

Council shall, when establishing a municipal Subdivision By-law, require a parkland dedication of cash or in-kind improvements to municipal parkland equalling at least 5% of the value of the created lots. Council may, through the Subdivision By-law, exempt classes of subdivision from municipal parkland dedication. Such exemptions may include, but are not limited to, boundary adjustments, consolidations, subdivisions for municipal purposes, utility subdivisions, and subdivisions creating a total of four or fewer lots from an area of land.

Figure 3.I Provincial Parks and Protected Areas



- Wilderness Area
- Nature Reserve
- Proposed Protected Area
- Proposed Provincial Park
- Proposed Protected River Corridor
- Proposed Nature Reserve

Provincial Parks

The Province operates and maintains three provincial day use parks in the Municipality including the Marie Joseph Roadside Park near Liscomb Mills (1.86 acres), the Sherbrooke Picnic park near Sherbrooke Village (0.76 acres), and the Lochiel Lake Picnic park (10.3 ac) near Aspen. There are no camping parks in St. Mary's though there are two private campgrounds (Riversedge and Nimrods campgrounds).

Provincial Parks and Protected Area

The Province of Nova Scotia has set a target for 20% of the provincial land area to be designated as provincial parks and protected areas. The provincial report, *Our Parks and Protected Areas: A Plan for Nova Scotia*, aims to protect up to 249,000 hectares, a land mass about one-quarter the size of Cape Breton Island.

POLICY 3–27 Existing provincial parks in St. Mary's

Council shall encourage the Province to maintain and promote the existing provincial parks within St. Mary's.

POLICY 3–28 St. Mary's River Corridor

Council shall encourage the Province in designating the remaining proposed St. Mary's River Corridor Lands as a protected area, to add to the lands already protected as St. Mary's River Provincial Park..

POLICY 3–29 New provincial parks

Council shall encourage the Province to establish and invest in infrastructure for new provincial parks within the Municipality, including the proposed:

1. *Liscomb Point Provincial Park (465 ha),*
2. *Port Bickerton Provincial Park (337 Ha),*
3. *Judds Pools Provincial Park (77 Ha), and*
4. *Sherbrooke Lake Provincial Park (60Ha).*

Sherbrooke Village

Sherbrooke Village is part of the Nova Scotia Provincial Museum network and is managed by the Historic Sherbrooke Village Development Society (HSVDS). The Village was built on the economy of ship building, lumbering, and gold mining during its industrial boom in of the 1860s. The Village consists of 80 buildings. Over 25 of those are open to the public, dating from the 1860s through to pre-WWI. The Village is open seasonally, as well as for special events in the off-season. Sherbrooke Village is the most significant tourist destination in the Municipality.

The Village is serviced by sewer and water and each building sits on its own premises identification number (PID). In 2020, Sherbrooke Village underwent a $1m restoration which included work on several of its buildings.

POLICY 3–30 Local Nova Scotia Museums

Council may meet with representatives of The Nova Scotia Museum annually to review plans for local museums.

Federal Parks

There are no federal parks or historic sites in the Municipality. However, the federal government is currently proposing a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the waters off the coast of St. Mary's. There are currently 14 Oceans Act MPAs across Canada, comprising over 350,000 square kilometres. Eight are located on the Atlantic Coast, ranging in size from 2 square kilometres to 11,580 square kilometres. Any proposed MPA would not be subject to municipal plans or by-laws.

Canadian Heritage Rivers

The Government of Canada has developed a national river conservation plan that has designated 40 Canadian Rivers—including the Margaree and Shelburne rivers in Nova Scotia and the Hillsborough and Three Rivers in PEI—as national heritage rivers. These rivers are recognized nationally for their outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational heritage and for shaping Canada's identity is as a nation. There are many benefits to joining the Canadian Heritage Rivers Program. The St. Mary's River could be an excellent candidate for this designation, with improved resources for conservation, access to a national network of resources, and greater opportunities for ecotourism.

POLICY 3–31 Canadian Heritage Rivers designation

Council shall be supportive of any application for the designation of the St. Mary's River as a Canadian Heritage River.

3.3.10 PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES

Rinks, gymnasiums and pools are important recreational amenities in municipalities and they contribute to the social and mental health of residents. Ideally these facilities are located close to the people that use them with good road and trail access. The Municipality is fortunate to have the RecPlex, which is home to community hockey, a curling club, public skating and various community events all year round.

POLICY 3–32 Recreation centres

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, permit recreation centres in all zones except the Drinking Water Zone.

3.3.11 CROWN LANDS

Much of the Municipality's land base is undeveloped as Crown land owned by the Province. Over 51.7% (1,030 sq.km) of the land in the Municipality is owned by the Province, and about 7.9 % (156 sq.km) is either protected as part of the Parks and Protected Areas or is designated for protection (3.4%). The Municipality recognizes that its forests, geologic reserves, waters, parks and habitats are some of its most important assets and the high percentage of Crown land assures its long-term rural status and character.

However, the Municipality has no jurisdiction over activities undertaken by the Crown or many of the activities the Crown authorizes on its land, such as forestry and mining. The high proportion of Crown land in the Municipality is also a challenge from a development perspective, since so much of the land base in the Municipality is essentially unavailable for development.

POLICY 3–33 Crown Land impacts

Council shall encourage the Province of Nova Scotia to engage with the Municipality to develop programs and strategies that explore the benefits and challenges of Crown Land and protected Crown Lands in the area.

