



PLAN
ANTIGONISH
COUNTY

Municipality of the County of Antigonish

Draft Municipal Planning Strategy

October 31, 2023

Table of Contents

1	Introduction and Context	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Community Context	2
1.3	Statements of Provincial Interest	5
1.4	How to Use this Municipal Planning Strategy	8
2	Plan Process	9
2.1	Plan Inception and Plan Development	9
2.2	Public Engagement	10
2.3	Key Issues	12
3	Land Use Designations and Zones	14
3.1	Community Structure	14
3.2	Rural Designation	15
3.3	Hamlet Designation	24
3.4	Serviced Centre Designation	27
3.5	Conservation Designation	38
3.6	Source Water Protection Designation	39
3.7	General Zones	41
4	Topic-specific Policies	47
4.1	General Development Policies	47
4.2	Transportation	53
4.3	Servicing	57
4.4	Environmental Management	60
4.5	Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities	62
4.6	Energy	65
5	Secondary Plans	70
5.1	Introduction	70
6	Implementation	73
6.1	Administration	73
6.2	Land Use By-law and Subdivision By-law	78
6.3	Site Plan Approval and Development Agreements	82

6.4	General Criteria	85
6.5	Monitoring, Reviewing, and Updating this Plan	88
6.6	Public Participation	88
7	Schedules	89
	Schedule 'A' – Future Land Use Map	89

1 Introduction and Context

1.1 Introduction

Land use planning is a collaborative process used by the Municipality of the County of Antigonish to help residents, business owners, and civic leaders establish and implement a vision for their individual communities and to build a shared future for the whole municipality. Planning provides a framework to guide how land is used, how and where growth and development happens, and how and where buildings are built. It fundamentally impacts how residents and other stakeholders experience their communities and helps build the community and future they want.

Land use planning, as one of the primary ways to shape the future of our communities, is also critical in guiding how investments are made in infrastructure; helping communities prepare for economic, environmental, and demographic changes; enabling and promoting development that is in keeping with the municipality's culture and character; protecting naturally sensitive and significant environments; and preventing development in areas that may pose hazards to human.

Land use planning is required under the *Municipal Government Act* (the "Act"), but more importantly it represents an important tool for the Municipality and its communities to ensure our future is built through a common vision. Up until 2018, land use planning was a voluntary process in Nova Scotia—municipalities had the discretion to implement land use planning across their jurisdiction. However, changes to the *Municipal Government Act* in 2018 made it mandatory.

Land use planning is accomplished and implemented through this Municipal Planning Strategy, sometimes referred to as the "MPS" or "Plan", as well as a series of "secondary plans" that apply to specific areas of the municipality. This MPS document develops a long-term vision and plan for how land is going to be used in the municipality and includes policies or statements that reflect Council's intention for land use. This Municipal Planning Strategy is primarily implemented through the Land Use By-law, which establishes specific standards and rules for development. Together, this Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law, along with the Subdivision By-law which contains rules for subdivision, are the primary documents governing land use and development in the Municipality of the County of Antigonish.

1.2 Community Context

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish (“the Municipality” or “Antigonish County”) is located in northwest of mainland Nova Scotia, and has a land area of approximately 1,457 square kilometers. The municipality fully surrounds the Town of Antigonish and shares a boundary with the Municipality of the District of Guysborough, the Municipality of the District of St. Mary’s, and the Municipality of the County of Pictou. The Paqtnkek Mi’kmaw Nation is also surrounded by the municipality, and it functions and governs itself as an independent community.

The Paqtnkek Mi’kmaw Nation is located approximately 25 kilometres east of the Town of Antigonish along Highway 104. The First Nation was established in 1820,¹ but the Paqtnkek Mi’kmaw Nation is part of the Mi’kmaw nation which has occupied an area including the Atlantic Provinces and the Gaspé Peninsula—an area known to the Mi’kmaw as *Mi’kma’ki* –for the last 10,500 years.² Today, Paqtnkek First Nation is home to over 375 people living on the reserve, with approximately another 225 community members living off reserve.³

The First Nation has actively pursued economic development, with particular focus on the Paqtnkek Fisheries Enterprise and further development enabled by the highway interchange along Highway 104. The Paqtnkek Fisheries Enterprise is a key employer in the community; it employs 20 community members who fish for various species using five community-owned fishing vessels.⁴ In 2020, the First Nation also joined Membertou, Miawpukek, Pictou Landing, Potlotek, Sipekne’katik, and We’koqma’q First Nations to form the Mi’kmaq Coalition which took a 50% ownership stake in Clearwater Seafoods.

The first Europeans to explore the area were the French who visited what is now Antigonish County in the mid-17th Century. The original French speaking Acadian settlers of Pomquet (many of whose descendants still live in the area) were thought to have been fleeing from the Acadian deportation of the mid-18th Century. The Acadian influence can be seen in the land patterns in Pomquet and other French settlements. The long narrow lots are typical of Acadian settled areas. Conversely, the Scottish and English settlers created larger square lots.

¹ <https://paqtnkek.ca/about-paqtnkek/community-profile/>

² <https://www.cbu.ca/indigenous-affairs/mikmaq-resource-centre/mikmaq-resource-guide/historical-overview/>

³ <https://paqtnkek.ca/about-paqtnkek/community-profile/>

⁴ <https://paqtnkek.ca/commercial/paqtnkek-fisheries-enterprise/>

Starting in the early 19th Century, large numbers of Scottish settlers moved into the area and established several communities, including St. Andrew's (named for the patron saint of Scotland), Heatherton (named for a ship owned by a prominent local merchant) and Lower South River (named for the South River). Settlers were drawn to the region by the impressive natural harbour, excellent timber, and prime agricultural land.

Antigonish County has a varied landscape that has shaped the community's history, culture, and economy. The municipality shares a significant border with the Northumberland Strait and St George's Bay, providing direct access to the rich waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Many of the coastal areas on the eastern extent of the municipality are sheltered by the many protected inlets and bays. Inland from the coast, the elevation gradually increases and the landscape transitions to gently rolling hills, though steep slopes are found in areas in ravines that provide conduits for the many rivers in Antigonish County.

The most fertile soils in the municipality are found in the areas around the Town of Antigonish and in central Antigonish, which are where the bulk of the agricultural activity in Antigonish County takes place. There are also significant agricultural holdings along the Northumberland Strait shore.

There are large areas of undisturbed forested land in the municipality squeezed between the major transportation routes. Most of the developed areas of the municipality are within the areas surrounding the Town of Antigonish or along major roadways, a pattern that has implications for the overall density of the population.

With a recorded population of 15,101 (2021), the Municipality of the County of Antigonish has a low population density, with approximately 10 people per square kilometre. Since 1996, the municipality's total population has remained relatively stable, with moderate fluctuations in growth and decline recorded in alternating census periods. In the last two census period, (2011-2016 and 2016-2021), the population declined from 2011 to 2016 but grew 3.5% between 2016 and 2021. Additionally, the distribution of population within the municipality has fluctuated – between 2016 and 2021, the population of Census Subdivision A (covering the western side of the municipality) grew by approximately 700 residents while Subdivision B (the eastern side) shrunk by about 170 residents.

Like most municipalities across Nova Scotia, the municipality has an aging population. Between 2006 and 2021, the median age of the municipality increased from 40.1 years to 47.5 years. From 2016 to 2021, the municipality experienced significant growth in residents aged 65 and over (+28.9%) while at the same time experiencing a decrease in the number of 0- to 19-year-olds (-3.4%) and 20 to 64-year-olds (-2.3%).

Beyond the immediate areas adjacent to the Town of Antigonish, municipal servicing is limited in Antigonish County. Municipal water service is available immediately outside of the Town of Antigonish and in the Lower South River, St. Andrews, and Saint Josephs area. Sewer is available surrounding the Town, in Lower South River, and in Pomquet. The remainder of the properties in the municipality typically rely on onsite wells, cisterns, and septic fields for drinking water and sewage disposal.

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish is bisected by Nova Scotia's 100-series highway system. Highway 104, also known as the Miners Memorial Highway, runs through the municipality, connecting the western and eastern extents of the municipality to one another. Highway 104 connects to a variety of secondary highways, including Highway 4, Highway 16, and Highway 7. Highway 4 runs parallel to Highway 104 and Highway 16 and 7 run north-south between Antigonish County and Guysborough County. The remainder of the municipality is connected through the 200- and 300- series roadways and local roads that weave throughout Antigonish County.

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish was incorporated as a municipality in 1879, and the Municipality is governed by the Municipal Council. The municipality is divided up into ten electoral districts, each of which elects a member of the Council. The ten elected members then select who will be the Warden.

1.3 Statements of Provincial Interest

The Province of Nova Scotia has established five Statements of Provincial Interest, which are intended to support sustainable development across the province. While land use planning is an activity that is largely undertaken by municipalities, the Province, through legislation, can help to ensure municipalities operate under the same planning framework and to protect interests and values held across the province. The Statements of Provincial Interest are one way of doing so and deal with five topics that are relevant to the Municipality of the County of Antigonish:

- Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Drinking Water
- Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Flood Risk Areas
- Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Agricultural Land
- Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Infrastructure
- Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Housing

Each Statement of Provincial Interest includes a set of provisions that must be identified in land use planning documents. This Municipal Planning Strategy and accompanying Land Use By-law address the Statements of Provincial Interest as outlined below.

1.3.1 Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Drinking Water

Clean drinking water is essential for life in the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, and this is reflected in the Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Drinking Water. In the municipality there are several public drinking water systems. Not only is the infrastructure vital in supplying drinking water to communities, but the sources of water themselves are critical to the long-term sustainability of the municipality. Municipal drinking water systems serve the communities of Lower South River, St. Andrews, and St. Josephs, as well as the areas immediately outside the Town of Antigonish. This Municipal Planning Strategy has identified and protected these sources of drinking water by establishing the Source Water Protection Zone. This zone is explicitly meant for the protection of drinking water sources and limits permitted uses to ensure development of land does not impact these as future sources of drinking water.

Applicable Policies: Policy 3-68 to Policy 3-72

1.3.2 Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Flood Risk Areas

The Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Flood Risk Areas applies to areas designated under the Canada-Nova Scotia Flood Damage Program, as well as areas that are “locally-known” floodplains. Under this program, the West and Rights Rivers and Brierly Brook have been identified as a Flood Risk Area. While the bulk of these areas are within the Town of Antigonish, a small portion extends into the County and is addressed by the West River Antigonish Harbour Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy. Outside of this area, Council has established measures to reduce the risk of damage from inland flooding by implementing minimum setbacks from watercourses for many forms of development.

Applicable Policies: Policy 4-30; West River Antigonish Harbour Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy Policies L-5.1 to L-5.5

1.3.3 Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Agricultural Land

The Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Agricultural Land specifically aims to protect land with soils classified as Class 2, Class 3, or Active Class 4 under the Canada Land Inventory. This Plan widely enables agricultural uses in the rural areas, and establishes the Agricultural Potential Zone, which identifies lands with good soils and places some limitations on the types of land uses that are permitted in order to avoid land use conflicts that could inhibit agricultural activities.

Applicable Policies: Policy 3-15 to Policy 3-19

1.3.4 Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Infrastructure

The Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Infrastructure looks to ensure infrastructure is used efficiently and effectively and that when expanded it does not place an undue burden on the municipality, its residents, or its businesses. With both municipal drinking water and sewer systems, this Municipal Planning Strategy is structured to promote growth in areas of the municipality that are already serviced. The structure used in this plan also establishes guidance to limit where services can be expanded to prevent unsustainable development of municipal services.

Applicable Policies: Policy 4-16; Policy 4-25 and 4-26

1.3.5 Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Housing

Housing is a basic need for every person in the municipality, and land use planning is an important tool in establishing appropriate areas to adequately supply diverse housing options. The Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Housing aims to ensure that a wide variety of housing forms, tenures, and options are available for current and future of the municipality. This Municipal Planning Strategy provides a land use framework that encourages and enables a variety of housing options in different communities across the municipality, including enabling different densities of housing, supportive housing, and manufactured housing.

Applicable Policies: Policy 4-10; Policy 4-15

1.4 How to Use this Municipal Planning Strategy

This Municipal Planning Strategy (“Plan”) establishes a set of policies that will guide and direct growth in the Municipality of the County of Antigonish over this planning period. These policies are accompanied by and implemented through the Land Use By-law, a document that contains the standards and regulations for development.

1.4.1 Interpretation

In this Plan:

- “may” is permissive and typically indicates a future action for which the Municipality has policy support to undertake, but is not obliged to undertake; and
- “shall” is imperative and indicates a duty to act, which is typically implemented through the Land Use By-law.

Diagrams, sketches, or photos in this Plan are provided for illustrative purposes only. Schedules form part of this Plan.

Nothing in this Plan shall affect the continuance of land uses that are lawfully in existence as of the date of this Plan coming into effect.

1.4.2 Secondary Plan Areas

This Municipal Planning Strategy is the overarching planning document for the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. However, the bulk of the municipality’s landmass is currently planned through detailed “Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies” – standalone documents that include a full suite of policies and supporting contextual information for those areas. Over time, as these Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies come up for renewal they may be rolled into this Municipal Planning Strategy.

The result of this structure is that this Municipal Planning Strategy provides overall context for the entire municipality, while also serving as the primary planning document for western areas of the municipality. At this time, the detailed policies of this plan will apply to those previously-unplanned areas within the western areas of the municipality, while policies specific to other areas are found within the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies. Therefore, the contents of this Municipal Planning Strategy are not always comprehensive in the sense of providing detailed information about all areas of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. Chapter 5 deals with secondary planning in more detail.

2 Plan Process

2.1 Plan Inception and Plan Development

The creation of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish’s Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law, a project called “Plan Antigonish County”, was initiated by the Municipality in September of 2021. Plan Antigonish County was part of a larger project called “Plan Eastern Nova,” a joint effort between the municipalities of Antigonish, Inverness, Richmond, and Victoria to collaboratively establish municipal planning strategies and land use by-laws for each respective municipality. Plan Antigonish County originated from legislative changes by the Province of Nova Scotia that required all land in the province to be the subject of land use controls.

In 2018, the Province of Nova Scotia passed legislation through Bill 58 that required every municipality (and all land within the municipality) to be subject to a municipal planning strategy and land use by-law. Bill 58 also established a set of ‘minimum planning standards’ that each municipality had to meet. Prior to the adoption of this Municipal Planning Strategy and the accompanying Land Use By-law, the only municipality-wide planning rules in the Municipality of the County of Antigonish related to wind turbine development. Beyond this, some parts of the municipality were subject to detailed municipal planning, through “secondary plans”. This included West River Antigonish Harbour, Central Antigonish, Eastern Antigonish, and Keppoch-Beaver Mountain. This Municipal Planning Strategy replaces the Municipal Planning Strategy for the County of Antigonish Concerning Wind Turbine Development as the overarching planning document for the municipality, while the secondary plans remain. These ‘secondary plans’ are described in more detail in Chapter 5 of this Plan.

