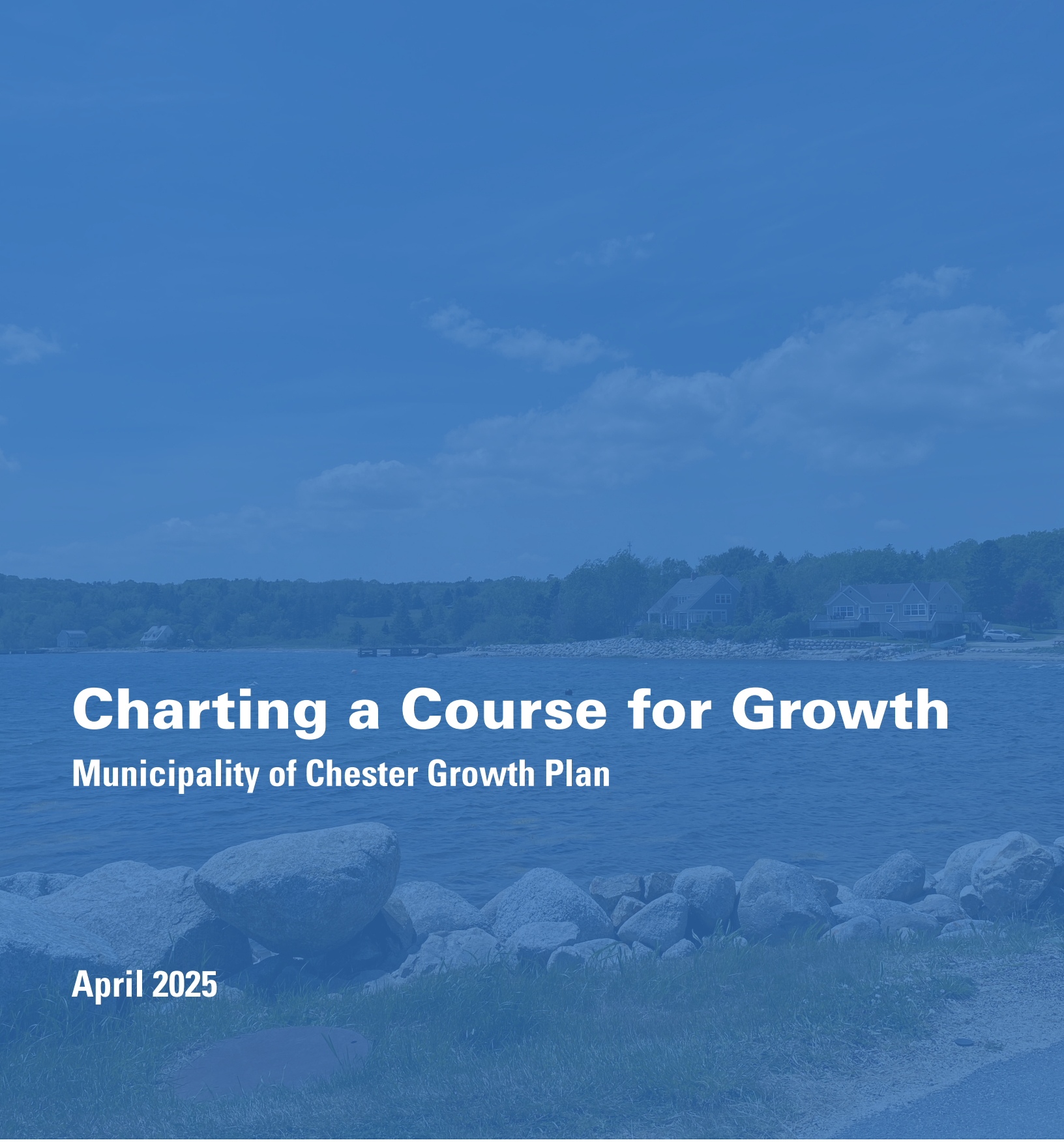


Charting a Course for Growth

Municipality of Chester Growth Plan

April 2025

Lead Consultant:

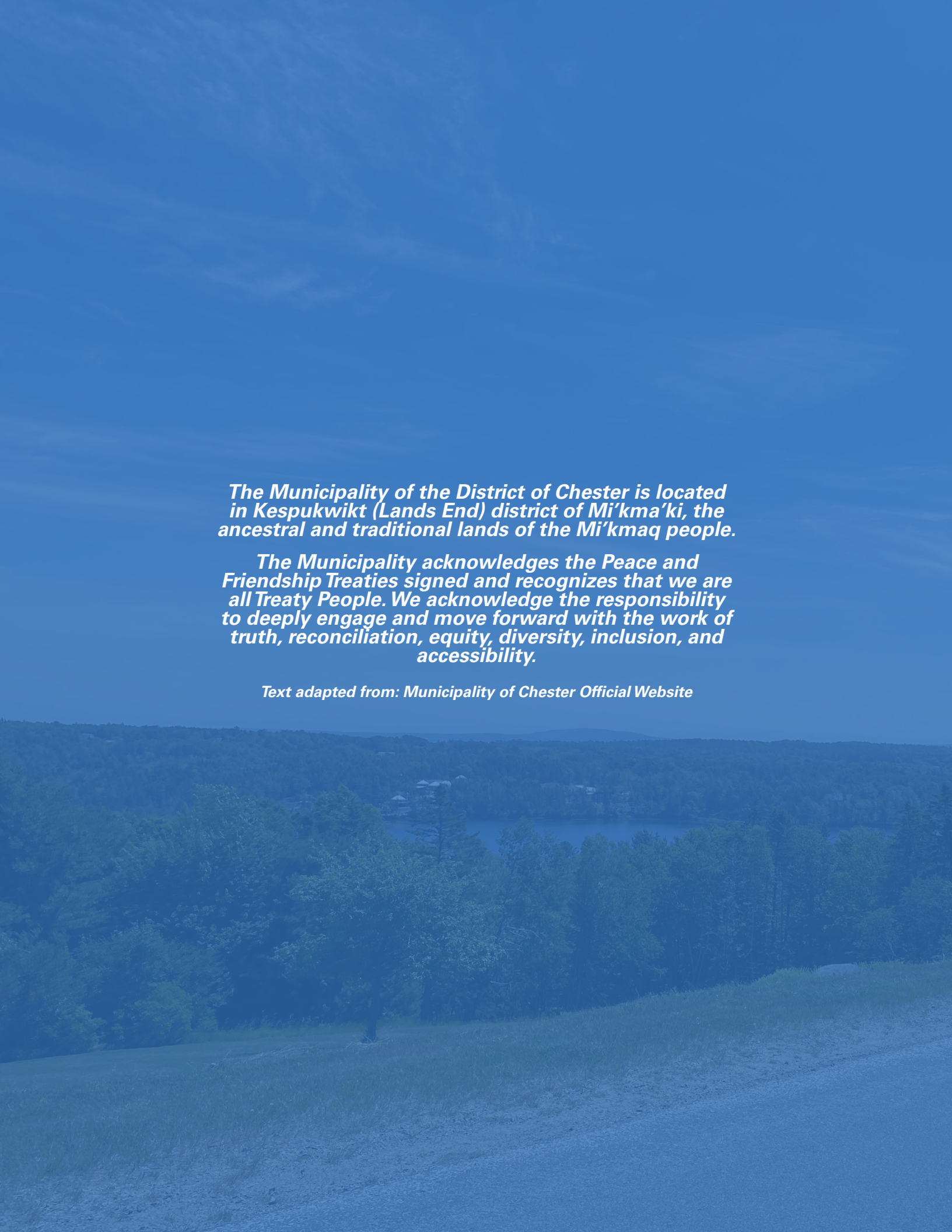
FBM

Sub-Consultant:

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Completed for:

THE MUNICIPALITY OF CHESTER



The Municipality of the District of Chester is located in Kespukwikt (Lands End) district of Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq people.

The Municipality acknowledges the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed and recognizes that we are all Treaty People. We acknowledge the responsibility to deeply engage and move forward with the work of truth, reconciliation, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Text adapted from: Municipality of Chester Official Website

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Section 1: Community Demographic Profile and Projections

1.1 Demographic Profile of the Municipality of Chester

Population Trends

According to 2021 Census data from Statistics Canada, the Municipality of Chester (MOC) had a population of 10,693, accounting for 1.1% of Nova Scotia's total population. Between 2016 and 2021, MOC experienced an annual population growth of 0.74%, gaining 383 residents. The upward trend has continued with Statistics Canada estimating a population of 11,848 in 2024.

After adjusting for the typical discrepancy between Statistics Canada census counts and population estimates, we estimate that if the census were taken in 2024 that the population of MOC would have been 11,650. This suggests an annual population growth rate of 1.8% between 2021-2024.