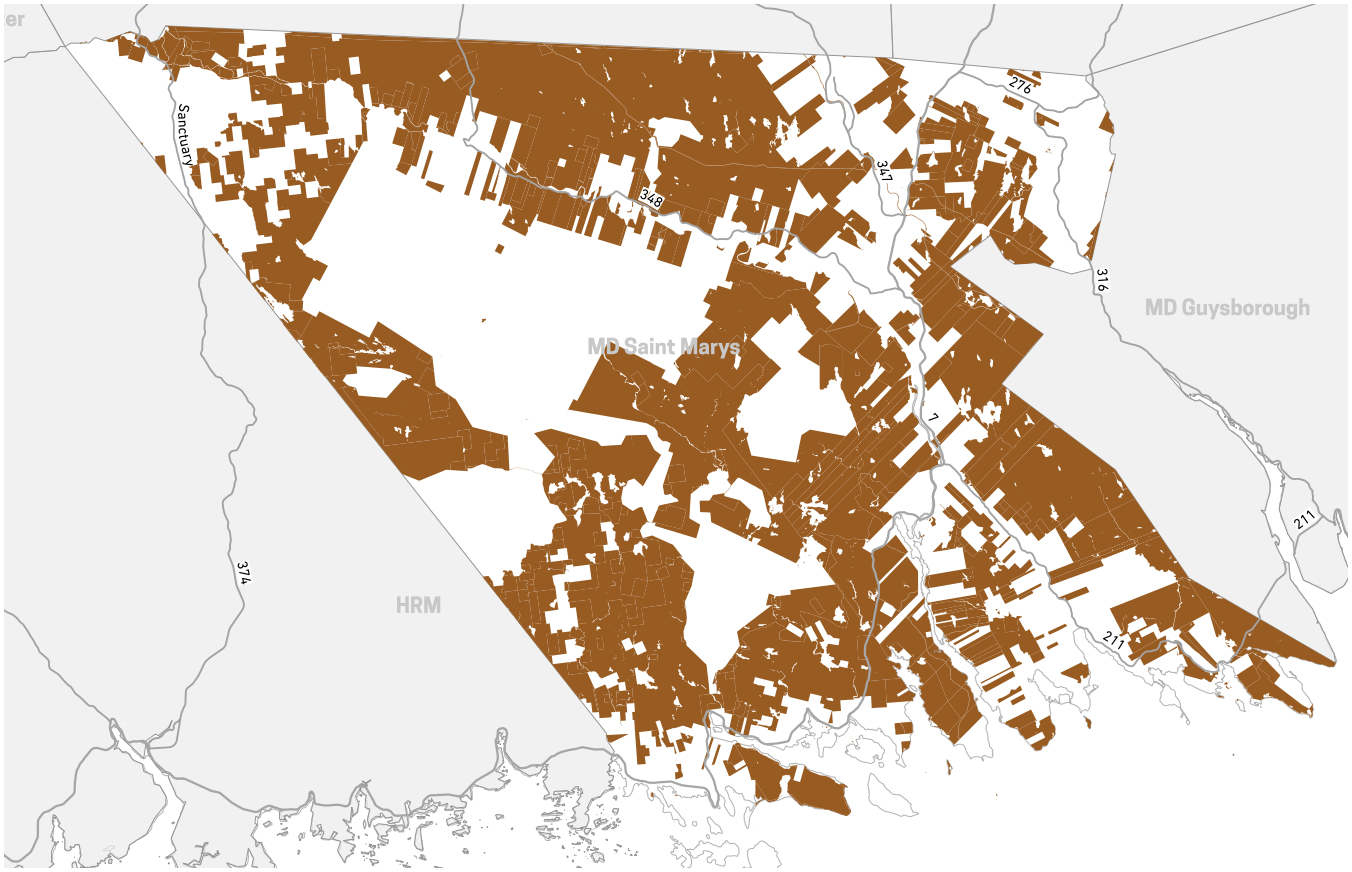


Figure 3.J Crown land in St. Mary's

3.3.12 MUNICIPAL ASSETS

The Municipality currently operates two distinct sets of asset inventories. Both sets are equally important for ensuring sustainable service delivery and opportunities for economic growth in the future.

The first asset category is comprised of municipal facilities such as the water utility (including water treatment facility and water lines), roadways in Sherbrooke, the St. Mary's RecPlex, the Transfer Station, the Fitness Centre, the Sherbrooke Library, the Municipal Office Community Room and S.H.O.P.S. Room. All of these facilities are essential for residents' physical and mental wellbeing, and they form the backbone of municipal service delivery.

The second set of assets consists of the 108 hectares of municipally-owned land. This land consists of discrete parcels distributed throughout the Municipality, with sizable holdings near Sherbrooke, Port Bickerton (Port Bickerton Lighthouse Property) and Liscomb. Municipal lands represent important opportunities for future development.

Both of these sets of assets must be adequately supported for long term operational sustainability to ensure they provide high-quality services and investment opportunities. It is critical to ensure that these assets are maintained and fully funded for the future.

POLICY 3–34 Municipal Assets

Council may adopt an Asset Management Policy to confirm the Municipality's commitment to ensuring the sustainable delivery of services into the future.

3.4 Private Lands and Services

One of the main objectives of the Municipal Planning Strategy and its associated Land Use By-Law is to control the size, placement, adjacency, and use of buildings on private lands within the Municipality. The aim is to provide some measure of certainty around people's most expensive investment (their home or business), and to guide development in the Municipality in a manner that protects the natural environment and supports the functional and aesthetic qualities the community values.

3.4.1 GENERAL POLICIES FOR PRIVATE LANDS

Lot Sizes

On unserviced properties, minimum lot sizes are determined first and foremost by Nova Scotia Environment's *On-site Sewage Disposal Regulations*, which rely on the site's soil type and its ability to sustainably absorb and treat wastewater effluent. While the Land Use By-Law may establish smaller or larger minimum lot sizes, ultimately the owner of an unserviced lot must also ensure the lot is sized to accommodate wastewater flows. For a basic residential system these lot sizes can range from 2,700 square metres on good quality soils up to 9,000 square metres on poorer quality soils. Other wastewater treatment technologies can be used to reduce lot sizes but the solution must be determined by an experienced engineer.

In areas of the Municipality with central sewer collection lot sizes are instead determined primarily on the desired character of the community. Smaller lots allow for a compact, "urban" form of development, while larger lots tend to have a more "rural" feel.

POLICY 3–35 Lot sizes

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, regulate the size of new lots to meet the intent of each specific zone, subject to the Department of Environment On-Site Sewage Disposal Regulations as applicable.