The Municipality’s Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law were created through a multi-step process that involved significant background research, public consultation, and policy and regulatory development. The background research involved conducting demographic, socio-economic, and spatial analysis to understand how the municipality has changed and the current state of land use.

2.2 Public Engagement

2.2.1 Initial Engagement

The initial public engagement for Plan Antigonish County took place between November of 2021 and February of 2022. Taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic, engagement included both online and in-person consultations.

The project officially launched with a press release from the Municipality and was followed by a series of in-person open houses. An online open house was also held for residents from all four Plan Eastern Nova municipalities. In total there were four open houses held in the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, in the following locations:

- Arisaig
- Cape George
- Lochaber
- Saint Josephs

The open houses coincided with the launch of an online survey and an online interactive map for residents and community members. The survey sought responses from residents and community members regarding planning specific issues as well as community ambitions. Conversely, the online interactive map allowed residents to provide location-specific comments on land use in the municipality.

Local and regional stakeholders also had the opportunity to provide their feedback on how land should be used and managed in the municipality through a series of online interviews and group discussions.

While the open house allowed residents and community members to get a better understanding of the project and how planning is conducted, there was a desire from the community to work collaboratively to create a vision for the municipality. A visioning workbook was developed which was designed to help individuals, families, friends, and organizations to share their vision for the future of their community.

The results from the initial phase of engagement were summarized into a brief engagement summary document. The summary included a qualitative analysis of the responses received from community members and stakeholders during the initial round of engagement.

Taken together, the information gathered during the initial phase of engagement was foundational to the development of policies and regulations contained within this Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use By-law.

2.2.2 Draft Plan Engagement

Engagement on the first draft planning documents (draft Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law) was completed during June and July of 2022. Engagement included in-person and online consultation to collect feedback from a wide spectrum of residents and stakeholders in Antigonish.

Following their completion, the draft planning documents were emailed directly to subscribers of the project's email list, and they were also posted onto the project's website. A series of four open houses were held in the municipality between June 20 and June 23. The open houses were held in the following locations:

- Arisaig
- Cape George
- Lochaber
- Saint Josephs

At the open houses, the draft planning documents were presented to the public, including the key directions for the draft policy and regulations. Like the initial phase of engagement, an online public meeting was also held where the draft planning documents were presented to members of the public. This meeting was recorded, and the recording was posted on the project's website for members of the public to view.

In addition to the open houses and online public meeting, the draft zoning was placed onto the project's interactive map so members of the public could make comments on the proposed zoning. Finally, an online feedback submission form was created to get specific comments from community members on the draft planning documents. Both the online interactive map and submission forms were available on the project's website.

Following the closure of the engagement period on the draft planning documents, the project team collected and analyzed all the feedback that was received, including direct feedback via telephone and email. The feedback from the community included diverging opinions on some of the key directions of the planning documents. This feedback was taken to the Municipality's Planning Advisory Committee, which provided direction to the planning team on how to proceed with updating the planning documents. The draft planning documents were updated based on the feedback of the Planning Advisory Committee.

[description of second draft engagement once completed]

2.3 Key Issues

Throughout the initial phase of engagement, community members and stakeholders shared their ideas, opinions, and insights regarding the growth and development of the municipality. During the initial phase, several key issues emerged based on the feedback of stakeholders.

2.3.1 The Environment

Across the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, the environment and natural landscape plays an important role in the day-to-day lives and cultural identity of the community. Coastal areas and beaches that provide access to the Atlantic coast are juxtaposed with inland streams, rivers, lakes, and forests. Respondents expressed their desire to see public access to trails and beaches preserved and enhanced, especially in relation to development. Climate change was also top of mind in Antigonish County; adapting to the impacts of climate change and ensuring measures for coastal erosion are in place were expressed during the engagement.

2.3.2 Housing

Access to affordable, adequate, and safe housing is a fundamental need for every person in Antigonish County; however, housing was a common topic of discussion during the initial phase of engagement. Respondents felt that there was a lack of rental options, entry-level homes for young families, and supportive housing for seniors to age in place. Other concerns around housing included:

- The impact of housing development around lakeshores and coastal areas, and
- The effect of housing availability on attracting and retaining young families in the community.

2.3.3 Services, Amenities, and Infrastructure

In the more rural areas of the municipality, there was concern regarding access to services, amenities, and infrastructure that is available elsewhere in Antigonish County. Generally, respondents felt there was a lack of infrastructure in the municipality to support growth and development. Respondents also felt that adequate services and infrastructure such as public transportation, active transportation, healthcare, and high-speed internet and cellular services were important but missing in the municipality.

2.3.4 Economic Development and Demographic Challenges

Throughout the engagement, respondents mentioned the limited number of employment opportunities and lack of businesses and services in Antigonish County as major challenges of life in the municipality. However, respondents also noted there are opportunities for tourism development, especially along the Sunrise Trail (Highway 245 and 337), though they also expressed a desire to see infrastructure development and controls placed on development to ensure it does not negatively impact the natural environment.

2.3.5 Implications of New Planning Rules

Across engagement methods, most respondents were in support of developing planning documents for the unplanned parts of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish; however, they were clear that planning regulations needed to be appropriate for the rural nature of these communities. There was a strong desire to see the community character remain intact, and to avoid overly restrictive regulations whenever possible.

3 Land Use Designations and Zones

3.1 Community Structure

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish has a diverse landscape, with each community holding its own unique identity, scale, and character. However, there are also some similarities to be found across communities, and from a land use and development perspective each area within the municipality can be broadly characterized into one of three categories: rural areas, hamlets, and serviced areas.

3.1.1 Rural Areas

The vast majority of the land area within the municipality is rural in nature. These areas are characterized by natural areas, resource-based development, and larger recreational areas. Many of the municipality's residents call the rural areas home, although residential densities tend to be lower than can be found in the hamlets or serviced areas. Most infrastructure in these areas is either privately or provincially owned and managed.

3.1.2 Hamlets

Within the municipality's large land area are a number of communities that do not have sewer servicing but serve as local hubs for the surrounding area. They may have a concentration of commercial services, a community hall, or more diversity in housing options than the surrounding area.

Many of these hamlet communities are already planned through the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies. Hamlet communities within the area of the municipality for which detailed planning is conducted through this primary Municipal Planning Strategy include:

- Saint Josephs

3.1.3 Serviced Centres

Serviced areas encompass the communities with central sewer, as well as adjacent areas where these services could be efficiently and sustainably expanded. The presence of this central services supports smaller lot sizes and higher densities of development. These communities are also typically characterized by a wider range of residential options and commercial services, and may host other types of municipal infrastructure, such as sidewalks.

Serviced centre communities within the area of the municipality for which detailed planning is conducted through this primary Municipal Planning Strategy include:

- None at the current time

3.2 Rural Designation

3.2.1 The Rural Designation and Permitted Zones

The varying, unique landscape of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish has been vital in shaping the history, culture, and economy of the community. Large agricultural and pastoral holdings, forests, marshes, beaches, and inland watercourses and waterbodies dominate the landscape.

These lands are often associated with the resource-based industries; forestry, fishing, and agriculture make up a significant portion of the municipality's economy, while low density residential development, varying commercial and industrial uses, marine-based development, and recreational properties are also present in these areas of the municipality. These land uses are often characterized by development on large, unserviced lots.

Traditionally, these land uses have been able to exist without significant land use controls. Their location—away from significant population centres—and the oversight from other levels of government has meant the Municipality has not been compelled to provide a rigorous level of land use control for resource-based uses. While the adoption of this Municipal Planning Strategy will result in land use controls placed on the rural areas of the municipality, it is Council's intention to limit the scope of land use regulations to ensure rural and resource-based land uses can continue with relative ease, while establishing a framework to reduce the potential for land use conflicts.

The Rural Designation is meant to guide land use planning and development decisions with respect to the rural lands in the municipality.

Policy 3-1: Council shall establish, on Schedule 'A', the Future Land Use Map, the Rural Designation.

Policy 3-2: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the following Rural Zones in the Rural Designation:

- (a) Rural General Zone
- (b) Rural Commercial Zone
- (c) Rural Industrial Zone
- (d) Agricultural Potential Zone
- (e) Lakeshore Zone

Policy 3-3: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the Conservation Zone, established in Section 3.5 of this Plan, within the Rural Designation.

Policy 3-4: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the following General Zones, established in Section 3.7 of this Plan, within the Rural Designation:

- (f) Parks and Open Space Zone
- (g) Institutional Zone
- (h) Commercial Recreation Zone
- (i) Fishing Zone
- (j) Highway Commercial Zone

Policy 3-5: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the Source Water Protection Zone, established in Section 3.6 of this Plan, within the Rural Designation.

3.2.2 Rural General Zone

The bulk of the municipality's landscape features low-density development, remains undeveloped, or is used for traditional resource-based activities such as forestry, agriculture, or aggregate extraction. Where development does occur, such as residential development, it usually occurs along (or near) the major roads and highways in the municipality such as Highway 337 and Ohio East Road, or along private roads.

Resource uses occur along the major roads and highways or in the inland areas away from major transportation routes. In the case of the latter, these resource areas are accessed from a series of interconnecting 'back roads' that allow commercial trucks to move to and from the extraction sites. Because of the rural nature of the municipality, these types of uses are expected to take place here.

Commercial and industrial uses, where they occur, have typically been established to serve the resource industry, the service needs of the immediate community, or tourism. Such uses are a long-standing part in the mix of development in these areas and will continue to be so in the future. While such uses will typically be accommodated through the application of the Rural Commercial Zone (Section 3.2.3) and the Rural Industrial Zone (Section 3.2.4), the Rural General Zone will make allowances for a limited degree of commercial and industrial uses.

Council intends to permit a range of uses in the Rural General Zone, including limited commercial and industrial uses, that coincide with the mixed development pattern that has traditionally occurred.

Policy 3-6: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Rural General Zone. This land use zone is intended to support resource-based uses, including, but not limited to, forestry and agriculture, low-density residential development, community uses, and limited commercial and industrial development.

Policy 3-7: The Rural General Zone shall be applied on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law to those areas in the Rural Designation that are not otherwise in another land use zone.

3.2.3 Rural Commercial Zone

While the highest concentration of commercial activity in the municipality takes place surrounding the Town of Antigonish, in hamlets, or within the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy areas, there are instances where commercial businesses are necessary in the rural, unserved areas. With the vast number of small communities and regional attractions, commercial uses such as accommodations, automobile service stations, or restaurants are necessary outside of the “hub” communities of the municipality. There is also a need for commercial uses that directly serve the rural and resource uses on the surrounding lands. Council is supportive of the establishment of the Rural Commercial Zone to promote a range of commercial services and amenities meant for the local residents, rural and resource uses, and those that cater to the travelling public.

Policy 3-8: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Rural Commercial Zone. This land use zone is intended to support a range of commercial services that cater to the travelling public, resource industries, and local communities in the rural areas of the municipality.

Policy 3-9: The Rural Commercial Zone shall permit a range of commercial uses, as well as residential, recreational, and institutional uses incidental to the Rural Designation. Drive-through uses shall be permitted within the Rural Commercial Zone by site plan approval.

Policy 3-10: The Rural Commercial Zone shall initially be applied on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law to existing commercial businesses within the Rural Designation.

3.2.4 Rural Industrial Zone

The term “industrial” encompasses a wide variety of uses—from warehousing and wholesaling to manufacturing, assembling, fabrication, or processing uses. Because of the availability of large lots and with low population densities, rural areas are often suited for industrial uses. These areas can more easily accommodate potential nuisances such as commercial truck traffic, manufacturing noise, and large shipping and storage areas. Industrial uses in rural areas are also important components of supporting resource-based industries, by providing the necessary processing facilities for raw materials. For these reasons, Council supports the establishment of the Rural Industrial Zone to accommodate a range of industrial uses in the rural areas of the municipality including, but not limited to scrapyards, solid waste facilities, and industrial uses with large footprints.

Heavy industrial uses—those that have the potential to be hazardous, have a strong environmental impact, or are obnoxious—require additional consideration, public engagement, and design and operational controls. As a result, Council will only consider such proposals through the development agreement process.

Policy 3-11: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Rural Industrial Zone. This land use zone is intended to support a range of industrial uses and limited commercial uses.

Policy 3-12: The Rural Industrial Zone shall permit non-obnoxious and obnoxious industrial uses, resource-based uses, automotive uses, and limited commercial uses that are related to, or supportive of, industrial uses. Scrap-yard uses shall be permitted within the Rural Industrial Zone by site plan approval.

Policy 3-13: The Rural Industrial Zone shall initially be applied on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law to those existing industrial uses within the Rural Designation.

Policy 3-14: Council shall consider entering into a development agreement to enable heavy industrial uses on lots 10,000 square metres or greater within the Rural Industrial Zone, subject to the policies in Section 6.3.2.

3.2.5 Agricultural Potential Zone

Municipalities in Nova Scotia are, by way of the *Municipal Government Act*, required to identify and protect high-value agricultural soils, which is defined as Class 2, Class 3, and actively-farmed Class 4 soils as identified by the Canada Land Inventory (Nova Scotia has no Class 1 soils).

Overall, the Municipality of the County of Antigonish has a significant amount of high-quality, arable land, with over 66 square kilometres of Class 2 soils and over 650 square kilometres of Class 3 soils.

However, soils are not always a good indication of agricultural activity or potential. Poor climate or difficult terrain can make otherwise fertile soils unsuitable for farming, while some crops (such as blueberries) thrive on otherwise poor soils. Indeed, in Antigonish County large areas of “good” soils do not feature any active agriculture.

Council recognizes the importance of agriculture and the need to ensure active agricultural lands and lands with agricultural potential are protected for the long-term benefit of residents in the municipality and the province beyond. Council also recognizes that the climate and terrain within the municipality do not always align with good soils. As a result, Council will establish the Agriculture Potential Zone. The zone is intended to identify good agricultural soils, as well as established agricultural areas that are located on “medium” soils, and communicate the potential for agricultural activities in these areas. However, rather than take an overly strict approach to other types of development in these areas, Council will focus on avoiding the fragmentation of lands with agricultural potential by permitting a wide range of land uses but directing such development mostly to established roads.

Policy 3-15: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Agriculture Potential Zone. This land use zone is intended to identify good agricultural soils and to communicate the potential for higher concentrations of agricultural development in these areas.

Policy 3-16: The Agriculture Potential Zone shall permit agricultural and forestry uses; a limited range of residential, recreational, and community uses; and commercial uses that provide agricultural-adjacent experiences, such as craft beverage producers and farmers’ markets.

Policy 3-17: The Agriculture Potential Zone shall be applied on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law to properties containing soils categorized as Class 2, Class 3, and actively farmed Class 4 soils as identified in the Canada Land Inventory, except where other zones would take priority per their application policy, such as serviced areas or source water protection areas.