Age Distribution

MOC has an older population compared to the provincial average. In 2021, the median age was 56 years, significantly higher than Nova Scotia's median of 46. Children (aged 0-14) comprised 11.5% of the population, while 57.9% were aged 15-64, and 30.6% were 65 years or older. By 2024, Manifold Data indicated a trend toward an aging population: the working-age group (15-64) decreased to 55.66%, while the retirement-age population (65+) increased to 32.7%. Additionally, the 2021 Census reported that 41% of primary household maintainers in MOC were 65 or older, significantly surpassing the provincial average of 31.6%.

Household Income

In 2020, as reported in 2021 Census data, the median household income in MOC was $64,500, a notable 18.7% increase from the $54,336 recorded in 2016. This growth closely mirrors that of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (Lunenburg County), where the median household income rose by 19.4% over the same period. While mean and median household income in MOC closely aligns with the Provincial average, MOC had a higher percentage

Table 1-1. Excerpt of Household Income Breakdown, MOC vs. Nova Scotia
(Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census)

Household Income	MOC	Nova Scotia
$10,000 to $14,999	2.2 %	2.0 %
$15,000 to $19,999	1.8 %	1.8 %
$20,000 to $24,999	7.4%	5.6 %
$25,000 to $29,999	5.0 %	4.0 %
$30,000 to $34,999	4.7 %	4.2 %
$35,000 to $39,999	5.8 %	4.6 %
$40,000 to $44,999	5.3 %	4.6 %
$50,000 to $59,999	8.3 %	8.3 %
$60,000 to $69,999	7.9 %	7.8 %

of households with household income between $20,000 and $45,000 (Table 1-1). In 2021, 26.9% of MOC households earned $100,000 or more, slightly below the provincial average of 31.7% but higher than Lunenburg County's 26.6%.

Migration and Mobility

Census data indicates a continuing trend towards increasing migration into MOC (Figure 1-1). In 2021, 18.7% of MOC residents were living in a different municipality in Canada in 2016, up from 12.6% in the previous five-year period. Of those who were living in a different municipality in 2016, two thirds moved from a different municipality in Nova Scotia and one third moved from a municipality in a different Province or Territory. International migration was comparatively modest with 1.5% of the population having lived abroad in 2016, however this represents a doubling of the 0.76% this group accounted for five years earlier. This suggests MOC is becoming an increasingly attractive destination for intra-provincial, inter-provincial, and international migrants. Of the intra-provincial migration, many of these new residents are likely to have migrated from Halifax Regional Municipality.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is one of the key indicators in examining the labour force capacity. As of 2021 Census data indicates 63.4% of MOC residents aged 25 to 64 held a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, aligning closely with Nova Scotia's average of 65.6% and Lunenburg County's at 61.1%.

The 2021 Census also highlights that 10% of the population have an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma, which is slightly higher than the provincial and the Lunenburg County average (8.6% and 9.8% respectively). The higher percentage of the population with apprenticeships is an advantage for MOC to leverage construction, manufacturing, and trade sectors.

School Aged Children Population

According to 2021 Statistics Canada Census data, MOC is home to 875 school aged children between the ages of 5-14 years old, accounting for 8.2% of the population. An additional 420 residents are high school aged between 15 and 19 years old, accounting for a further 3.9% of the population. Compared with the Provincial average, the Municipality has a slightly smaller share of school aged children, with 10% of Nova Scotia's population aged 5-14 and 5% aged 15-19 (Table 1-2).

Across Nova Scotia, the trend in positive net migration of current and prospective school aged children has increased (Table 1-3). Between 2016 and 2021 the Census reports that the number of children migrating to Nova Scotia increased by 15% and 26% for ages 0-4 and 5-14 respectively. The Medium and High Population Growth scenarios for MOC project the growth of school-aged populations (ages 5-14), which should be accounted for when planning for amenities, recreation, and services.