Existing Undersized Lots

Many older lots were subdivided before the implementation of the provincial septic guidelines and present the risk of contamination from septic effluent. Council recognizes that these lots do not meet the current standards, but understands that there may be some need to accommodate reasonable redevelopment or expansion so long as land owners can prove there is no potential for additional pollution.

POLICY 3–36 Relaxation of standards

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, relax standards to allow for the use of existing undersized lots if they are serviced, can meet provincial septic requirements, or do not require wastewater disposal.

Accessory Buildings

Accessory buildings such as garages, sheds, or barns are permitted in all zones but their location, size and placement will be controlled by the Land Use By-Law depending on the zone.

POLICY 3–37 Accessory buildings

Council Shall, through the Land Use By-Law, permit accessory buildings in all zones with varying design and placement requirements based on the zone standards.

3.4.2 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

There are a wide variety of residential building forms in St. Mary's, including single detached homes, cottages, mini-homes, duplexes, townhomes, and multi-unit buildings. Some of these residential properties include small commercial uses like bed and breakfasts, daycares, animal daycares, home offices, and small retail sales or hobby farms. Some of these commercial uses are compatible with residential uses, while some need a higher degree of control to ensure compatibility.

As of the 2016 Census, the vast majority of homes were single-detached (930). As St. Mary's population continues to age, there is a need for different types of housing, and more affordable housing options. Multi-unit housing will continue to grow in demand as well as smaller dwellings such as tiny homes.

POLICY 3–38 Housing diversity

Council shall, through the permitted uses within the Land Use By-Law, support a wide variety of housing types in the Municipality.

Secondary or Backyard Suites

Many municipalities across Nova Scotia are increasingly concerned with housing affordability and have moved to permit backyard suites (granny suites, carriage flats, or tiny home) or secondary suites (in-law suites or basement apartments) in all residential zones. These new suites are located on one property with another, primary, dwelling, but they have a size limit to ensure that the equivalent of two homes are not built on one lot. These additional units can provide a greater range of affordability and housing diversity to St. Mary's residents and are particularly well suited to the large lots in the Municipality.

POLICY 3–39 Accessory dwelling units

Council Shall, through the Land Use By-Law, permit backyard suites and secondary suites in all zones that permit single-detached dwellings, subject to limits on size and location intended to maintain their "accessory" nature.

Home-based Businesses

In rural areas, home-based businesses are an important part of the local economy. Some of these home-based businesses eventually grow into larger, stand-alone businesses with staff and need for a dedicated building. Council supports the entrepreneurs of St. Mary's by supporting home-based businesses which do not compromise the safety or tranquillity of their neighbours.

POLICY 3–40 Home based businesses

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, permit home-based businesses in all zones that permit dwellings.

Manufactured Homes

There is currently (2022) one manufactured home park in Sherbrooke, and in order to provide flexible housing options for residents, there could be more built in the future. Stand-alone manufactured homes are permitted in all zones the same as a single-detached dwelling, but in order to create a "manufactured home park", with many mobile homes on one lot, additional considerations are required.

POLICY 3–41 Manufactured home park

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, permit manufactured home parks in the Medium Density Residential Zone and the Rural Resource Zone, subject to additional requirements aimed at ensuring each manufactured home has adequate space and that basic aesthetic standards (such as skirting) are established.

Short-term Accommodations

One of the limiting factors for tourism in the Municipality is the general lack of accommodations. According to AirDNA, (a site that measures the bookings of sites like AirBnB) St. Mary's has only 11 active rentals as of 2021, by far the lowest of any municipality in Nova Scotia. To build tourism in the region, and to provide income opportunities to residents, Council supports short-term rentals.

POLICY 3–42 Accommodations in Residential zones

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, permit short-term rentals in all zones that permit dwellings.

Low Density Residential Zone (RL)

St. Mary's includes neighbourhoods that are characterized by lower-density residential development, with the occasional small business or community amenity. The Low Density Residential Zone will identify and enable this existing form of development, as well as enable a wider range of lower-density residential uses that are rare or do not exist in St. Mary's, such as small townhomes.

Additionally, the importance and prominence of the fishery in St. Mary's has a established a long-standing practice of residents using their residential properties in for activities supporting the fishery, such as boat and gear storage and repair. These practices are important to the community and should continue; the Low Density Residential Zone will continue to enable such practices.

POLICY 3–43 Low Density Residential Zone

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish the Low Density Residential (RL) Zone to permit a range of lower density residential housing types, related community amenities, and traditional activities supporting the fishery.

Medium Density Residential Zone (RM)

While St. Mary's has, to-date, had limited multi-unit residential development, Council is supportive of such options in the Municipality as a way to diversify the types of housing available and potentially increase affordability. The Medium Density Residential Zone is intended to enable such developments.

POLICY 3–44 Medium Density Residential Zone

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish the Medium Density Residential (RM) Zone, intended to permit a range of low and medium density residential uses and related community amenities.

Higher Density Residential Development

Council is supportive of the potential for higher-density residential development (in excess of 20 units) but wants to ensure such developments are considerate of the local context and do not risk overwhelming local services. As a result, such developments will only be considered by development agreement.

POLICY 3–45 Higher Density Residential by Development Agreement

Council shall consider entering into a development agreement to permit multi-unit dwellings larger than 20 units in size in the Medium Density Residential Zone and the Mixed Use Zone, subject to Policy 4-13.



3.4.3 COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mixed Use (MU) Zone

St. Mary's, and particularly Sherbrooke and Port Bickerton, has traditionally developed with a comfortable mix of residential and commercial uses located side-by-side. This type of development pattern is well-known to the community, and is reasonable to continue. However, it is important for commercial uses to be limited in size in order to avoid unreasonably disturbing the balance of commercial and residential uses in these areas

Sherbrooke is the only community with central water and sewer services so it can accommodate greater density and a wider range of commercial uses than other unserviced areas in the Municipality. Consequently it makes sense to provide smaller lot standards, increased unit counts, and a wider array of potential uses.

The Mixed Use Zone will accommodate this range of mixed residential and commercial uses, while offering reduced lots standards in areas with services.