Policy 3-18: When a policy of this Municipal Planning Strategy is used to change a property from the Agricultural Potential Zone by amendment to the Zoning Map of the Land Use By-law, or to advance development within the Agricultural Potential Zone by development agreement, Council shall be satisfied that the proposal:

- (a) by its nature or the regulatory limitations placed upon it minimizes the risk of land use conflicts that could impact the operation of existing agricultural operations;
- (b) is limited to the land area necessary to accommodate the proposed development;
- (c) prioritizes locating of development in a manner that minimizes, to the extent possible, the fragmentation of agricultural soils; and
- (d) if carried out by development agreement:
 - i. clusters buildings, lawns, on-site services, and accessory structures to provide a buffer to any adjacent agricultural or resource uses; and
 - ii. includes provisions to reduce the risk of land use conflict between agricultural operations and potential residential uses.

Policy 3-19: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, prohibit development, with the exception of agricultural or forestry development, where more than six lots created after the adoption of this plan front onto a private road in the Agricultural Potential Zone.

3.2.6 Lakeshore Zone

Lakes are a prominent feature of the landscape in the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, particularly in the south-west area of the municipality. Major lakes within the area planned by this primary Municipal Planning Strategy include Lochaber Lake and Gaspereaux Lake, as well as a number of smaller lakes such as Saint Josephs Lake, Cameron Lake, and Gillis Lake.

The municipality's lakes are important natural habitat, and are also popular destinations for recreational development for seasonal properties and accommodations. To accommodate recreational development and associated septic systems, large areas of land must be cleared and graded, which can increase runoff and present a risk to the plants and animal species that rely on lakes for their habitat.

While Council generally supports development in the rural, lakeside areas of the municipality, it also believes the Municipality has a responsibility to ensure development in these areas is conducted in a manner that helps to ensure they can be enjoyed for generations to come. For these reasons, Council will establish the Lakeshore Zone. This zone will take a thoughtful approach to development around lakes, including establishing setbacks from the lake, limiting the types of permitted development, and requiring larger minimum lot sizes, to protect these valued resources.

The Lakeshore Zone will be applied to lakes within the municipality with existing development, or those that have the potential for development, such as lakes that are close to existing roads or population centres.

Policy 3-20: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Lakeshore Zone. This land use zone is intended to enable lakeside development with thoughtful development standards intended to protect the integrity of lakeside ecosystems. Minimum lot sizes and development standards in the Lakeshore Zone shall keep development densities low to reduce the need for lot clearing.

Policy 3-21: The Lakeshore Zone shall permit limited residential and accommodation uses, including, but not limited to, single dwellings and small tourist accommodations; a limited range of commercial uses to provide services to the local community; community uses; and water-related uses, such as marinas.

Policy 3-22: The Lakeshore Zone shall initially be applied on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law to an area within 300 metres of the shoreline of lakes with existing development or those that have the potential for development. Minor rounding of zone boundaries shall be permitted to align the zone with property lines for ease of administration where such rounding does not significantly differ from the 300-metre distance.

Policy 3-23: Council shall, when considering amendments to the zoning map of the Land Use By-law to move land out of the Lakeshore Zone, evaluate potential risks to late water quality due to land clearing, effluent or other pollutant discharge, or erosion. Such evaluation may, if necessary, be supported by studies or plans, prepared by the appropriate professional at the applicant's expenses, as warranted by the nature and complexity of the proposed development.

3.3 Hamlet Designation

3.3.1 The Hamlet Designation and Permitted Zones

While much of Municipality of the County of Antigonish is rural, there are small, well-defined communities that are local centres or community hubs for the surrounding area. These “hamlets” may also be built around a specific industry, such as a fishing wharf or tourism destination. While these communities do not feature central sewer, they may feature other forms of infrastructure, such as sidewalks.

The hamlets all share the common feature of acting as hubs for the surrounding area, but they do not all align in their overall size or the intensity and character of their residential and commercial development. The individual characteristics of hamlets will, therefore, be recognized through variations in where zoning is applied.

Policy 3-24: Council shall, on Schedule ‘A’, the Future Land Use Map, designate as “Hamlet” lands that provide a higher density of development, services, and/or community facilities but are not serviced by central sewer.

Policy 3-25: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the following Hamlet Zones in the Hamlet Designation:

- (a) Hamlet Residential Zone
- (b) Hamlet Core Zone

Policy 3-26: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the Conservation Zone, established in Section 3.5 of this Plan, within the Hamlet Designation.

Policy 3-27: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the following General Zones, established in Section 3.7 of this Plan, within the Hamlet Designation:

- (a) Parks and Open Space Zone
- (b) Institutional Zone
- (c) Fishing Zone

Policy 3-28: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the Source Water Protection Zone, established in Section 3.6 of this Plan, within the Hamlet Designation.

3.3.2 Hamlet Residential Zone

A common feature among Municipality of the County of Antigonish's hamlets is a concentration of residential development. Typically, this takes the form of lower-density residential development, such as detached homes. However, hamlets are often located next to tourism destinations, popular outdoor recreation opportunities (like beaches), or commercial and resource-based industries. Saint Joseph, for example, is located between Saint Joseph Lake and Gaspereaux Lake. As a result, there is also the potential need for other approaches to housing. The Hamlet Residential Zone will recognize existing residential areas within the hamlets, as well as areas where new housing should be developed.

Policy 3-29: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Hamlet Residential Zone. This land use zone is intended to identify residentially-focused areas within the hamlets.

Policy 3-30: The Hamlet Residential Zone shall permit low- and medium-density residential uses, as well as complementary community facilities, such as schools and places of worship. Dwellings with four to six dwelling units and boarding houses with four to six sleeping units shall be permitted by Site Plan Approval.

Policy 3-31: The Hamlet Residential Zone shall be applied on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law to existing residential areas within hamlets, and areas within hamlets where residential expansion is prioritized.

3.3.3 Hamlet Core Zone

Hamlets are the service centres for surrounding areas, and as such may host a range of commercial establishments, community-based services, and activities related to tourism and resource industries. While hamlets remain rural in nature, they typically feature a well-defined core area, or could establish such a "heart" in the future. However, the size and location of this core varies from community to community, and the extent of the application of the Hamlet Core Zone reflects this.

Policy 3-32: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Hamlet Core Zone. This land use zone is intended to encourage the establishment or continuation of a community core that offers a higher concentration of services and housing options.

Policy 3-33: The Hamlet Core Zone shall permit low- and medium-density residential uses, a range of community services, smaller commercial operations appropriate to the semi-rural nature of hamlets, tourism-related businesses, and lower-impact activities related to resource industries. Kennels shall be permitted provided the proposed use can meet additional lot requirements, established in the Land Use By-law, to minimize potential land use conflicts. Residential proposals with seven or more dwelling units, drive through uses, and automobile sales shall only be permitted by site plan approval.

Policy 3-34: The Hamlet Core Zone shall be applied on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law to existing community cores within hamlets, or areas within hamlets where the establishment of a core is desired. The extent of the Hamlet Core Zone should be appropriate to the specific character of each hamlet.

Policy 3-35: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish development standards within the Hamlet Core Zone that are more flexible than surrounding rural areas in order to encourage a critical mass of services and a clearly-identifiable community core.

3.4 Serviced Centre Designation

3.4.1 The Serviced Centre Designation and Permitted Zones

The availability of municipal services in the ground is a particularly defining factor for the character of a community and appropriateness of land uses. Where water and—in particular—sewer have been historically provided by the municipality, this has typically allowed property parcels to become smaller and buildings to move closer together. This means that serviced communities have a more tightly-knit network of streets and many amenities within walking distance.

Where residential densities are higher, commercial offerings usually follow suit and provide some basic shopping amenities, services, and various facilities.

Where so many residents, jobs, and amenities are concentrated in one area, detailed planning rules are more needed than in the rural areas of the municipality. More proximity means a higher likelihood of land use conflicts between incompatible property types. There is also a higher chance that without regulations, land uses could be developed that simply do not fit the character of a community.

Serviced areas also have a particular significance to municipalities, as they accumulate the majority of public investment into infrastructure. Water treatment plants and sewage treatment plants are among the most valuable assets in municipal inventories, and the upkeep of water and sewer lines across a community is expensive in nature. Some areas of the municipality, such as areas adjacent to the Town of Antigonish, have sidewalks and piped stormwater management system (as opposed to open ditches). All of these assets require regular maintenance and drive operational cost.

Due to the amount of taxpayers' money invested in these various aspects of a serviced community, it is also in the public's best interest to ensure that development in serviced areas occurs in an orderly and efficient manner. These highly valuable lands should therefore be well utilized and contribute to communities that are attractive, livable, and that help municipal finances through a reasonable relationship between property tax revenue and municipal cost.

Serviced centres are also pivotal to solutions for housing challenges. The demographic profile of rural Nova Scotia, recent immigration trends, and the composition of current building stock in the municipality have created a substantial shortage of downsized and rental housing options. This problem was constantly echoed throughout public engagement sessions during the preparation of this Plan. Small and affordable housing solutions can only be realistically achieved by increasing residential densities, which is unlikely to be practically workable outside of serviced areas. Even though the typical building stock of residential dwellings in serviced areas is dominated by

single unit dwellings, higher-density residential dwellings should not be excluded from residential areas if sustainable solutions to the housing shortage are to be sought. However, there is a need for a trade-off between preservation of a community's existing character and introduction of more sustainable housing forms, which will be sought by various multiple-unit-related policies of this section.

As of 2023, there are no areas identified as Serviced Centres because all communities that would fit this description are subject to Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies. This section is, however, maintained here in this Municipal Planning Strategy to enable the possibility of incorporating such Secondary Plans when they come up for review.

Policy 3-36: Council shall, on Schedule 'A', the Future Land Use Map, designate as "Serviced Centre" lands that are serviced by municipal sewage collection systems.

Policy 3-37: In order to maximize the public benefit from serviced centres, Council shall promote livable communities and orderly development while minimizing potential land use conflicts through a higher degree of planning regulations in the Serviced Centre Designation.

Policy 3-38: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, promote compact settlement form and efficient utilization of land within the Serviced Centre Designation through smaller lot sizes and a focus on infill development.

Policy 3-39: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the following Service Centre Zones within the Serviced Centre Designation:

- (a) Main Street Zone
- (b) General Centre Zone
- (c) Residential Centre Zone
- (d) Light Industrial Centre Zone
- (e) Comprehensive Development District Zone

Policy 3-40: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the Conservation Zone, established within Section 3.5 of this Plan, within the Serviced Centre Designation.

Policy 3-41: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, also permit the following General Zones, established in Section 3.7 of this Plan, within the Serviced Centre Designation:

- (a) Parks and Open Space Zone
- (b) Institutional Zone

Policy 3-42: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the Source Water Protection Zone, established in Section 3.6 of this Plan, within the Serviced Centre Designation.

3.4.2 Main Street Zone

Historically, much of the community life in rural centres has revolved around main streets of settlements. These main stretches of roads have transformed over time but, nevertheless, still play a vital role in community life to this day. Main streets give communities their visual identity and invite residents to socialize with their neighbours, especially if some small parks and plazas are nearby. It is therefore important to preserve and promote environments that are pleasant and inviting for pedestrians.

In order to draw in pedestrians and convince tourists to stop in a community, commercial developments need to be designed in an inviting manner that allow for interaction between the buildings, streets, and sidewalks. Since main streets have also typically developed earlier than adjacent subdivisions, there tend to be more historic homes on these main stretches.

New commercial developments are encouraged to be developed in mixed-use fashion within this zone, with residential units being located on upper stories or in the rear of properties. Main streets are a highly suitable location for affordable residential units as they are typically the least car-dependent places in rural areas.

All of these circumstances require that main streets are treated in a distinct way and regulated through a separate zone. The zone will prioritize land uses that facilitate interaction and feature design rules which promote the traditional look and rhythm of main streets.

Policy 3-43: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Main Street Zone. This zone is intended to accommodate commercial uses primarily focused on pedestrians and to establish and promote a “main street” character.

Policy 3-44: The Main Street Zone shall permit pedestrian-oriented commercial uses, mid-density residential uses in mixed-use properties, and community-type uses. Zone standards shall be flexible to promote infill development. Residential uses consisting of 12 or more dwelling or sleeping units shall only be permitted by site plan approval.

Policy 3-45: The Main Street Zone shall include design standards that regulate the appearance of buildings and site design of properties within the zone, aiming to promote pedestrian environments as well as a traditional look and rhythm of architecture typical for rural main streets. Council may consider, by development agreement, proposals that do not meet the specific architectural provisions of the Main Street Zone in the Land Use By-law provided:

- (c) Council is satisfied the proposal is consistent with the “main street” character and a pedestrian-focused environment;
- (d) the proposal otherwise complies with the requirements of the Land Use By-law; and
- (e) the proposal complies with the general development agreement approval policies of Section 6.3.2.

Policy 3-46: Council shall not initially apply the Main Street Zone on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law. As future Serviced Centre Designations are established, Council may apply the Main Street Zone to areas within those designations that feature a tradition “main street” form of development or areas where such form of development is encouraged.

3.4.3 General Centre Zone

Communities in the Municipality of the County of Antigonish are vibrant and eclectic, and often contain areas where a variety of commercial and residential property types occur within proximity of each other. Where such a wide range of land uses currently co-exists without major conflicts, it becomes part of the community's character and should be embraced by corresponding planning rules. Such mixed areas offer opportunities for new businesses to settle and the economy to grow, while simultaneously reducing the need for driving due to the proximity of businesses and residences. Such areas are also suitable locations for development of multi-unit dwellings or grouped dwellings on individual lots.

Despite all the advantages of mixing different types of development, some land uses of higher intensity will need to be regulated to prevent overly disruptive land uses from interfering with regular functioning of these area. This refers primarily to land uses that generate significant customer traffic, such as retail stores, gas stations, or restaurants. Residential developments with more than six housing units fit into the same category. Mixed-use buildings are generally encouraged.

Commercial and larger residential development will also be guided by some basic design rules that will help with the visual appearance of such areas. Residential developments with more than 12 housing units will need to follow the development agreement procedure, mainly to ensure that they are not overstraining the municipal services in their immediate vicinity. Industrial uses do not fit the character of such areas and will not be permitted.

Policy 3-47: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the General Centre Zone. This zone is intended to accommodate a wide range of uses as they typically occur in the serviced centres of the municipality.

Policy 3-48: The General Centre Zone shall permit low- to mid-density residential uses, community uses, and commercial uses up to a reasonable threshold of intensity. Zone standards shall be flexible to promote infill development.

Policy 3-49: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit automobile-oriented commercial uses, drive-through uses, and residential developments of 7 to 12 units in the General Centre Zone by site plan approval.