POLICY 3–46 Mixed Use Zone

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish the Mixed Use Zone to permit a wide range of commercial and service uses of a limited size, as well as residential mixed-use development and multi-unit development. Zone standards shall accommodate both serviced and unserviced lots to reflect the diversity of mixed-use communities in St. Mary's.

POLICY 3–47 Large commercial by development agreement

Council shall consider entering into a development agreement for commercial developments with a commercial floor area larger than 112 square metres in the Mixed Use Zone, subject to Policy 4-13.

General Commercial (GC) Zone

Commercial development ranges from a small corner stores up to large "big box" franchises and everything in between. The residential zones provides some flexibility to allow small commercial uses in residences in St. Mary's, and the Mixed Use Zone allows stand-alone commercial uses to a limited size. However, large, stand-alone commercial uses can have impacts on the uses around them and should be zoned specifically for commercial use. Council recognizes that rural areas must include some flexibility so St. Mary's allows one residential unit on each general commercial property.

Very large commercial uses will only be considered by development agreement to ensure their visual impact on the community is adequately considered and controlled.

POLICY 3–48 General Commercial zone

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish the General Commercial (GC) zone to permit a wide range of commercial uses, as well as a single dwelling unit on the property. The zone standards shall be flexible to accommodate the wide range of commercial needs.

POLICY 3–49 Large commercial by development agreement

Council shall consider entering into a development agreement for commercial developments with a commercial floor area larger than 600 square metres in the General Commercial Zone, subject to Policy 4-13.

3.4.4 INSTITUTIONAL USES

Institutional facilities include churches and places of worship, cemeteries, schools, rinks, government facilities, community halls, police stations, and other such facilities. These facilities are important to the health and social cohesions of the community and many of the smaller community-type institutions will be permitted in a variety of zones. However, larger institutional facilities should be placed in their own zone. There may also be a desire to specifically identify and protect existing uses with institutional zoning.

POLICY 3–50 Institutional Zone

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish the Institutional (Ins) Zone, intended to identify and permit a wide range of institutional uses.

3.4.5 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural Resource (RR) Zone

The large majority of the land area in St. Mary's is rural in nature. While much of the land is owned by the Crown, there is still a substantial amount of private rural land, particularly along existing roadways. These lands are suited for a wide variety of resource-type development, as well as low-density residential dwellings and their associated uses. The Rural Resource Zone will recognize and reinforce the rural character of these areas.

POLICY 3–51 Rural Resource Zone

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish the Rural Resource (RR) Zone, intended to accommodate resource-based industries and rural living.

POLICY 3–52 Aggregate-related industry

Council shall consider entering into a development agreement for aggregate-related industrial developments in the Rural Resource Zone, subject to Policy 4-13.

Agriculture (Ag) Zone

Compared to other municipalities in Nova Scotia, St. Mary's has a low proportion of good agricultural soils (see Appendix 'B'). This, combined with the local climate, has meant that agricultural activity is limited. However, there are a number of dairy farms and grazing fields, as well as several small hobby farms, particularly in the Aspen, Goshen, and Argyle areas.

In Nova Scotia, municipalities have a provincially-mandated responsibility to identify and protect good agricultural soils, and to promote agricultural activities. Agricultural lands often support multiple buildings on the same lot including one residential dwelling, or temporary dwelling units for workers so the agriculture zone needs to be flexible. The Agriculture Zone will fulfill this role. However, given the fact that agriculture potential is limited for other reasons, this zone will still allow for other uses of these lands.

POLICY 3–53 Agricultural Zone

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish the Agriculture (Ag) Zone, intended to prioritize agricultural activities and reduce the fragmentation of productive agricultural lands.

POLICY 3–54 Small scale commercial uses in Agricultural Zone

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, permit small-scale agri-tourism businesses to operate within the Agricultural zone including, but not limited to, restaurants, farm stays, and u-picks.

POLICY 3–55 Topsoil removal from Agricultural Zones

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, not permit the removal of topsoil within the agricultural zone, unless removed from lots approved for non-agricultural development or sod or peat production.

POLICY 3–56 Livestock separation distances

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law set out separation distances for livestock operations development to reduce land-use conflicts.

POLICY 3–57 Agricultural expansion

Council may promote the economic opportunities for expanding agriculture in St. Mary's through livestock rearing, aquaculture, special crop cultivation or indoor facility cultivation.

3.4.6 INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

St. Mary's has a long history of industrial development as part of the region's shipbuilding, fishing, forestry, mining, and processing activities. Its active ports and harbours have been the centre of the Municipality's industry for hundreds of years and its sparse density (the lowest in the province) provides opportunities for resource extraction and potential industrial development which will not create adjacency nuisances or the potential for land/air/water pollution.

St. Mary's is one of the few large municipalities with no industrial park and there may be economic opportunities to develop one in the future with its relative close proximity to Antigonish. Wind energy is a possible new renewable business opportunity for St. Mary's especially where it is close to the NS Power mainline like in the area of Salmon River Lake.

Many resource extraction activities like mining, forestry and the fishery are the jurisdiction of higher levels of government, but the Municipality can control related buildings and facilities through the Land Use By-Law.

POLICY 3–58 Industrial Zone

3.4.7 *Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish an Industrial (Ind) Zone to enable a wide range of industrial use within in the Municipality.*

3.4.8 WHALE SANCTUARY (WS)

In February 2020, after two years of researching hundreds of locations on the east and west coasts of North America, the Whale Sanctuary Project selected Port Hilford in St. Mary's as the best site for the sanctuary. The application is being coordinated with many provincial and federal agencies including the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Transport Canada, and the Department of Environment. The site is planned to include on-site and off-site infrastructure and facilities, and while the Municipality has no jurisdiction for water based land uses, it can control the land based facilities which could include a mix of industrial operations and visitor centre facilities.

The presence of the sanctuary in the region could draw visitors to the region, and the sanctuary concept is consistent with the Municipality's goals of sustainable development, conservation, and environmental education.

Council understands the positive impact this type of project may have for St. Mary's and will support its development by creating a zone specific to the uses of the Whale Sanctuary Project.

POLICY 3–59 Whale Sanctuary Designation

Council shall, on the Future Land Use Map of this Plan, establish the Whale Sanctuary Designation on lands intended to accommodate the Whale Sanctuary Project. The only zone permitted in this Designation shall be the Whale Sanctuary Zone.

POLICY 3–60 Whale Sanctuary Zone

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish the Whale Sanctuary (WS) Zone to allow uses pertinent to the Whale Sanctuary Project.

POLICY 3–61 Review of Whale Sanctuary Designation and Zone

If the Whale Sanctuary Project has not commenced development by 2025, or if the Whale Sanctuary Project no longer owns the parcels identified as PIDs 37581592, 37581584, 37508819 and 35177567, Council may review the designation and zoning on these properties and establish a new proposed use for the lands through an amendment to this Plan and the Land Use By-Law.

3.4.9 FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Future land use designations identify, broadly, the range of activities that are considered appropriate now, and potentially in the future by amendments to the zoning map of the Land Use By-Law ("rezoning").

Core Designation

The Core Designation identifies the core areas of Sherbrooke and Port Bickerton, where denser, more "urban" forms of development are appropriate.

POLICY 3–62 Core Designation

Council shall, on the Future Land Use Map of this Plan, establish the Core Designation on the denser areas of Sherbrooke and Port Bickerton, and immediately adjacent areas where continuation of this development pattern would be appropriate.

POLICY 3–63 Zones within the Core Designation

Zones permitted within the Core Designation are:

1. *Low Density Residential*
2. *Medium Density Residential*
3. *Mixed Use*
4. *General Commercial*
5. *Institutional*
6. *Parks and Recreation*
7. *Industrial*

Rural Designation

The Rural Designation identifies the bulk of the rural lands within the Municipality.

POLICY 3–64 Rural Designation

Council shall, on the Future Land Use Map of this Plan, establish the Rural Designation on rural areas of the Municipality not otherwise covered by other designations.

POLICY 3–65 Zones within the Rural Designation

Zones permitted within the Rural Designation are:

8. *Rural Resource*
9. *Agriculture*
10. *General Commercial*
11. *Institutional*
12. *Parks and Recreation*
13. *Industrial*

3.5 Other Municipal Priorities

The following considerations are also important for the successful implementation of this MPS and the associated LUB.

3.5.1 HERITAGE

The Heritage Property By-Law is currently up to date with the *Heritage Property Act,* which was last amended in 2010. The Municipality currently has a few registered properties, and potential for new designated properties.

The new Act includes several new incentives for registered heritage properties including:

- A heritage conservation advice grant for any owner to do an assessment, with matching funding up to $3,000.
- If the property is registered with a non-profit or as a place-of-worship, a conservation work grant (roof, windows, siding or core structures) may be considered up to a matching of $7,500 every two years.
- Support for conservation of monuments in municipally-registered cemeteries.
- A sales tax rebate through Service NS for a full rebate for provincial tax for eligible exterior materials (excludes labour) administered through the *Sales Tax Act*.
- Support and training for municipal councils.

POLICY 3–66 Heritage Property By-Law

Council shall monitor the Municipal Heritage Property By-law to ensure it remains up-to-date and conforms with the latest Heritage Property Act.

3.5.2 WETLANDS, WATERCOURSES & COASTAL AREAS

Wetlands and watercourses in Nova Scotia are protected under provincial jurisdiction and are subject to provincial regulations set out by the Department of Environment. Any changes to wetlands less than 2 hectares are considered under the Nova Scotia Wetland Conservation Policy, and those more than 2 hectares require an environmental impact assessment reviewed under the *Environmental Assessment Act*.

Watercourse alterations are controlled under the Nova Scotia Environment Watercourse Alteration program.

The On-site Sewage Disposal Systems Regulations (under the *Environment Act)*, require a minimum setback of 30.5 metres for sewage disposal systems from all wetlands or watercourses.

POLICY 3–67 Watercourse setbacks

Council shall, through the Land Use By-Law, establish watercourse and wetland setbacks to protect developments from flooding and protect natural areas from the impacts of development.

POLICY 3–68 Coastal setbacks

Council may, through the Land Use By-Law, establish coastal setbacks to protect development from the impacts of coastal erosion, increased storm surges and other events related to the changing climate to support the future implementation of the Coastal Protection Act.

POLICY 3–69 Floodplain overlay zone restrictions

Subject to detailed floodplain mapping, council may create a floodplain overlay map or maps to control development in flood-prone areas and develop policy consistent with the provisions of the Provincial Statement of Interest on Flood Risk Areas.

POLICY 3–70 Coastal zone erosion mapping

Council may work with the Province of Nova Scotia to prepare coastal erosion mapping for coastal areas of the Municipality.

POLICY 3–71 Coastal erosion overlay zone restrictions

Subject to detailed coastal erosion mapping, Council may create coastal erosion overlay map to restrict development in erosion-prone areas.

3.5.3 CLIMATE CHANGE

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's Municipal Climate Change Action Plan (MCCAP) identifies the primary climate-related threats to the community including greenhouse gases, flooding, coastal erosion, and sea level rise, and sets out a series of strategic climate change adaptation and mitigation actions to address these threats.

The considerations in the MCCAP pertain to coastal access, commerce and industry, community facilities, emergency response systems, parks and protected areas, public education, roads and bridges, vulnerable populations, water quality, and wildlife. They are intended to be carried out based on available funds, staff, and Municipal guidelines. Taken together, they lay the foundation for the development of new planning policies and land use management strategies intended to prepare the community of St. Mary's for climate-related risks in the future.

This MPS builds upon the MCCAP, expanding upon the mitigation and adaptation strategies therein by establishing necessary policy to safeguard human life and property. A successful response to climate change will involve constant evolution and evaluation of municipal strategies and land use policies to ensure they continue to align with the commitment to support the community of St. Mary's in its effort to increase preparedness and resiliency.