Policy 3-50: Council shall consider entering into a development agreement to enable proposals for residential developments with more than 12 dwelling or sleeping units on a lot in the General Centre Zone. When considering such developments, special considerations shall be given to the following:

- (a) that parking areas are planned and landscaped in a way that they do not create adverse effects on neighbouring properties;
- (b) that stormwater runoff from impervious areas is appropriately managed and unlikely to cause disturbance on neighbouring properties; and
- (c) the proposal complies with the general development agreement approval policies of Section 6.3.2.

Policy 3-51: Council shall not initially apply the General Centre Zone on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law. As future Serviced Centre Designations are established, Council may apply the General Centre Zone to areas within those designations that are not otherwise zoned for other purposes.

3.4.4 Residential Centre Zone

Some areas within serviced centres have over time become neighbourhoods of primarily residential character. These areas maintain a relatively compact, but lower-density form of development. Where such clusters of housing have emerged, the range of permitted land uses needs to be narrowed down to prevent land use conflicts from emerging.

The Residential Centre Zone is, therefore, introduced, generally aiming to accommodate existing development forms; promote infill development; and enable and encourage the development of compact, walkable neighbourhoods on currently-undeveloped lands. Larger residential developments are needed by the housing market, but can have adverse impacts on a neighbourhood if they are poorly designed. Consequently, development with four to six units will be regulated by means of site plan approval.

Policy 3-52: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Residential Centre Zone.

Policy 3-53: The Residential Centre Zone shall permit residential development up to three units per lot and a narrow range of commercial and community uses which seamlessly fit into a residential environment. Zone standards shall be flexible to promote infill development. Residential developments with four to six units on a lot shall be permitted by site plan approval.

Policy 3-54: Council shall not initially apply the Residential Centre Zone on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law. As future Serviced Centre Designations are established, Council may apply the Residential Centre Zone to areas within those designations that are primarily residential in nature and are intended to remain that way.

3.4.5 Light Industrial Centre Zone

Serviced community centres often attract some industrial development such as light manufacturing and warehouses. These are generally welcome additions of employment and economic activity in the communities of the municipality. However, many of the resulting land uses are too disruptive to be mixed into the general community fabric and will therefore be regulated through a separate zone. To make optimal use of municipal infrastructure provided in serviced areas, the zone focuses on small to medium lots which can accommodate a large number of businesses in a relatively small area.

Policy 3-55: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Light Industrial Centre Zone. This zone is intended to accommodate light industrial development of limited intensity on small to medium lot sizes.

Policy 3-56: The Light Industrial Centre Zone shall permit light manufacturing and assembly, production facilities, service and maintenance shops, automobile sales, large retail establishments, recycling depots, storage, warehousing, and similar uses. Drive-through restaurants shall be permitted in the Light Industrial Centre Zone by site plan approval.

Policy 3-57: Within the Light Industrial Centre Zone, uses that have an increased potential of emitting noises and odours shall be restricted by special buffering requirements from non-industrial developments.

Policy 3-58: Council shall not initially apply the Light Industrial Centre Zone on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law. As future Serviced Centre Designations are established, Council may apply the Light Industrial Centre Zone to existing industrial lots.

Policy 3-59: Council shall consider proposals to amend the maps of the Land Use By-law to rezone lands in the Serviced Centre Designation to the Light Industrial Centre Zone. Council shall not approve such a rezoning unless Council is satisfied:

- (a) that the property to be rezoned is not within the Main Street Zone or Residential Centre zone at the time of the proposal;
- (b) that all standards of the Light Industrial Centre Zone are observed for the proposed development; and
- (c) that the proposal meets the general criteria for amending the Land Use By-law, set out in Section 6.2.3.

3.4.6 Comprehensive Development District Zone

In some instances, planning cannot be effectively applied on a property-by-property basis, but instead requires a holistic approach for the redevelopment of an entire section of a community. These situations typically occur when large, abandoned properties are redeveloped or when undeveloped land is being proposed for development, particularly if it involves the installation of services and new roads.

Such key sites can be pivotal to community life in serviced centres, and therefore require a close review of the site can integrate into the community in terms of land uses, transportation links, and public places.

Policy 3-60: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Comprehensive Development District Zone.

Policy 3-61: Development within the Comprehensive Development District Zone shall only be permitted by development agreement. When considering entering into a development agreement for proposals in the Comprehensive Development District Zone, Council shall ensure:

- (a) The planned district provides a mix of land uses as appropriate to the location of the site. Where appropriate, this should include a variety of residential types and densities and a mix of commercial and community uses. Uses and densities beyond what is otherwise permitted in Serviced Centres may be considered.
- (b) The adequacy of existing and proposed active and public transportation and automobile distribution networks within and adjacent to the site, including the manner in which proposed roadways within the development are linked with streets of adjacent developments to provide for a cohesive, grid-like network of local and collector streets and active transportation infrastructure.
- (c) The development does not create the potential to landlock or reduce the ability to subdivide adjacent parcels.
- (d) The development provides for efficient pedestrian movement into, out of, and within the development, especially between commercial and residential neighbourhoods.
- (e) The adequacy of surface area of park land, which is to be transferred to the municipality through the subdivision process.

- (f) Appropriate phasing of the development relative to the distribution of the specific land uses and infrastructure within all or a portion of the site.
- (g) The development agreement contains appropriate architectural controls, site controls, and stormwater controls which create relative comfort and design of streets and buildings promoting a development conducive to active transportation, human-scaled developments, visual variety, and interest for active transportation users.
- (h) The proposal complies with the general development agreement policies of Section 6.3.2.

Policy 3-62: Council may consider, for lands within the Serviced Centre Designation, requests to rezone lands to the Comprehensive Development District Zone provided Council is satisfied:

- (a) the area being considered is a minimum area of three hectares;
- (b) the proposal cannot be accommodated through the standard permitting process or by rezoning to another zone or zones permitted within the Serviced Centre Designation; and
- (c) the complexity, scale, or other characteristic of the proposal is such that Council believes the proposal would benefit from a public review process.

3.5 Conservation Designation

3.5.1 The Conservation Designation and Permitted Zones

The natural environment in the Municipality of the County of Antigonish is not only a significant part of the cultural identity in the municipality, but it plays an important role in the ecological integrity and ecosystem and natural services that make the municipality a spectacular place to live and visit. These areas include beaches, wetlands, coastal habitats, nature reserves, among many others. There are also areas of cultural significance across the municipality that the Municipality wishes to identify for conservation uses. Although, in many instances, these areas are protected by provincial or federal laws, it is important for the Municipality to communicate the significance of these features. Council will protect ecologically and culturally sensitive and significant areas through the Conservation Designation of this Municipal Planning Strategy.

Policy 3-63: Council shall establish, on Schedule 'A', the Future Land Use Map, the Conservation Designation. This designation shall be applied to areas of natural and cultural sensitivity and significance, such as large wetlands, protected beaches, and wilderness areas.

Policy 3-64: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the following zones in the Conservation Designation:

- (a) Conservation Zone

3.5.2 The Conservation Zone

The Conservation Zone is intended to carry out the purpose of the Conservation Designation. Permitted land uses and development in the Conservation Zone will be very limited to minimize potential disturbances to environmentally or culturally sensitive and significant areas.

Policy 3-65: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Conservation Zone. This land use zone is intended to protect environmentally and culturally sensitive and significant areas. Land uses permitted in the Conservation Zone shall be limited to low-impact recreational uses and uses dedicated to the scientific or cultural study of the conservation areas.

Policy 3-66: Council shall, on the zoning map of the Land Use By-law, apply the Conservation Zone to all lands within the Conservation Designation.

Policy 3-67: Council shall not permit an amendment to the maps of the Land Use By-law to rezone lands within the Conservation Zone without an amendment to this Plan.

3.6 Source Water Protection Designation

3.6.1 Source Water Protection Designation and Permitted Zones

Common to every resident and business in the municipality is the need for a source of clean drinking water. While much of the municipality derives its drinking water from on-site sources, such as wells or cisterns, there are parts of the municipality, including Saint Joseph, Lower South River, St. Andrew's, and areas around the Town of Antigonish that are serviced by the Municipality's drinking water system.

The James River watershed, which supplies water to the Town of Antigonish and surrounding areas, is partly within the area planned by this primary Municipal Planning Strategy. This watershed is designated as a Protected Water Area under provincial legislation and is also surrounded by provincially designated Wilderness Area, so development threats are low. However, Council believes it is important to clearly identify this area and provide clear guidance that development will not be permitted in this area.

Policy 3-68: Council shall establish, on Schedule 'A', the Future Land Use Map, the Source Water Protection Designation. This designation shall be applied to the source water areas for municipal drinking water supplies.

Policy 3-69: Council shall, on the maps of the Land Use By-law, permit the following zones in the Source Water Protection Designation:

- (a) Source Water Protection Zone

3.6.2 Source Water Protection Zone

In order to ensure a long-term source of clean drinking water into the future, Council will establish the Source Water Protection Zone. This zone is intended to have strict land use controls to limit most types of development and to ensure that existing sources of drinking water are preserved. Additionally, although it is outside of the scope of this Municipal Planning Strategy, the Municipality supports the creation of watershed management plans and strategies for all the Municipality's water supply areas to ensure they are protected for future generations.

Policy 3-70: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Source Water Protection Zone. This zone is intended to protect and preserve existing municipal water supplies by limiting development and land uses to those that will not jeopardize the long-term use of these areas as sources of drinking water.

Policy 3-71: Council shall, on the zoning maps of the Land Use By-law, apply the Source Water Protection Zone to all lands within the Source Water Protection Designation.

Policy 3-72: Council shall not amend the maps of the Land Use By-law to adjust the boundaries of the Source Water Protection Zone without an amendment to this Plan, except in compliance with the boundaries identified in a source water protection plan.

3.7 General Zones

The previous sections address land use “Designations”, which establish a framework for the types of land use zones that are permitted in various locations throughout the municipality. However, some land use zones, and the uses they permit, are applicable across the various types of communities in the municipality. This section of the Plan creates zones that are permitted in various Designations.

3.7.1 Fishing Zone

With its hundreds of kilometres of both coastline and many inland water bodies and watercourses, the municipality’s economy, unsurprisingly, has developed partly around the fishery and marine-related uses. There are several existing small-craft harbours that provide harbourage from many local fishers, including Arisaig, Livingstone Cove, and Ballantynes Cove. Often, these uses also include areas for manufacturing and processing related to marine uses, and may also include cultural uses (such as museums) and commercial businesses related to the fishery, such as restaurants and tourism activities. This requires a unique framework for land use planning. To ensure small craft harbours and their associated uses and other inland marine uses are protected, Council will establish the Fishing Zone.

Policy 3-73: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Fishing Zone. This land use zone is intended to support fishing and marine uses in the rural, inland and coastal areas of the municipality.

Policy 3-74: The Fishing Zone shall permit a range of marine and fishing uses, including processing and manufacturing, and commercial and institutional uses directly related to fishing uses.

Policy 3-75: Council shall, on the zoning maps of the Land Use By-law, apply the Fishing Zone to existing small craft harbours, marine-industrial uses along inland watercourse and water bodies, and to fishery-related uses in the vicinity.

Policy 3-76: Council shall consider applying the Fishing Zone to other properties by amendment to the Land Use By-law. In considering such amendments, Council shall have regard to the following:

- (a) that where agricultural soils are involved, the proposal complies with Policy 3-18; and
- (b) the proposal complies with the general policies for Land Use By-law amendments found in Section 6.2.3.

3.7.2 Parks and Open Space Zone

Parks and open space uses are often appropriate in many land use zones, and they can simply adopt the same land use zone as the surrounding lands. However, in some instances, Council may wish to formally identify lands for parks and open space uses to clearly communicate the long-term intention of those lands.

Policy 3-77: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Parks and Open Space Zone to identify and preserve land as parks and open space.

Policy 3-78: The lot standards within the Parks and Open Space Zone shall be flexible to accommodate a wide range of recreational uses.

Policy 3-79: Council shall consider applying the Parks and Open Space Zone to other properties by amendment to the Land Use By-law. In considering such amendments, Council shall have regard to the following:

- (a) that where agricultural soils are involved, the proposal complies with Policy 3-18; and
- (b) the proposal complies with the general policies for Land Use By-law amendments found in Section 6.2.3.

3.7.3 Commercial Recreation Zone

Recreational pursuits are not only important in the daily lives of residents and community members, but they are increasingly becoming an integral part of the local economy in the municipality. Places like movie theatres, bowling alleys, and bingo halls are well-loved spaces in the communities, while golf courses and outdoor adventure businesses cater to local use and use from visitors from across Nova Scotia and beyond.

Council intends to continue to enable and facilitate the growth of indoor and outdoor recreational uses across the municipality through the Commercial Recreation Zone. However, while uses such as campgrounds, RV parks, shooting ranges, and animal and car racing tracks may potentially benefit the community, they also could have negative impacts on neighbouring uses. For uses that have the potential to create land use conflicts, Council will require an additional level of oversight.

Policy 3-80: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Commercial Recreation Zone, which is intended to permit indoor and outdoor commercial recreational uses, including, but not limited to, adventure parks, indoor car racing tracks, movie theatres, golf courses, and bowling alleys. Lot standards within the Commercial Recreation Zone shall be flexible to accommodate a range of recreational uses.

Policy 3-81: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit campgrounds and RV parks within the Commercial Recreation Zone by Site Plan Approval, with evaluation criteria intended to limit impacts on surrounding uses.

Policy 3-82: Council shall consider entering into a development agreement to enable proposals for outdoor car racing tracks, outdoor animal racing tracks, and shooting ranges, on lots 10,000 square metres or greater within the Commercial Recreation Zone, subject to the policies in Section 6.3.2.

Policy 3-83: Council shall initially apply the Commercial Recreation Zone to existing businesses with a commercial recreation component.

Policy 3-84: Council shall consider applying the Commercial Recreation Zone to other properties by amendment to the Land Use By-law. In considering such amendments, Council shall have regard to the following:

- (a) that where agricultural soils are involved, the proposal complies with Policy 3-18; and
- (b) the proposal complies with the general policies for Land Use By-law amendments found in Section 6.2.3.

3.7.4 Highway Commercial Zone

The municipality is located along Highway 104, which is a key transportation route between Cape Breton and the rest of the province. The lands at highway exits and interchanges can be excellent locations for commercial businesses that benefit from easy access to the highway system. These areas are often highly visible and integrated into the broader transportation network, meaning they can accommodate a range of uses that serve the travelling public. However, with a limited number of highway interchanges in the municipality, Council wishes to preserve these areas for commercial uses that cater to the travelling public or those that require direct access to the highway system, such as ambulance depots.

Policy 3-85: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Highway Commercial Zone, which is intended to be applied at major highway intersections to accommodate uses that cater to the travelling public or depend on direct access to the highway system.