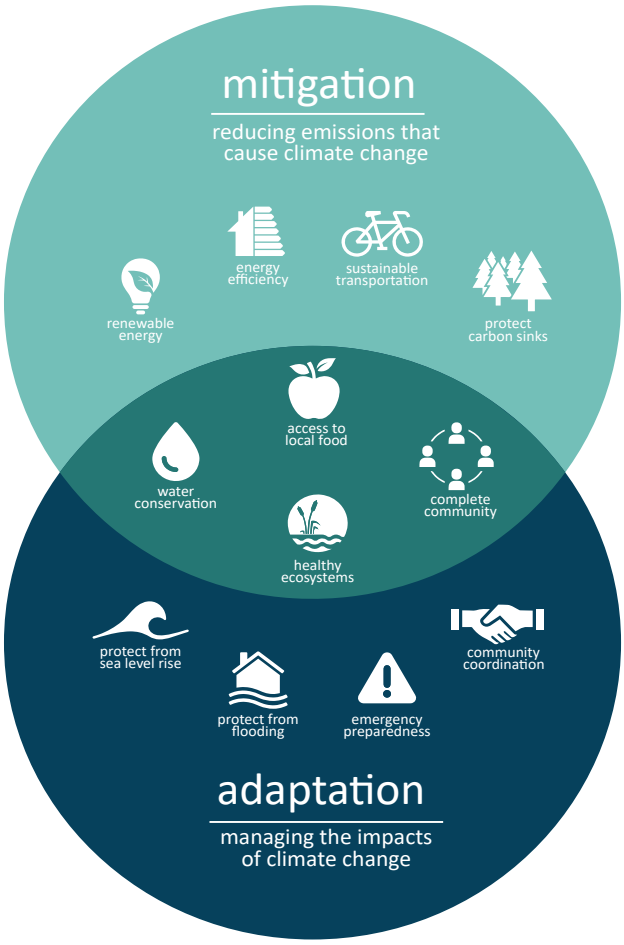


Figure 3.K Climate change mitigation & adaptation



Figure 3.L Improved resilience

5- NOAA Office for Coastal Management, 2015, Coastal Community Resilience Indicators and Rating Systems, https://coast.noaa.gov/data/digitalcoast/pdf/resilience-indicators.pdf .

PART 4
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



4.1 Municipal Plan Administration

This Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) is a policy document that sets out the vision, goals, objectives, and policies for development, conservation, and land use in St. Mary's. This MPS and its associated Land Use By-Law are enabled by, and are consistent with, Parts 8 and 9 of the *Municipal Government Act*.

The adoption of this Municipal Planning Strategy does not commit Council to undertake any of the projects or actions contained herein. However, Council shall not take any action or make any decision that does not reasonably carry out the intent of this MPS.

The following policies include the basic requirements for proper implementation, administration, edits, and enforcement of to this document and its accompanying Land Use By-Law. Where policies address the control of land use, they must be implemented through the Land Use By-Law or Subdivision By-law and through the powers of Council as provided by the *Municipal Government Act* and other provincial statutes as may be applicable.

POLICY 4–1 MPS for St. Mary's

This document and all associated appendices shall constitute the Municipal Planning Strategy for the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's.

Plan Amendments

From time to time, a By-Law amendment may require an amendment to the Municipal Planning Strategy to ensure policy consistency. The Municipal Planning Strategy may also need to be amended for a variety of other reasons outlined in the Act.

Plan amendments initiated for the purpose of a By-Law amendment can be undertaken concurrently (*i.e.* Council can consider the two amendments at the same time).

POLICY 4–2 Plan amendment

Council may consider amendments to the policies of this MPS or to the Future Land Use Map under the following circumstances:

1. *The intent of any policy is to be changed.*
2. *The Municipal Planning Strategy is in conflict with Provincial land use policies or regulations in accordance with the Municipal Government Act.*
3. *A requested amendment to the Land Use By-Law is in conflict with this Municipal Planning Strategy and there are valid reasons for the amendment.*
4. *A secondary planning strategy is to be incorporated into the Municipal Planning Strategy.*

POLICY 4–3 Concurrent MPS amendment and LUB amendments

Council may undertake MPS amendments and LUB amendments concurrently.

MPS Review

In accordance with the *Municipal Government Act* this Strategy must be reviewed no later than 10 years after the later of the following dates:

- the date it was adopted;
- the date it was last reviewed; and
- the effective date of these regulations.

POLICY 4–4 MPS review

Council shall, in accordance with the Municipal Government Act, review this Strategy periodically and using the procedures identified in the Act.

4.2 Development Agreements

Development agreements are legally binding contracts which are negotiated between Council and an applicant to allow more flexibility and control than as-of-right approval techniques. When preparing such a document, Council shall refer to the items to be included in a development agreement and the evaluation criteria contained in this Municipal Planning Strategy.

POLICY 4–5 Development agreements

Council shall consider entering into a development agreement where such an agreement is enabled by policies elsewhere in this Plan. Where Council approves a development agreement, the development agreement shall:

1. *specify the development, expansion, alteration, or change permitted;*
2. *specify the conditions under which the development may occur; and*
3. *set terms by which Council may amend or terminate and discharge the agreement.*

POLICY 4–6 Development agreement must meet policy

Council shall not approve or amend a development agreement unless Council is satisfied the proposed agreement is consistent with the enabling policy and the general criteria set out in Policy 4-13.

POLICY 4–7 Conditions in a development agreement

Council may specify conditions in the development agreement to bring the proposal into alignment with the enabling policy and the general criteria set out in Policy 4-13. Such conditions may include, but are not limited to, controls regarding:

1. *servicing;*
2. *the type, location, and orientation of structures;*
3. *the architectural design of structures, including, but not limited to, bulk, scale, height, roof shape, building and cladding materials, and the shape and size and placement of doors and windows;*
4. *the provision of open space and amenities;*
5. *the type, size, and location of signage;*
6. *the type and orientation of exterior lighting;*
7. *management of solid waste, compost, and recycling;*
8. *pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation;*
9. *connections to existing or planned pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular networks;*
10. *the location and number of bicycle and vehicular parking and loading spaces;*
11. *access for emergency vehicles;*
12. *the location and type of landscaping, including fences and other forms of screening;*
13. *stormwater management;*
14. *grading and erosion control;*
15. *the emission of noise, odour, light, liquids, gases, and dust;*
16. *the type of materials stored and/or sold on site;*
17. *hours of operation;*
18. *the phasing of development;*
19. *financial bonding for the construction and maintenance of components of the development, including, but not limited to, roads and landscaping;*
20. *mitigation measures for construction impacts;*
21. *time limits for the initiation and/or completion of development; and*
22. *all other matters enabled in Section 227 of the Municipal Government Act.*

4.3 Land Use By-Law and Subdivision By-law

The Land Use By-Law is the instrument by which many of the policies in this Municipal Planning Strategy dealing with land use control and development are implemented. The Land Use By-Law establishes certain land use zones, identifies their location on a Zoning Map, and indicates the uses permitted and the development standards required.