Policy 3-86: Council may consider, through amendments to the Land Use By-law, requests to rezone lands to the Highway Commercial Zone within any designation that has policy permitting this zone, provided Council is satisfied that:

- (a) that the property being considered is situated within 1 kilometre of a Highway 104 interchange;
- (b) vehicle circulation on-site can be designed to support efficient movement, enable emergency service access, and avoid obvious points of conflict;
- (c) that stormwater runoff from impervious areas can be appropriately managed and is unlikely to cause disturbance on neighbouring properties;
- (d) that where agricultural soils are involved, the proposal complies with Policy 3-18; and
- (e) the proposal complies with the general policies for Land Use By-law amendments found in Section 6.2.3.

3.7.5 Institutional Zone

The municipality is supported by a strong foundation of institutional and community uses. Uses such as schools, hospitals, fire halls, Municipal Offices, and municipal recreation centres all serve a specific role in the ongoing function of the municipality and the day-to-day lives of residents and community members. Some smaller institutions may be similar in scale to other uses within a community and will be permitted directly in other land use zones. However, larger institutions may require more thought, or Council may wish to specifically identify and communicate the intent of certain institutional lands. To support the ongoing function of these uses and to enable their future development, Council will establish the Institutional Zone.

Policy 3-87: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Institutional Zone. This land use zone is intended to accommodate a wide range of community and institutional uses.

Policy 3-88: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit institutional and community uses, as well as residential uses with three or fewer dwelling units, within the Institutional Zone.

Policy 3-89: Council shall consider entering into a development agreement to enable proposals for residential developments with 4 to 12 dwelling or sleeping units on a lot in the Institutional Zone. When considering such developments, special considerations shall be given to the following:

- (a) that parking areas are planned and landscaped in a way that they do not create adverse effects on neighbouring properties;
- (b) that stormwater runoff from impervious areas is appropriately managed and unlikely to cause disturbance on neighbouring properties; and
- (c) the proposal complies with the general development agreement approval policies of Section 6.3.2.

Policy 3-90: Council may consider, through amendments to the Land Use By-law, requests to rezone lands to the Institutional Zone in designations that permit this zone, provided Council is satisfied that:

- (a) vehicle circulation on-site can be designed to support efficient movement, enable emergency service access, and avoid obvious points of conflict;
- (b) stormwater runoff from impervious areas can be appropriately managed and is unlikely to cause disturbance on neighbouring properties;
- (c) where agricultural soils are involved, the proposal complies with Policy 3-18; and
- (d) the proposal complies with the general policies for Land Use By-law amendments found in Section 6.2.3.

4 Topic-specific Policies

4.1 General Development Policies

The land use designations and zones discussed in the previous chapter provide a framework to guide and manage development in the municipality. They recognize and address specific land use planning issues and challenges associated with certain areas (e.g., serviced versus unserved, coastal versus inland) or certain types of development (e.g., residential, industrial, commercial); however, some issues and opportunities are shared among all areas of the municipality. These issues include signage, the regulation of buildings and lots, and non-conforming uses and structures. This chapter addressed those municipality-wide planning topics.

4.1.1 Regulation of Buildings and Lots

Land use planning can have a significant impact on the look and feel of a community, and fundamental to land use planning is the establishment of rules and regulations that influence the location and size of buildings on a lot and the size of new lots. In areas where lot sizes and buildings are smaller and where buildings are closer to each other, this helps to foster characteristics of an urban or “village” setting. In these areas, residential and commercial densities are often higher, enabling greater access to services and amenities. Conversely, in areas where lot sizes are large and buildings are spaced out from one another, this is more suited for rural and lower-density areas of the municipality.

Lot size is also strongly correlated with the availability of central services such as municipal sewer and water. In these areas, it is particularly advantageous to smaller lot sizes to utilize municipal services most efficiently.

Policy 4-1: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, regulate the size, location, and number of buildings on a lot in order to carry out the intent of each land use designation and land use zone.

Policy 4-2: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law and Subdivision By-law, regulate the size of newly created lots that are consistent with the intent of each land use designation and land use zone.

Policy 4-3: Council may, through the Land Use By-law, relax lot area and frontage requirements for development on existing undersized lots and for lots created using Section 18, 19, 21, 22, and 23 of the Subdivision By-law.

Policy 4-4: Council may, through the Subdivision By-law, place limitations on the development of flag lots in the municipality. If doing so, Council shall establish regulations addressing development on flag lots legally existing on the date of this Plan's adoption.

4.1.2 Non-conforming Uses and Structures

When land use planning policy and regulations change, uses or structures that were once permitted may no longer be allowed under the new planning documents. This may create a scenario where a use or structure, which was legally developed in good faith, may no longer be permitted. In addition, many areas of the municipality had no planning rules prior to the adoption of this Municipal Planning Strategy; in those areas existing uses and structures would be granted 'non-conforming' status if they do not align with the rules that are implemented by this Plan and its associated Land Use By-law.

The *Municipal Government Act* guarantees certain protections for non-conforming uses and structures that were legally developed to ensure they can continue to operate and function. One of the provisions for non-conforming uses, however, is that once a use has ceased to operate for a period of six months, it must then conform to the new planning rules. Similarly, the Act does not permit non-conforming structures to expand. However, the Act also enables municipalities to relax these regulations. Council does not wish to establish undue hardships on property owners who developed in good faith and intends to implement relaxations as provided for by the Act.

Policy 4-5: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, extend the period before a non-conforming use is considered discontinued to 12 months, as enabled by the *Municipal Government Act*.

Policy 4-6: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit the expansion of non-conforming structures provided the expansion does not increase the non-conformity of the structure.

Policy 4-7: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit the conversion of a non-conforming use to another non-conforming use by site plan approval provided the new use, by its nature or by the conditions placed upon it, is equally or less impactful to the surrounding area in terms of noise, odour, traffic generation, light emission, and aesthetics than the use it replaces.

4.1.3 Signage

Advertising signage plays an important role in the local economy of rural communities. Signage provides information to the travelling public about the services and amenities available in an area. Signage may be located on the lot on which the business is located or it may be placed many kilometres away from the site of the business as a means to attract potential customers and patrons. This dual approach is utilized to great effect in the municipality, especially as driving distances between destinations and population centres can be significant in magnitude.

However, when left unfettered and unregulated, signage can result in ‘sign pollution’ which can result in negative impacts on the amenity and landscape. It can also result in derelict, and sometime dangerous signs being left erected. Council supports a careful and balanced approach to advertising signage to ensure businesses can advertise their businesses while also maintaining and protecting the character of the municipality.

Policy 4-8: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, regulate the type, size, and location of signs to balance the need for advertising with the need to protect the quality of the community.

4.1.4 Islands

While not a prominent feature on the landscape in Antigonish, as a municipality that shares its boundary with the Atlantic Ocean and has a number of large lakes, there are several islands in the municipality, particularly in the Antigonish Harbour, Pomquet, Gaspereaux Lake, and Havre Boucher areas.

Because islands may not always have road access, and rely on boats for access, standard development rules established in the Land Use By-law may inadvertently preclude these areas from development. Council will relax development standards for islands to enable their use and development.

Policy 4-9: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, relax lot frontage standards for islands that do not have road access.

4.1.5 Residential Development

Housing is one of the necessities of life. Access to affordable, appropriate, and safe housing is a need for every person living and wanting to live in the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. However, with a housing market skewed towards single dwellings, and limited rental options, there is a shortage of housing options in the municipality. Housing diversity not only includes different tenures of housing (e.g., renter versus owner), but it includes different styles (e.g., duplex versus triplex), sizes, and price points for people to choose from. Council is supportive of efforts that enable a growth in a diversity of the housing options that are available that align with the general development patterns across the municipality.

Policy 4-10: Council shall, through the policies of this Municipal Planning Strategy and the regulations of the Land Use By-law, enable diversity in the form, scale, and location of housing that is permitted in the municipality.

4.1.6 Home Based Businesses

Where population densities are low—like that in the municipality—the business case for standalone commercial development may not exist in many areas. Home-based businesses offer homeowners and tenants the opportunity to develop and grow small-scale businesses while also helping provide their communities and neighbourhoods with many of the necessary day-to-day services like childcare and personal services. Home-based businesses also provide the venue for artisans to perfect their craft and build a customer base.

Council recognizes and supports home-based businesses and the benefits they bring to the community and municipality, but is aware that some home-based businesses can create challenges for neighboring uses. As such, Council supports establishing a two-tiered approach to home-based businesses:

- Level 1 Home-based Business: Small, limited home-based businesses, such as personal service shops or art galleries.
- Level 2 Home-based Business: Larger home-based providing a wider range of services appropriate to a rural context, such as small automobile repair garages.

Policy 4-11: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish and permit a two-tiered approach to home-based businesses.

Policy 4-12: Level 1 home-based businesses shall be limited in their scope and use to align with the character of established, serviced neighbourhoods.

Policy 4-13: Level 2 home-based businesses shall be more permissive than level 1 home-based businesses, including provisions that allow additional uses, outdoor storage and display, and larger floor areas. Level 2 home-based businesses shall be permitted in the Main Street Zone, General Centre Zone, Hamlet Residential Zone, Hamlet Core Zone, Rural General Zone, and Rural Commercial Zone.

Policy 4-14: The type, size, and signage, and other criteria for home-based businesses shall be established in the Land Use By-law to mitigate any potential impacts the home-based business has on surrounding uses.

4.1.7 Residential Facilities and Small Options Homes

The diverse residents of the municipality require housing options that support their needs. In some cases, this may include residential care or other forms of support to varying degrees. The spectrum of supportive housing can range from residential facilities offering 24/7 care for residents to small options homes where adults share a living arrangement supplemented by support workers. Council strongly believes in meeting the housing needs of all the municipality's residents and wants to ensure planning rules do not create barriers to supportive housing options.

Policy 4-15: Supportive housing options, such as small options homes and residential care facilities, shall be permitted through the Land Use By-law in all land use zones that permit residential uses to a similar scale.

4.2 Transportation

The municipality depends on a well-connected transportation system to move people and goods throughout the municipality and between the municipality and other areas of the world. Providing this infrastructure is a major responsibility for the Province, the Municipality, and, in some cases, private landowners. It is, therefore, important that this Plan's policies support an efficient, sustainable, transportation system.

4.2.1 Public Roads

Public roads are roads owned by a municipal, provincial, or federal government. They provide the primary transportation links between communities in the municipality, and often also serve as the roads within neighbourhoods.

Since 1995, any new public road created through the process of subdivision becomes the responsibility of the Municipality. This creates a need for the Municipality to maintain these roads and to replace them when they reach end-of-life. Council, therefore, intends to be thoughtful about the development of new public roads and ensuring that development enabled by such roads is of a sufficient scale to provide for financially-sustainable maintenance of the roads.

4.2.2 Private Roads

Private roads are roads that are not owned by a municipal, provincial, or federal government. They enable development in areas where it would not be financially feasible to build roads to a public standard due to the low density of development. However, private roads can also come with challenges such as differences in maintenance expectations when they are shared by multiple people. As a result, Council believes that private roads should only be used in areas where there are few other feasible options.

Council also believes that private roads should be built to a basic minimum standard to ensure property owners can expect reasonable maintenance requirements and safe roadway widths to accommodate emergency vehicles and heavy equipment, such as construction material deliveries. As a result, Council has adopted standards within the Subdivision By-law for private road construction.

Policy 4-16: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, prohibit development on private roads created after [adoption date] within the Serviced Centre Designation.

4.2.3 Sidewalks and Active Transportation

An effective network of sidewalks and other active transportation facilities, such as trails, provides important opportunities for recreation and for safe travel to services and other destinations. Some facilities are focused primarily on the recreational aspect, such as the Cape George Hiking Trail, while others may be designed primarily to connect people from where they live to school, work, or places to shop. Council is very supportive of expanding the network of trails within the municipality, as well as the development of sidewalks in areas where the density of development is appropriate to support and utilize this infrastructure.

The easiest time to develop an effective active transportation network is at the outset of development. This allows for thoughtful connections to areas beyond the development, as well as reduced construction costs compared to later retrofit installations.

Policy 4-17: Council may, through the Subdivision By-law, require sidewalks on new public roads in the Serviced Centre Designation.

Policy 4-18: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit trails as a land use in all zones.

Policy 4-19: Council shall, through the criteria of Section 6.3.2, require development that occurs by development agreement to connect sidewalk and public trail networks that abut the subject site.

4.2.4 Parking

The provision of vehicle parking spaces as part of development can be important in order to avoid spillover of parking into neighbouring areas. However, the hard surfaces necessary for parking spaces can increase stormwater runoff and too much parking can push buildings too far apart, making communities less attractive for pedestrians. Providing too much parking is also an unnecessary cost burden that is ultimately passed on to building tenants or customers.

Policy 4-20: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, require the provision of parking spaces in the Serviced Centre Designation and Hamlet Designation zones, with the number of required parking spaces aimed at reducing the impact of the use on surrounding areas, rather than fully accommodating peak parking needs at all times.

Policy 4-21: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, exempt development within the Main Street Zone from minimum parking requirements to promote compact development and land use efficiency.

4.2.5 Electric Vehicle Charging

Electric vehicles are growing in popularity, which comes with the need to charge them. Unlike gasoline and diesel vehicles, much of the “fueling” for electric vehicles is expected to occur while the vehicle is otherwise parked at home, at work, or at destinations like restaurants and hotels. In addition, there is a growing network of “fast chargers” that provide charging during longer journeys, much like a traditional gas station. Planning rules in the municipality need to account for both approaches to charging.

Policy 4-22: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit electric vehicle charging stations as an accessory use in all zones.

Policy 4-23: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit electric vehicle charging stations as a main use in zones that prioritize commercial and industrial uses.

4.2.6 Public Transit

Antigonish County is serviced by Antigonish Community Transit (“ACT”), a non-profit service supported by the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, the Town of Antigonish, and the Province of Nova Scotia. As of 2023, ACT provides a fixed-route service within the Town, and door-to-door service throughout the entirety of Antigonish County.

Council is supportive of public transit operations and will permit transit stops broadly throughout the municipality. Council also intends to consider the provision of appropriate transit facilities as part of any development conducted by development agreement, through the policies of Section 6.3.2.

Policy 4-24: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit transit stops in all land use zones.

4.3 Servicing

4.3.1 Central Sewer and Water

Sewage collection and treatment systems are among key services provided by a municipality to its residents. Based on the *Environment Act* and its related regulations, small lots for development generally cannot be subdivided unless there is a central sewage system in place. Sewage collection systems are essential to public health and safety where development densities exceed a threshold beyond the capacity of the local soils to treat the effluent from septic systems.

Central sewage systems have therefore a twofold role: on one hand they enable urban-style developments and concentrated, walkable land use patterns while on the other they ensure safe operation and living conditions in areas that already display these types of settlement patterns. Consequently, they are a very crucial component of municipal infrastructure and need to be maintained and developed with appropriate care.

The Municipality operates centralized sewage collection and treatment systems for Pomquet, Havre Boucher, Heatherton, Lower South River, and surrounding the Town of Antigonish.

Some areas in the municipality also run centralized water supply systems for local residents and businesses. These water supplies originate from both surface water and groundwater wells, from where the water is treated before distributed into the system. The Municipality operates centralized water treatment and distribution facilities to serve areas immediately outside of the Town of Antigonish and in the Lower South River, St. Andrews, and Saint Josephs area.

Similarly to the considerations about central wastewater systems, water supply systems need to be operated to high safety standards in line with the *Environment Act* and its related regulations.

Centralized sewage and water systems are very expensive assets to maintain and operate. Good utilization of such systems should therefore be promoted through infill development while extensions of the networks should only be considered if a clear need is demonstrated (i.e. a community need that goes beyond the benefit of individual property owners). Expansions when they are undertaken will typically result in charges for the capital costs levied on property owners. The procedures and calculations for such levies are outlined in the Municipality's Local Improvement By-law.

Policy 4-25: Council shall ensure proper and safe operation of the municipal wastewater collection and treatment systems.

Policy 4-26: The Municipality shall not be obligated to extend municipal wastewater collection and treatment systems or potable water systems unless directed by higher levels of government. It shall generally be the intention of Council to consider expansions to the existing sewer and water systems only to locations where a clear benefit to the Municipality is demonstrated which goes beyond the gain of individual property owners benefitting from such extension. Such benefit may include, but is not limited to, treating an environmental problem, enabling the development of a major economic initiative, or encouraging a development pattern that is of sufficient density to sustainably finance the ongoing maintenance and operational costs of the system.

4.3.2 On-site Services

Based on the provincial *Environment Act*, development lots that are not serviced by municipal wastewater collection must be subdivided in accordance with the NS On-site Sewage Disposal Systems Regulations. These regulations set minimum lot sizes depending on prevalent soil conditions on the lot.

The provincial regulations under the *Environment Act* supersede any municipal lot size requirements, unless they are more stringent than the provincial requirement. Consequently, the development officer shall administer provincial on-site sewage disposal regulations when endorsing subdivision files for approval.

Policy 4-27: Council shall defer to the Provincial *Environment Act* and its regulations for rules on installation of on-site septic disposal systems.

4.3.3 Solid Waste Facilities

The Municipality is a partner in Eastern Region Solid Waste Management and owns and operates a waste management facility in Beech Hill. The Beech Hill facility provides a transfer station for garbage destined for the Guysborough Waste Management facility, as well as facilities to manage recyclables, construction waste, household hazardous waste, and compost.

Further to this, the municipality is also served by Enviro-Depots in Lower South River and Tracadie, which operate as bottle exchange points.

Businesses are generally required to hire commercial operators for their garbage pickup needs. Similarly, construction and demolition debris are not accepted at municipal facilities. Residential properties are encouraged to manage their organic waste on-site.

Policy 4-28: Council shall consider, by development agreement, proposals for non-municipal solid waste disposal sites within the Rural Industrial Zone, provided Council is satisfied the proposal:

- (a) has an adequate level of servicing, including, but not limited to, firefighting capacity, for the scale of the proposed use;
- (b) can be adequately scaled if future expansions are necessary;
- (c) supports the municipality's general approach to solid waste disposal; and
- (d) conforms to the policies of Section 6.3.2.

4.3.4 Utilities

Utilities, including those related to communications, gas, and electricity, provide essential services to residents. Often these utilities involve equipment, buildings, or transmission lines to operate. Council does not wish to place undue hardships on these utilities; therefore, these uses will be permitted in any zone within the plan area.

Policy 4-29: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit public and private utilities, except for electrical generation facilities, in all zones within the plan area.

4.4 Environmental Management

4.4.1 Shoreline Development

With over 300 kilometres of coastal shoreline and countless lakes, rivers, and other watercourses, shoreline development is an important topic in the municipality. While shorelines are particularly attractive places to develop, they are also sensitive to disturbance and can also present risks in terms of flooding and erosion.

The riparian area at the threshold of land and water is essential for the health of watercourses. It provides an important buffer that captures runoff and surface pollutants, and is essential habitat for many species. Many fish depend on riparian areas as a safe habitat for young to grow in the relative safety provided by riparian plants before moving to open water. While Council encourages landowners to keep the riparian area in its natural state, municipalities in Nova Scotia have very few tools to prevent landowners from clearing riparian areas. However, the Municipality of the County of Antigonish can do its part by preventing development from locating too close to this important area.

Along coastal areas, damage to shoreline development from sea level rise, storm surge, and coastal erosion are also a concern. The Government of Nova Scotia has acted on developing a province-wide approach to development regulation in these areas through the passing of the *Coastal Protection Act* in 2019. As of 2023 that Act has not yet been proclaimed and implemented through regulations. However, it is expected that such regulations will include a minimum vertical elevation for development and provisions to consider the potential risks of shoreline erosion. Considering the forthcoming provincial regulations, Council has decided not to implement a separate set of municipal regulations.

Policy 4-30: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, implement a minimum horizontal buffer between development and the ordinary high water mark of watercourses. Exceptions shall be made for uses and structures that functionally depend on access to the water, and for the relocation of existing structures within the buffer provided such relocation does not reduce the buffer size.

4.4.2 Stormwater Management

Stormwater management is increasingly becoming a challenge for municipalities across Nova Scotia. With development often comes the conversion of natural lands to impermeable surfaces such as roads and buildings. Where precipitation could once infiltrate the surface into the water table, it now runs off these impermeable surfaces in different directions until it is absorbed or is collected in a watercourse or water body. As climate change continues to shift climate and weather patterns, the municipality may face more frequent and severe precipitation events, exacerbating stormwater concerns. For these reasons, Council supports adopting strategies within its planning documents to reduce the impacts developments have on stormwater.

Policy 4-31: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, require a landscaping plan and/or a stormwater management plan for proposals for large industrial and commercial developments to ensure the potential impacts of the proposal are limited and mitigated.

4.5 Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

4.5.1 Park Dedication

As a predominantly rural community, many residents in the municipality have their outdoor recreation needs met through private land or provincial and federal lands. However, the Municipality still has an important role to play through the provision of formal parkland in more developed areas, as well as trails and other forms of rural park infrastructure. In particular, residents have noted concerns about losing traditional access to the coast and other watercourses, and Council wishes to help preserve these accesses.

The *Municipal Government Act* enables municipalities to require land for public purposes (parkland) as part of the subdivision process. Council intends to implement these provisions but wants to be strategic about where such lands are located, rather than ending up with small parcels of land in areas where they will not be publicly used or where park development and maintenance is difficult. As a result, Council will require that land be “usable” for recreation purposes and have access to a road, except in unique circumstances where the land has exceptional value for other purposes (e.g. environmental or historical preservation).

Policy 4-32: Council shall, through the Subdivision By-law, require the dedication of lands for public purposes as part of the subdivision process. Such dedication shall take the form of:

- (a) usable lands for public recreation purposes, or exceptional land for historical or environmental purposes;
- (b) cash-in-lieu; or
- (c) a combination thereof.

4.5.2 Recreational Vehicles

Recreational vehicles ('RVs') are a popular way to travel. Many property owners in the municipality also use them as an alternative to a cottage building or as temporary accommodations while a cottage building is under construction. While RVs are technically vehicles, they share many characteristics with buildings, including requiring a cleared area on the land and enabling people to stay overnight for a long period of time. This can have an impact on the land and watercourses, as well as the density of people in an area. Council wishes to continue to enable people to use RVs for recreational accommodations but wants to ensure large gatherings of RVs are properly sited within a campground designed for that purpose.

Policy 4-33: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, include within the definition of "campground" the use of land for more than one RV for the purpose of providing accommodations.

4.5.3 Community Facilities

The communities of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish feature a range of community facilities, such as community halls, churches and other places of worship, and schools. These facilities lie at the heart of the municipality, providing essential opportunities for social interaction, recreation, and a strong community identity. Council is strongly supportive of these facilities, and intends to broadly permit them throughout the municipality, typically without requiring special zoning.

Council also recognizes that the role of community facilities changes, and occasionally a hall, church, or school will close. While the use may cease, the buildings the hosted these facilities remain as prominent landmarks within the community. Rather than see such buildings neglected, Council would like to see them given a new life in another way that benefits the community. Council will, therefore, consider proposals to utilize these buildings for other purposes.

Policy 4-34: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, widely permit community facilities, with the type and scale of permitted facility tailored to intent of each land use zone.

Policy 4-35: Council shall consider entering into a development agreement to reuse former schools, community halls, places of worship, and other similar community facilities for uses not otherwise permitted in the applicable land use zone. When considering such developments, special consideration shall be given to the following:

- (a) the proposal provides a community benefit such as, but not limited to, the provision of housing or the provision of a commercial space that provides opportunity for community to gather;
- (b) the proposed use will not, by its nature or by the controls placed upon it by the development agreement, impact surrounding uses due to noise, odour, or dust;
- (c) the proposal preserves and restores prominent aspects of the building; and
- (d) the proposal complies with the general development agreement policies of Section 6.3.2.

4.6 Energy

With the political, economic, and ecological pressure to lessen dependence on fossil fuels for energy supply, communities throughout Atlantic Canada are looking at alternative sources of energy. The Government of Nova Scotia's Renewable Energy Regulations require that by 2030, 80% of the province's electricity will come from renewable sources, including wind, biomass, tidal and solar power.

4.6.1 Solar Collectors

Solar collectors convert the energy of the sun to useable energy either in the form of electricity (solar photovoltaics) or heat (solar hot water or space heating). Their popularity is growing in Nova Scotia as a means for residents to produce renewable energy. The scalable nature of installations makes it possible to design systems well-tailored to the energy needs and financial means of a potential owner.

Solar collectors are also increasingly installed as commercial projects, selling electricity to the grid to supply the needs of all Nova Scotians. In fact, the Municipality established its own solar installation in 2021 adjacent to the municipal offices.

Solar collectors typically have no moving parts and can be installed on existing structures, so are relatively unobtrusive beyond aesthetic preferences. Council wishes to support residents in providing renewable energy, so will widely permit solar collectors as an accessory use. Council also supports commercial-scale projects, but is aware of the potential for these projects to use large areas of land. In serviced areas this can result in the inefficient use of the valuable sewer or water services in the ground, and in conservation and source water protection areas could encourage the clearing of land, contrary to the goals of these areas.

Policy 4-36: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit solar collectors as an accessory use in all zones and shall provide an exemption from building height limits to enable solar collectors to be installed on top of buildings.

Policy 4-37: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, permit solar collectors as a main use except in zones in the Serviced Centre Designation, Source Water Protection Zone, and Conservation Zone. Solar collectors as a main use in the Hamlet Centre Designation shall be limited in size.

4.6.2 Wind Turbines

Wind energy is becoming an important and increasingly viable source of energy. In recent years, a number of wind turbine projects have been constructed throughout Nova Scotia, with several more under consideration currently. These facilities range from single turbines to “wind farms”, consisting of many turbines clustered together. According to the Canadian Renewable Energy Association, Canada had an installed capacity of 14,304 MW at the end of 2021, enough to power the equivalent of approximately 3.6 million homes and a number that will certainly increase in coming years. Along with construction of the turbines, some concerns have emerged, especially regarding visual and sound impacts on nearby residences.

For the Municipality’s land use planning purposes, there are two scales of wind turbine development. The larger turbines are often called ‘utility scale’ wind turbines, and they are designed to supply power commercially for Nova Scotia Power Inc. (NSPI). These turbines typically reach up to 100 metres (330 feet) in height and are typically developed by companies that have agreements in place with NSPI for the sale of the electricity. Many turbine developments are stand-alone operations where there is only one turbine at a location, while others may be grouped into a larger “wind farm”. As of 2022, the Municipality of the County of Antigonish is home to utility scale turbines at Maryvale, Fairmont, and Browns Mountain.

Even a small increase in wind velocity has a great impact on energy produced, so location and design are very important. As of 2022, the largest wind farm in Nova Scotia is South Canoe in Lunenburg County, with a nameplate capacity of 102 megawatts of electricity (the output of one megawatt of wind power is enough electricity to power approximately 350 homes). The Province requires that wind turbines producing 2 megawatts or more undertake an environmental assessment. Federal requirements may also apply.

Smaller scale turbines, or ‘domestic’ turbines, are also being installed throughout the province. As the term implies, these turbines generate power primarily for private use by homes, farms and businesses. Many of these turbines are installed “behind the meter” and can substantially reduce or entirely replace power consumption from the grid. In addition, some domestic wind turbines have been constructed in remote areas not serviced by NSPI. Nova Scotia Power’s Enhanced Net Metering program also allows domestic turbines, generating 100 kilowatts or less, to be interconnected with the main utility and only draw from the provincial power grid when needed. Surplus energy generated by the turbine gets delivered to the provincial grid and the customer can credit that energy against any future use.

The size of the turbines refers to their nameplate capacity, which equals the electricity produced when the wind velocity results in the greatest conversion efficiency. The smallest domestic turbines can be purchased at retail stores, generating anywhere from 50 to over 500 watts.

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish is supportive of wind energy and believes that it is important that this source of energy be developed without jeopardizing the rights of their residents to fully enjoy their property and way of life. Council intends to provide for the development of wind turbines and to regulate them in such a way that other uses, especially residential development, will not be adversely affected. Council is aware that there will be no perfect solution acceptable to all residents and the developers of wind energy, but will strive to arrive at a reasonable balance in their approach to control future wind turbine development.

Policy 4-38: Council shall, notwithstanding uses permitted in each zone of the Land Use By-law, regulate the placement of utility-scale and domestic-scale wind turbines through the establishment of the Wind Resource Overlay on the Zoning Map of the Land Use By-law.

Policy 4-39: Domestic-scale wind turbines shall be considered to be those with a nameplate capacity of under 100 kilowatts and shall be permitted in all zones of the Land Use By-law, subject to lot size, noise, and setback requirements.

Policy 4-40: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish the Wind Resource Overlay to identify locations where utility-scale wind turbines are permitted.

Policy 4-413: Utility-scale wind turbines shall be considered to those with a nameplate capacity of 100 kilowatts or greater, and shall be permitted in all land use zones, but only on lands within the Wind Resource Overlay.

Policy 4-42: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish noise requirements and setbacks for utility-scale wind turbines from residential dwellings, watercourses, and public roads.

Policy 4-43: Where a dwelling is constructed within the setback distance of utility scale wind turbine development erected after June 1st, 2009, the wind turbine development may expand provided the expansion is not located closer to the residence than the initial wind turbine development.

Policy 4-44: Mini wind turbines shall be considered to be those with a nameplate capacity of under 1 kilowatt and shall be permitted in all zones of the Land Use By-law, with a waiver for minimum lot sizes.