The Subdivision By-law is another tool used by Council to implement this Plan. It sets out the requirements and processes for such things as subdividing land and creating streets. Currently, the Municipality uses the Provincial Subdivision Regulations as its Subdivision By-law; however, Council may wish to adopt a stand-alone Subdivision By-law in the future.

POLICY 4–8 LUB adoption

Council shall adopt a comprehensive Land Use By-Law setting out specific regulations to implement this Municipal Planning Strategy

POLICY 4–9 Appointment of a Development Officer

Council shall appoint a Municipal Development Officer to administer the Land Use By-Law and Subdivision By-law and grant development permits in accordance with the Land Use By-Law.

POLICY 4–10 Subdivision By-law

Council may consider adopting a stand-alone municipal Subdivision By-law to implement requirements for subdivision that are not found within the Provincial Subdivision Regulations

4.1.1 LUB AMENDMENTS

Land Use By-Laws are regularly amended to accommodate growth, a change in land use, or to accommodate new technologies which impact land uses. The Land Use By-Law can be amended by either changing the zoning map ("rezoning"), or by amending the text in the By-Law. Either amendment must conform to the intent of the policy directions of this Municipal Planning Strategy. Land Use By-Law amendments can be initiated by:

- A request by an property owner to have the By-Law amended (i.e. a map amendment or text amendment) for their particular property;
- A motion by a member of Council to amend the By-Law; or
- A change in the Municipal Planning Strategy.

Amendments to the Land Use By-Law must follow the procedures outlined in the *Municipal Government Act.*

4.1.2 VARIANCES

Section 235 of the *Municipal Government Act* gives the Development Officer the power to grant "variances" from the requirements of the Land Use By-Law. The Act sets out the circumstances when such variances may be granted, the Land Use By-Law provisions for which variances may be granted, and the process for granting such variances.

POLICY 4–11 Variances

Council shall, in accordance with Section 235 of the Municipal Government Act, permit the Development Officer to vary:

1. *the percentage of land that may be built upon;*
2. *the size or other requirements relating to setbacks;*
3. *lot frontage;*
4. *lot area;*
5. *location and number of parking spaces and loading spaces required;*
6. *ground area of a structure;*
7. *height of a structure;*
8. *floor area occupied by a home-based business; and/or*
9. *height and area of a sign.*

4.4 Planning Approvals Process

Amending the Land Use By-Law or entering into a development agreement can be appealed to the Utility and Review Board, so such approvals require a clear, thoughtful, defensible process.

POLICY 4–12 LUB amendment and development agreement process

In considering amendments to the Land Use By-Law and processing development agreements, Council shall:

1. *request a policy report and recommendation from the Planning Department or Development Officer;*
2. *refer the matter, where applicable, to the appropriate Municipal, Provincial, and/or Federal Departments and Boards and agencies where special expert advice and/or recommendations are required;*
3. *comply with all legal requirements concerning amendments to the Land Use By-Law as set out in the Municipal Government Act;*
4. *ensure the applicable public participation policies have been satisfied; and*
5. *ensure the applicable fees have been paid by the applicant to cover the cost(s) for advertising with respect to public notice as provided for in the Municipal Government Act.*

POLICY 4–13 LUB amendment and development agreement considerations

In considering amendments to the Land Use By-Law or when considering entering to a development agreement, Council shall have regard for the following matters:

1. *That the proposal is in conformity with the intent of this strategy and with the requirements of all other municipal By-Laws and regulations;*
2. *That the proposal is not premature or inappropriate by reason of:*
   - **(a)** *the ability of the Municipality to absorb public costs related to the proposal;*
   - **(b)** *impacts on existing drinking water supplies, both private and public;*
   - **(c)** *the adequacy of central water and sewage services or, where such services are not available, the suitability of the site to accommodate on-site water and sewage services;*
   - **(d)** *the creation of excessive traffic hazards or congestion on road, cycling, and pedestrian networks within, adjacent to, or leading to the proposal;*
   - **(e)** *the adequacy of fire protection services and equipment;*
   - **(f)** *the adequacy and proximity of schools and other community facilities;*
   - **(g)** *the creation of a new, or worsening of a known, pollution problem in the area, including, but not limited to, soil erosion and siltation of watercourses;*
   - **(h)** *site-specific climate change risks;*
   - **(i)** *the potential to create flooding or serious drainage issues, including within the proposal site and in nearby areas;*
   - **(j)** *impacts on known habitat for species at risk;*
   - **(k)** *the suitability of the site in terms of grades, soil and geological conditions, the location of watercourses and wetlands, and proximity to utility rights-of-way; and*
   - **(l)** *any other matter pursuant to the Municipal government Act that may be addressed in a Land Use By-Law which Council feels is necessary to ensure the general compatibility of the use and structures with adjacent areas.*

4.5 Community Engagement

The success of all municipal planning efforts hinges on feedback and active engagement from the community. Stakeholders are integral to establishing long-term planning objectives as well as short-term policy and By-Law changes, and St. Mary's is fortunate to have citizens that care deeply about ensuring the Municipality thrives in the coming years.

Feedback throughout the development of this MPS indicated that the Municipality could improve its engagement strategy and work harder to involve residents and stakeholders in planning efforts. Council will adopt policies, such as the current Public Participation Program Policy, that provide procedures to allow public consultation and notice when reviewing the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law. This policy is available digitally on the municipal website.