Policy 4-45: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, allow consenting landowners to waive setback rules for wind turbines.

Policy 4-46: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law, establish a time by which inactive wind turbines and all supporting structures must be removed from the site and the site be restored to a natural condition. Council shall be made aware of decisions to remove any wind turbines and determine a time by which developers must notify Council of such.

Policy 4-47: In considering a proposal to amend the boundaries of to the Wind Resource Overlay, it shall be the policy of Council to have regard for the following:

- (a) the adequacy of the area of land being rezoned in relation to the number of turbines being proposed;
- (b) the potential for electromagnetic interference on radio, telecommunications or radar systems;
- (c) the proposal meets the setback and other requirements in the Land Use By-law; and
- (d) the proposal meets the implementation criteria listed in Section 6.2.3.

4.6.3 Other Energy Systems

Solar and wind are currently the main growth technologies for electrical energy in Nova Scotia. However, there are other technologies that are in development, such as tidal power, and existing technologies that may see new installations under certain site conditions, such as hydroelectricity. It is important for the Municipality to have a tool to consider other energy systems when such proposals arise. This policy is intentionally broad to enable consideration of technologies that may not yet be mature, or even invented yet. However, Council intends to take a close look at any such proposals through the development agreement process to ensure they are appropriate for the context in which they are proposed.

Policy 4-48: Council shall consider entering into a development agreement to enable proposals for energy systems other than wind turbines and solar collectors in all use zones. When considering such developments, special considerations shall be given to the following:

- (a) the proposal is consistent with the intent of the land use zone in which it is proposed; and
- (b) the proposal complies with the general development agreement policies of Section 6.3.2.

5 Secondary Plans

5.1 Introduction

This Municipal Planning Strategy applies to the entire area with the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. However, there are a number of “Secondary” Municipal Planning Strategies (“Secondary Plans”) that were previously developed in order to establish planning in specific areas of the municipality and continue to remain in effect today as standalone documents. In areas subject to existing Secondary Plans it is Council’s intention to defer to these documents on matters of planning and development. However, over time, as these Secondary Plans come up for review and renewal, it is Council’s intention to merge those documents into this Municipal Planning Strategy to take a cohesive and streamlined approach to planning throughout the municipality. In doing so, some aspects of those Secondary Plans may continue to remain relevant and necessary and will be integrated as sections within this Chapter.

Furthermore, Council may, in the future, wish to establish Secondary Plans for other areas of the municipality to address specific planning issues relevant only to those areas. This Chapter will provide a home for those Secondary Plans.

5.1.1 West River Antigonish Harbour Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy

The West River Antigonish Harbour Plan Area is comprised of land that is located between the Central Antigonish Planning Area and the Antigonish Harbour in the east all the way out to Browns Mountain in the west. The Planning Area surrounds the Town of Antigonish and includes the communities of North Grant, Sylvan Valley, Brierly Brook, Pleasant Valley, West River, Beech Hill, Greenwold, Post Road, Cloverville, Clydesdale, William’s Point, Saltsprings, Purlbrook, Pitchers Farm, Lanark, Harbour Centre, Glen Road, Antigonish Landing, and Jimtown.

Policy 5-1: Council shall, on Schedule ‘A’, the Future Land Use Map, identify the West River Antigonish Harbour Secondary Plan Area.

Policy 5-2: Notwithstanding the contents of this Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use By-law, within the West River Antigonish Harbour Secondary Plan Area all planning matters except wind turbines shall be subject to the requirements of the West River Antigonish Harbour Secondary Plan and associated West River Antigonish Harbour Land Use By-law.

5.1.2 Central Antigonish Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy

The Central Antigonish Plan Area is comprised of land that is located between the Eastern Antigonish Plan Area, and the West River Antigonish Harbour Plan Area, along with lands on the east side of Antigonish Harbour. The Plan Area is bordered on the south by the Antigonish/Guysborough County boundary and to the north by Pomquet Harbour and the Northumberland Strait. Politically, the Plan Area encompasses electoral Districts 5, 6 and 7 of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. The Plan Area is bisected by the Trans-Canada Highway.

Policy 5-3: Council shall, on Schedule 'A', the Future Land Use Map, identify the Central Antigonish Secondary Plan Area.

Policy 5-4: Notwithstanding the contents of this Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use By-law, within the Central Antigonish Secondary Plan Area all planning matters except wind turbines shall be subject to the requirements of the Central Antigonish Secondary Plan and associated Central Antigonish Land Use By-law.

5.1.3 Eastern Antigonish Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy

The Planning Area is in the eastern section of the County and extends approximately from Bayfield to Auld Cove. The Planning Area is comprised of part of District 7 and all of Districts 8 and 9 of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish.

Policy 5-5: Council shall, on Schedule 'A', the Future Land Use Map, identify the Eastern Antigonish Secondary Plan Area.

Policy 5-6: Notwithstanding the contents of this Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use By-law, within the Eastern Antigonish Secondary Plan Area all planning matters except wind turbines shall be subject to the requirements of the Eastern Antigonish Secondary Plan and associated Eastern Antigonish Land Use By-law.

5.1.4 Keppoch-Beaver Mountain Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy

The Keppoch Beaver Mountain planning area is located in the western portion of Antigonish County, near the Pictou-Antigonish County border. The planning area is approximately 210 kilometres northeast of Halifax, and approximately 55 kilometres west of the Canso Causeway. This Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy encompass approximately 3,460 hectares (8,500 acres) of land.

Policy 5-7: Council shall, on Schedule 'A', the Future Land Use Map, identify the Keppoch-Beaver Mountain Secondary Plan Area.

Policy 5-8: Notwithstanding the contents of this Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use By-law, within the Keppoch-Beaver Mountain Secondary Plan Area all planning matters except wind turbines shall be subject to the requirements of the Keppoch-Beaver Mountain Secondary Plan and associated Keppoch-Beaver Mountain Land Use By-law.

6 Implementation

6.1 Administration

Unlike most municipalities across Nova Scotia, the Municipality of the County of Antigonish employs a regional and shared approach to land use planning. Land use planning policy and regulations are administered and implemented by the Eastern District Planning Commission, a regional planning authority, which provides planning, subdivision, and building inspection services for the Counties of Victoria, Richmond, Inverness, and Antigonish and the Towns of Port Hawkesbury and Antigonish.

Through this Municipal Planning Strategy, the Municipality and Eastern District Planning Commission set about implementing the vision, goals, and policies to manage land use and development. This Municipal Planning Strategy and its associated Land Use By-law are enabled consistent with the *Municipal Government Act*, as amended.

6.1.1 Statements of Policy

The policies within this Municipal Planning Strategy establish Council's intention with respect to the management of land use and development in the Municipality. Statements of policy are denoted by the text "**Policy #-#**", where the numbers are replaced by the chapter number and appropriate sequential policy number, respectively.

In addition to the statements of policy, this Municipal Planning Strategy contains preamble, or descriptive text, before a set of policies. This preamble is used to help interpreted the intent of statements of policy, but it does not form part of the policy.

Policy 6-1: Policy statements of Council shall be denoted in this Plan with the text "**Policy #-#**", with the number signs (hash) replaced by the appropriate chapter number and sequential policy number, respectively.

Policy 6-2: Written content of this Municipal Planning Strategy not contained within a Policy statement of Council shall be considered preamble. Preamble may be considered to interpret the intent of Policy statements of Council, but do not form a part of the Policy statement.

6.1.2 Effective Date and Repeal

Policy 6-3: This Municipal Planning Strategy and implementing Land Use By-law shall come into effect on the date that a notice is published in a newspaper, circulating in the municipality, informing the public that the planning documents are in effect.

Policy 6-4: The Municipal Planning Strategy for the County of Antigonish Concerning the Regulation of Wind Turbine Development, effective June, 2009, is hereby repealed.

6.1.3 Regional Cooperation

The development of this Municipal Planning Strategy included consultation with neighbouring municipalities. The other member municipalities of the Eastern District Planning Commission were partners in the project so were integrated throughout the entire planning process. Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) was similarly undertaking a plan review at the time this Plan was under development, so the project team, Eastern District Planning Commission, and representatives met multiple times to discuss areas of potential alignment between the two municipalities' planning documents. The Municipality also notified the Municipality of Pictou County, Municipality of the District of St. Mary's, and Municipality of the District of Guysborough of the project and invited comment on shared planning matters.

Since future planning decisions made in the municipality can impact adjacent municipalities and communities, it is important the Municipality continue to support a cooperative approach where land use decisions could potentially impact adjacent municipalities. Council supports efforts to notify and consult neighbouring municipalities when considering amendments to this Municipal Planning Strategy and when adopting new municipal planning strategies in the future.

Although not a municipality, another significant community the Municipality must look to notify regarding planning decisions is the Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation, which is located approximately 25 kilometres east of the Town of Antigonish along Highway 104. Council is supportive of integrating the Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation early into the planning process for Municipal Planning Strategy amendments and when the Municipality adopts new municipal planning strategies.

Policy 6-5: Council shall, through its Public Participation Program, establish requirements for engaging with neighbouring municipalities when conducting amendments to this Municipal Planning Strategy or its Secondary Plans, or when adopting a new Municipal Planning Strategy.

Policy 6-6: Consultation undertaken through Policy 6-5 shall, at a minimum:

- (a) invite comment on matters of municipal interest;
- (b) invite comment in relation to Statements of Provincial Interest;
- (c) be considered by Council or the Planning Advisory Committee as its designate as part of the body of feedback received on the proposed amendment or new Municipal Planning Strategy; and
- (d) be completed prior to Council publishing its first notice for a Public Hearing on the proposed amendment or new Municipal Planning Strategy.

6.1.4 Land Use Planning and Relationships with Indigenous Communities

The lands of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish—and the rest of Nova Scotia for that matter—are subject to the Peace and Friendship Treaties of the 18th century. These treaties were signed between the Mi’kmaq and the British following long-standing conflicts between the French and the British for control of lands in the Maritimes. Through the Peace and Friendship Treaties, the British sought to end hostilities and encourage cooperation between the British and the First Nations.

Unlike other treaties signed with First Nations across Canada, the Peace and Friendship Treaties did not include the Mi’kmaq surrendering land or resources to the British Crown. Despite these treaties, however, First Nations across Canada, including in Nova Scotia, have been subject to centuries of exploitation, assimilation, and eradication of Indigenous people and culture through colonial policy and legislation. To an extent, this has been continued through the practice of land use planning—the practice of applying rules and regulations to land that was never ceded by the Mi’kmaq.

The realities of land use planning and other policies, legislation, and perspectives are entangled with centuries of colonialism. In the age of reconciliation with the Indigenous people of Canada, a careful and sustained approach toward relationship building taken by the Municipality and residents of Antigonish County is needed. As is outlined in the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada:

“Reconciliation must support Aboriginal peoples as they heal from the destructive legacies of colonization that have wreaked such havoc in their lives. But it must do even more. Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children

and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share.”⁵

Within the scope of land use planning and this Municipal Planning Strategy, the Municipality can take concrete steps and actions to relationship building with the local First Nation community: the Paqtnkek. While land within the First Nation is not subject to this Municipal Planning Strategy or the Land Use By-law, the land surrounding First Nations lands and the rest of the municipality are. Indigenous perspectives and interests extend beyond First Nations lands, and these must be integrated into the broader approach to land use planning in the community. Council supports working to build stronger relationships with the First Nations of Antigonish County by directly engaging with the Paqtnkek Mi’kmaw Nation on planning matters.

However, rebuilding relationships with First Nations must extend beyond the scope of land use planning into the broader function and relationships of the Municipality. Understanding Indigenous perspectives, ideas, and experiences requires a holistic approach by the Municipality and the broader community to take concrete actions to build stronger relationships. The Municipality must, however, ensure any engagement and actions are genuine, respectful, and consider the capacity and time of First Nations.

Policy 6-7: Council shall consult and engage with the Paqtnkek Mi’kmaw Nation when:

- (a) adopting a new municipal planning strategy to replace this one: and
- (b) considering amendments to this Municipal Planning Strategy.

Policy 6-8: Council shall work to engage and build stronger relationships with the Paqtnkek Mi’kmaw Nation and other First Nation communities.

⁵The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Honoring the Truth, Reconciling the Future.

6.2 Land Use By-law and Subdivision By-law

6.2.1 Adoption

The land use policies in this Municipal Planning Strategy are primarily implemented through a Land Use By-law. This By-law sets out zones, the permitted uses for each zone, development standards for each zone and/or for certain types of uses, and the uses and circumstances for development by development agreement and site plan approval. In doing this, the By-law reflects the policies of the Municipal Planning Strategy. Council approves the Land Use By-law at the same time this Plan is approved.

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, creating streets, and providing recreational lands.

The Land Use By-law and Subdivision By-law are administered by a Development Officer appointed by the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. The Development Officer is responsible for issuing development permits in accordance with the By-law.

Policy 6-9: Council shall adopt a Land Use By-law and Subdivision By-law consistent with the intent of this Plan.

Policy 6-10: Council shall appoint one or more Development Officers to administer the Land Use By-law and the Subdivision By-law and to issue and deny permits under the terms of these By-laws.

Policy 6-11: The Subdivision By-law shall:

- (a) apply to the whole of the municipality;
- (b) ensure that any subdivision, with the exception of lots created using the variance provisions of Part 9 of the *Municipal Government Act*, conforms with the lot requirements contained in the Land Use By-law or any applicable Secondary Land Use By-laws;
- (c) establish locations and standards for the development of public and private roads, central services, and other publicly owned infrastructure;
- (d) contain provisions intended to ensure that lots are suitable for onsite sewage disposal where there is no central sewer system, as required per provincial regulations under the *Environment Act*;
- (e) contain provisions for dedicating land or an equivalent value for park, playground, and similar public purposes; and
- (f) contain any other provisions needed to fulfill the intent of this Plan.

6.2.2 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. This is intended to alleviate hardships where an irregular set of circumstances on a lot makes it reasonably impossible to comply with the requirements of the 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 6-12: Council shall, in accordance with Section 235 of the *Municipal Government Act*, permit the Development Officer to vary:

- (a) the percentage of land that may be built upon;
- (b) the size or other requirements relating to setbacks;
- (c) lot frontage;
- (d) lot area;
- (e) location and number of parking spaces and loading spaces required;
- (f) ground area of a structure;
- (g) height of a structure;
- (h) floor area occupied by a home-based business; and/or
- (i) height and area of a sign.

6.2.3 Amending the Land Use By-law

Council recognizes it cannot foresee all possible types of development that might be acceptable in the municipality in general, or on a specific piece of land. As such, there will be times when the Land Use By-law needs to be amended to accommodate a new development trend or specific development proposal.

Council also recognizes that it is possible to inadvertently make mapping errors in preparing the maps that accompanying this Plan and the Land Use By-law. Such errors do not reflect the policies in this Plan and thus will be corrected by By-law amendments.

Policy 6-13: Council shall amend the text of the Land Use By-law if the proposed amendment meets the general criteria set out in Policy 6-22.

Policy 6-14: Council shall consider amendments to the maps of the Land Use By-law when the proposed zoning change is not specifically prohibited within this Plan and at least one of the following three conditions is true:

- (a) the proposed zone is enabled by this Plan for use within the same designation;
- (b) a non-conforming use appears to have been created by an inadvertent administrative oversight in the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law preparation process, resulting in a property being zoned inconsistent with stated policies in this Plan; or,
- (c) notwithstanding the zones permitted within a designation, the land to be rezoned is not in the Source Water Protection Zone or Conservation Zone, is under 2 hectares in area and is adjacent to a designation that permits the proposed zone. For greater clarity, land that abuts a right-of-way, such as a street, is considered to be adjacent to the designation on the other side of the right-of-way.

Policy 6-15: Council shall not amend the maps of the Land Use By-law if the lot and existing buildings do not meet the requirements of the proposed zone.

Policy 6-16: Council shall not amend the maps of the Land Use By-law unless Council is satisfied that:

- (a) the proposal meets the zone intent and any applicable zone placement criteria set out in policies, elsewhere in this Plan, applicable to the proposed zone; and
- (b) the proposed zone and the uses it permits meet the general criteria set out in Policy 6-22.

6.3 Site Plan Approval and Development Agreements

Outside of the standard development permitting process (“as of right”), Council has other tools that enable a finer-grained level of management over a development. Two such tools are site plan approval and development agreements.

6.3.1 Site Plan Approval

Site plan approval is a development process by which applicants must meet additional standards established and outlined in the Land Use By-law. The *Municipal Government Act* outlines what these additional requirements may pertain to, including where structures and parking is located on a lot, retention of vegetation, and the location of walkways. Uses that are enabled by the site plan approval process must be prescribed in this Municipal Planning Strategy. Unlike the “as of right” development process, the additional standards and requirements part of site plan approval are often qualitative, giving the Development Officer greater flexibility and the ability to negotiate with an applicant.

The Development Officer must be satisfied that the proposal meets the applicable standards, at which point a site plan approval is established and the Development Officer can issue development permits.

Policy 6-17: Council shall enable the use of the site plan approval process within the Land Use By-law as a tool to review developments that require additional oversight or management or where Council sees benefit in providing flexibility for land use proposals.

Policy 6-18: Council shall, through the Land Use By-law establish a notification area of 60 metres for the approval of a site plan approval.

6.3.2 Development Agreements

Development agreements are planning tools, enabled by the *Municipal Government Act*, that give Municipal Council a finer level of control over a proposed development. They are written legal documents between Municipality and the property owner and are registered upon the title of the land (the agreement does not cease if the land is sold or if the property owner dies).

Development agreements are intended to enable staff, Council, and the public to give input on aspects of a development that would otherwise not be permitted through the standards in the Land Use By-law. This allows the Municipality to holistically evaluate a proposal and implement measures to mitigate potential impacts that may arise.

Like uses enabled by site plan approval, the Municipal Planning Strategy must outline uses that are permitted by a development agreement.

Policy 6-19: Where enabled by the policies within this Municipal Planning Strategy, Council shall consider entering into a development agreement with an applicant to enable a proposed development.

Policy 6-20: A development agreement that has been approved by Council shall:

- (a) specify the development, expansion, alteration, or change permitted;
- (b) specify the conditions under which the development may, or may not, occur;
- (c) set terms and conditions by which Council may amend or terminate and discharge the agreement.

Policy 6-21: Council may specify conditions in the development agreement to bring the proposal into alignment with the enabling policy and general criteria set out in Policy 6-22. Such conditions may include:

- (a) servicing;
- (b) the type, location, and orientation of structures;
- (c) 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;
- (d) the provision of open space and amenities;
- (e) the type, size, and location of signage;
- (f) the type and orientation of exterior lighting;
- (g) management of solid waste, compost, and recycling;
- (h) pedestrian, bicycle, public transit, and vehicular circulation;
- (i) connections to existing or planned pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular networks;
- (j) the location and number of bicycle and vehicular parking and loading spaces;
- (k) access for emergency vehicles;
- (l) the location and type of landscaping, including fences and other forms of screening;
- (m) stormwater management;
- (n) grading and erosion control;
- (o) the emission of noise, odour, light, liquids, gases, and dust;
- (p) the type of materials stored and/or sold on site;
- (q) hours of operation;
- (r) the phasing of development;
- (s) financial bonding for the construction and maintenance of components of the development, including, but not limited to, roads and landscaping;
- (t) mitigation measures for construction impacts;
- (u) time limits for the initiation and/or completion of development; and
- (v) all other matters enabled in Section 227 of the *Municipal Government Act*.

6.4 General Criteria

6.4.1 Evaluating Land Use By-law Amendments and Development Agreement

Amendments to the Land Use By-law and the adoption of development agreements are processes that require careful thought. As such, Council has established a set of general criteria to consider when evaluating all Land Use By-law amendments and development agreement proposals

Policy 6-22: Council shall not amend the Land Use By-law or enter into a development agreement unless Council is satisfied the proposal:

- (a) is consistent with the intent of this Municipal Planning Strategy;
- (b) does not conflict with any Municipal or Provincial programs, by-laws, or regulations in effect in the municipality;
- (c) in case of development proposals on soils with agricultural potential, complies with Policy 3-18,
- (d) is not premature due to:
 - i. the ability of the Municipality to absorb public costs related to the proposal;
 - ii. impacts on existing drinking water supplies, both private and public;
 - iii. 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;
 - iv. the creation of excessive traffic hazards or congestion on road, cycling, and pedestrian networks within, adjacent to, or leading to the proposal;
 - v. the adequacy of fire protection services and equipment;
 - vi. the adequacy and proximity of schools and other community facilities;
 - vii. 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;
 - viii. site-specific climate change risks such as projected sea level rise on the subject site;
 - ix. the potential to create flooding or serious drainage issues, including within the proposal site and in nearby areas;

- x. impacts on known habitat for species at risk, as identified in the Department of Natural Resources Significant Species and Habitats Database, or any successor database; and
- xi. 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.

Policy 6-23: In evaluating Policy 6-22(d), Council may determine that the proposal, due to its scale or nature, does not on the face of it conflict with any or all of the potential concerns identified in the subclauses. Where Council has concern about the potential for conflict with any or all of the Policy 6-22(d) subclauses or compliance with any other policy of this Plan, Council may require any or all of the following information, prepared by an appropriate qualified professional at the applicant's cost, and at a level sufficiently detailed to evaluate whether the criteria for amending the Land Use By-law or entering into a development agreement have been met:

- (a) a detailed site plan showing features such as, but not limited to:
 - i. topography;
 - ii. location and dimensions of existing and proposed property and/or unit lines;
 - iii. location of zoning boundaries;
 - iv. use, location, and dimensions of existing and proposed structures;
 - v. existing and proposed watercourses and wetlands;
 - vi. location of minimum coastal elevation;
 - vii. location and dimensions of existing and proposed road, bicycle, and pedestrian networks;
 - viii. location and dimensions of driveways, parking lots, and parking spaces;
 - ix. type and amount of site clearing required, if any;
 - x. location of buffers;
 - xi. location and dimensions of existing and proposed parks and recreation lands, whether public or private;
 - xii. location of utilities;
 - xiii. development densities;
- (b) elevation drawings of existing and proposed structures including, but not limited to, dimensions and exterior materials;
- (c) a site grading plan;

- (d) a landscaping plan;
- (e) a drainage and stormwater management plan;
- (f) a hydrological assessment to determine groundwater resource volumes, availability, quality, and sustainability pre- and post-development;
- (g) a traffic impact assessment that evaluates the ability of existing road, bicycle, and pedestrian networks to accommodate traffic generated by the proposed development;
- (h) a geotechnical study;
- (i) environmental studies, including, but not limited to, studies addressing Species at Risk, climate change, and environmental contamination;
- (j) a shadow study;
- (k) a wind study;
- (l) a vibration study; and
- (m) a noise study.

6.5 Monitoring, Reviewing, and Updating this Plan

Municipal Planning Strategies are not set in stone. They are meant to be flexible, ‘living’ documents that can adapt and change as circumstances change. Over the life of this Plan, it may need to be updated following reviews of the document or amended as issues, values, and opportunities change. In either case, a strong set of policies is required to guide when and how Council should facilitate reviews and updates to the document.

6.5.1 Municipal Planning Strategy Reviews

Policy 6-24: Within two years of the adoption of this Municipal Planning Strategy, Council shall initiate a ‘housekeeping’ review to identify errors, omissions, or ways to improve or streamline the Plan.

Policy 6-25: Within five years of the adoption of this Municipal Planning Strategy, Council shall complete an interim review of the Plan. The intent of this review is to identify emerging policy issues and gaps in the Plan and adopt new or modified Plan policies to address these issues and gaps.

Policy 6-26: Within 10 years of adopting this Municipal Planning Strategy, Council shall complete a comprehensive review of this Plan to conduct extensive public consultation; to review policies; and to update or replace components of the Plan.

6.5.2 Amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy

Policy 6-27: Council may consider an amendment to this Municipal Planning Strategy when:

- (a) any policy intent is to be changed;
- (b) an amendment to the Land Use By-law or Subdivision By-law would conflict with any portion of the Municipal Planning Strategy; or
- (c) when this Municipal Planning Strategy is inconsistent with any Statements of Provincial Interest.

6.6 Public Participation

Policy 6-28: Council shall, by policy and consistent with Section 204 of the Act, adopt a Public Participation Program for the preparation of planning documents.

7 Schedules

Schedule 'A' – Future Land Use Map

Eastern Nova Scotia Regional Planning Draft Future Land Use Map: Antigonish

Legend

Future Land Use

- HAM Hamlet
- SC Serviced Centre
- RUR Rural
- CON Conservation
- SWP Source Water Protection

Other

- Town or First Nations Lands
- Secondary Plan Area

North



Scale

1:100,000
0 2 4 km

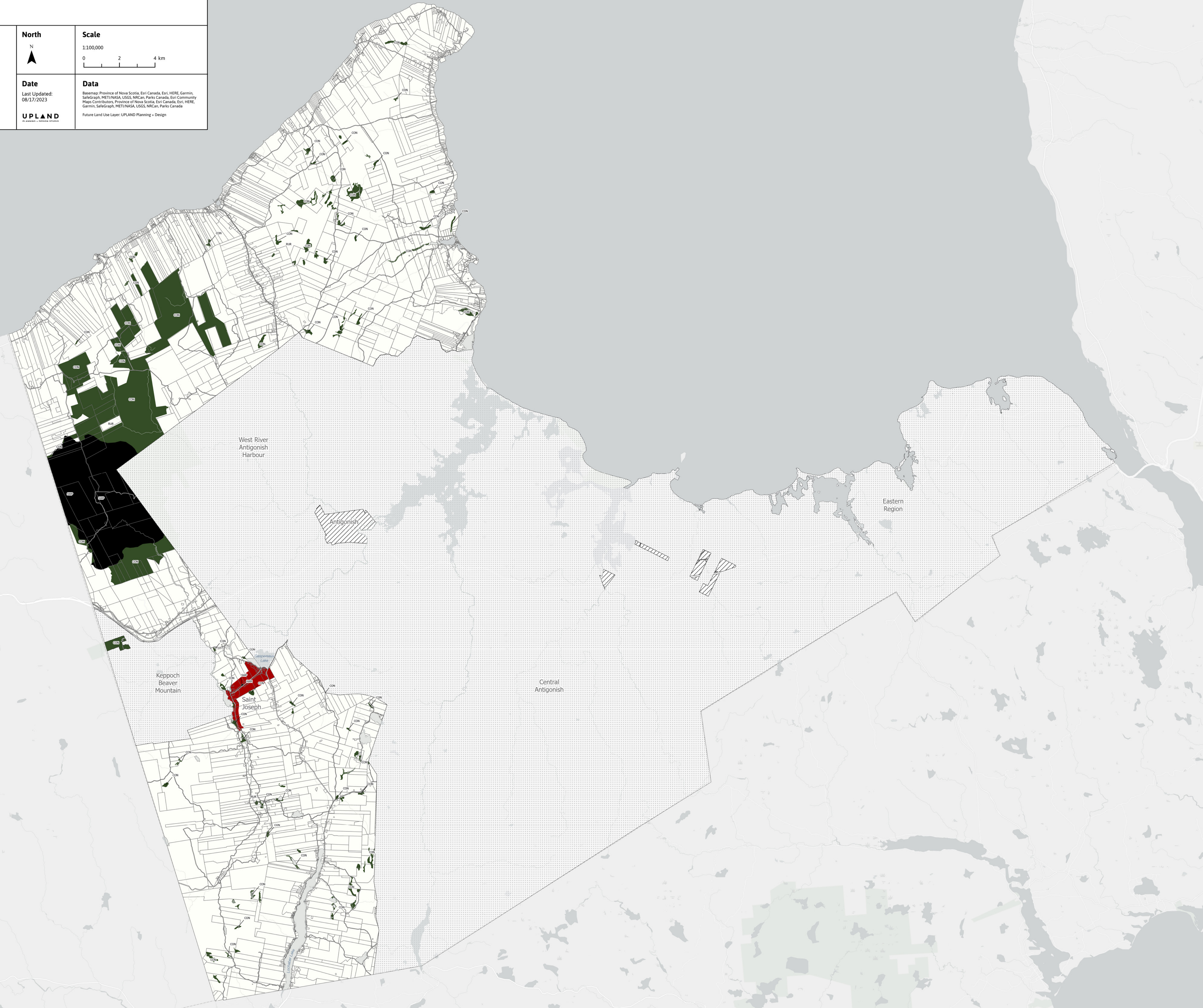
Date

Last Updated:
08/17/2023



Data

Basemap: Province of Nova Scotia, Esri Canada, Esri, HERE, Garmin, Swisstopo, METI/NSA, USGS, NRC, Esri Community Maps Contributors, Province of Nova Scotia, Esri Canada, Esri, HERE, Garmin, Swisstopo, METI/NSA, USGS, NRC, Esri Canada
Future Land Use Layer: UPLAND Planning + Design



Eastern Nova Scotia Regional Planning

Draft Future Land Use Map: Antigonish - Gaspereaux Lake

Legend

Future Land Use

- HAM Hamlet
- SC Serviced Centre
- RUR Rural
- CON Conservation
- SWP Source Water Protection

Other

- Town or First Nations Lands
- Secondary Plan Area

North



Scale



Date

Last Updated:
08/17/2023

UPLAND
PLANNING + DESIGN STUDIO

Data

Basemap: Province of Nova Scotia, Esri Canada, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, NRCan, Parks Canada
Future Land Use Layer: UPLAND Planning + Design