Council will continue to adopt these policies through the strategic areas that support positive change and increase community involvement in decision-making processes in the municipal government.

POLICY 4–14 Community engagement

Council shall, through steps outlined in the municipal Public Participation Program and Engagement Policy, continue to encourage public participation and community engagement when amending planning documents.

4.6 Final Thoughts

The Municipality recognizes that the preceding community priorities represent complex challenges and unique opportunities for the community in the coming years. The implementation of the strategies and policies will require a concerted effort on the part of the Municipality, business leaders and residents alike. Key partnerships with other governments, neighbouring municipalities and community groups will greatly aid efforts to realize the community vision. Council will continue to involve abutting municipalities whenever necessary to ensure planning efforts are beneficial for our region as a whole.

Council recognizes that change is an evolving process, and many of the strategies and associated policies will require substantial reorganization of current land use planning practices. Some of the policies will impact residents' current use of land, and the Municipality is committed to providing guidance to landowners and developers to help ensure adherence to the new regulations as outlined in the By-Law.

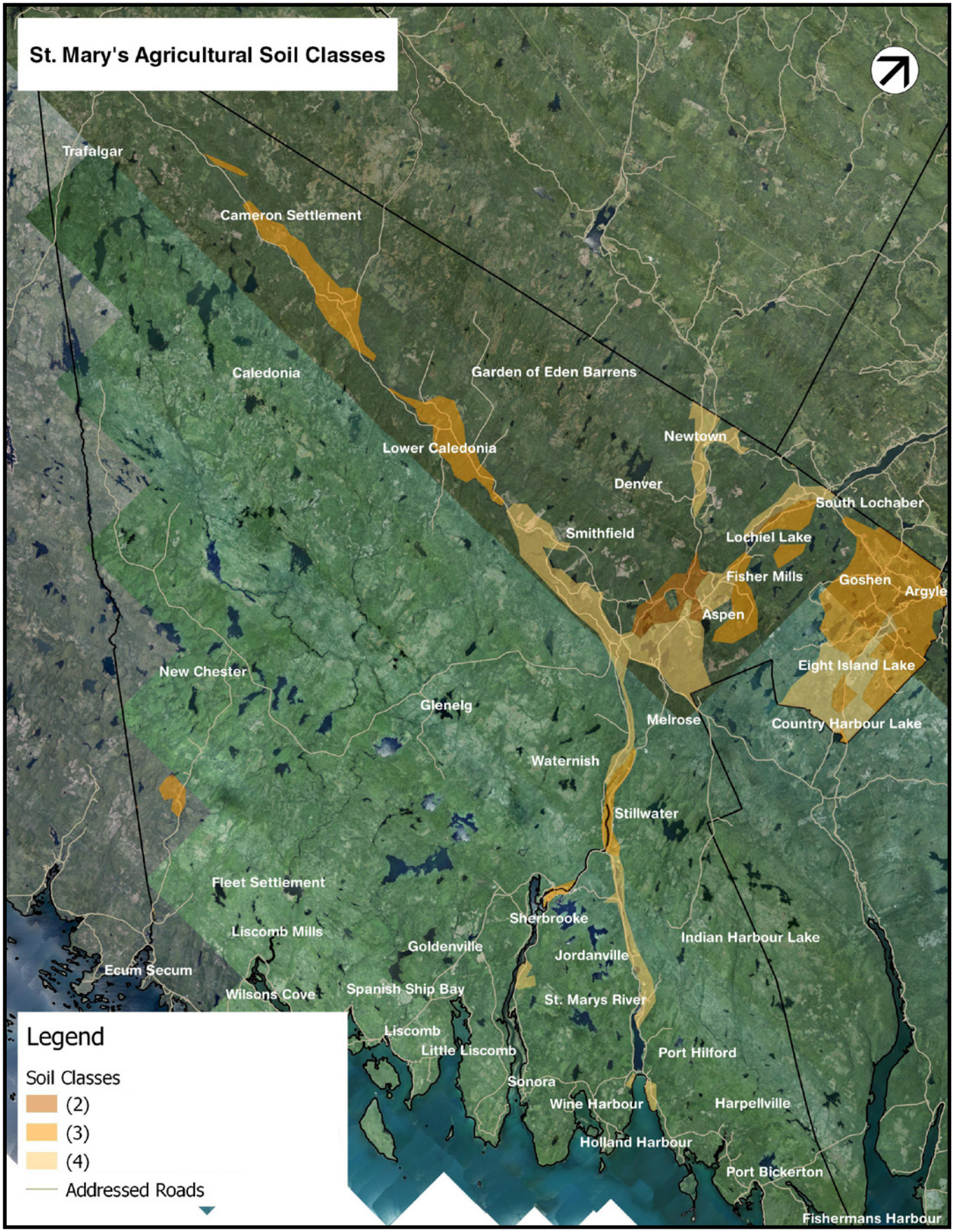
The Municipality views this Municipal Planning Strategy as a continuation of efforts already underway to improve the quality of life of the community in St. Mary's and ensure a bright future for residents.



APPENDIX A - FUTURE LAND USE MAP



APPENDIX B - AGRICULTURAL SOILS MAP


St. Mary's Agricultural Soil Classes
Trafalgar
Cameron Settlement
Caledonia
Garden of Eden Barrens
Lower Caledonia
Newtown
Denver
South Lochaber
Smithfield
Lochiel Lake
Fisher Mills
Goshen
Argyle
Aspen
Eight Island Lake
New Chester
Glenelg
Melrose
Country Harbour Lake
Waternish
Stillwater
Fleet Settlement
Sherbrooke
Liscomb Mills
Indian Harbour Lake
Goldenville
Jordanville
Ecum Secum
Wilsons Cove
Spanish Ship Bay
St. Marys River
Liscomb
Little Liscomb
Port Hilford
Sonora
Wine Harbour
Harpellville
Holland Harbour
Port Bickerton
Fishermans Harbour
Legend
Soil Classes
(2)
(3)
(4)
Addressed Roads

Municipality of the District of St. Mary's