In response to the growth in the population of school aged children, paired with the need to replace aging infrastructure, a 2023 news release by the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development announced a $1 billion investment

Figure 1-1. Migration and Mobility Status, 2016 vs. 2021
(Source Statistics Canada Census, 2016 & 2021)

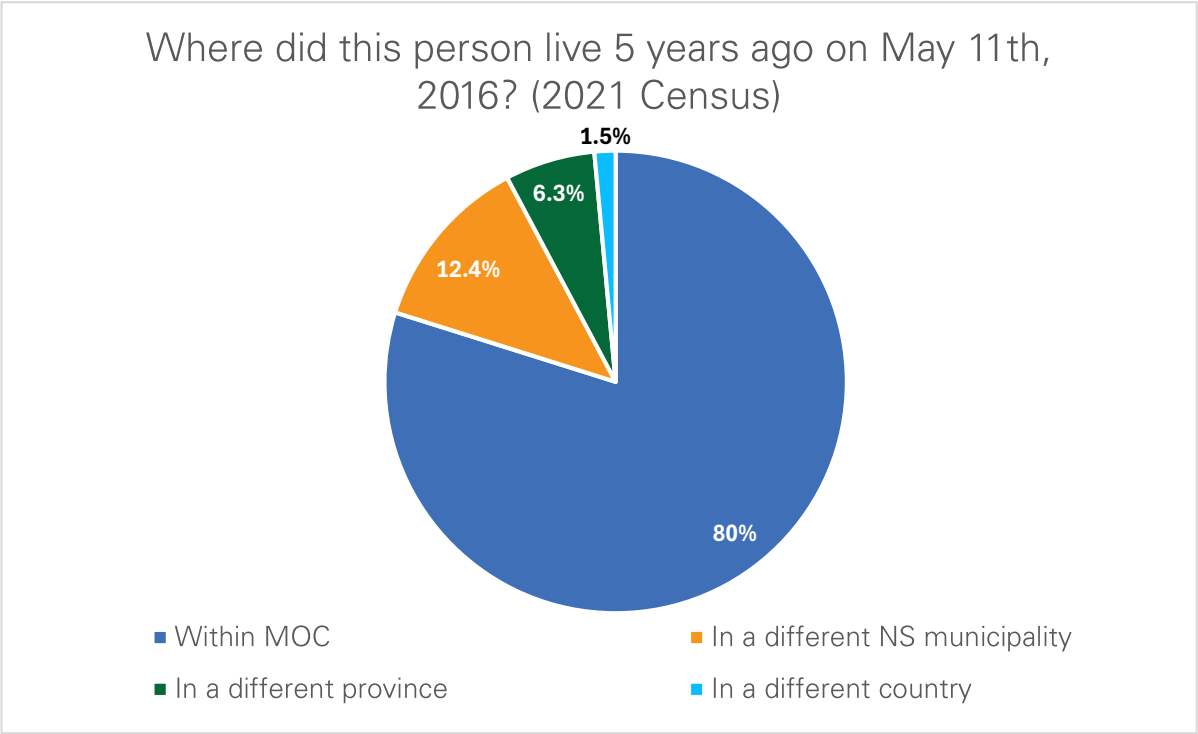


Table 1-2. School Aged Children Breakdown, MOC vs. Nova Scotia
(Source: FBM & Manifold Data Inc.)

	MOC		Nova Scotia	
	Counts	% of population	Counts	% of population
5 to 9 years	445	4.2 %	47,070	4.9 %
10 to 14 years	430	4.0 %	49,300	5.1 %
15 to 19 years	420	3.9 %	48,180	5.0 %

Table 1-3. Total School Aged Population vs. Migrated School Aged Population in Nova Scotia.
(Source: Statistics Canada 2016, 2021)

	2016	2021	+/- (%)
0-4 years (**total**)	42,005	40,340	**-4%**
0-4 years (**migrated**)	7,280	8,390	**+15%**
5-14 years (**total**)	91,825	96,370	**+5%**
5-14 years (**migrated**)	10,445	13,180	**+26%**

in school facility upgrades. This includes a new consolidated pre-primary to Grade 12 School in New Germany, Lunenburg County. As the Municipality continues to work towards its goal of attracting young families, it should collaborate with the Province to ensure local school capacity is adequate for the growing population and that investments in new schools support Growth Plan objectives.

Workforce Population

The total labour force population for the year-end 2023/2024 in MOC was 5,180, approximately 46.4% of the estimated total population 2023 (estimates from Manifold Data). This includes permanent employees, temporary employees, and the self-employed. MOC has a slightly higher percentage of self-employed workers (20.39%), compared to the Provincial and the Lunenburg County average (11.30% and 17.37% respectively).

The 2021 Census provides insights into MOC's workforce. The top three occupational categories (what people do for work) were:

1. **Sales and service occupations:** 1,050 jobs (21.7% of the labour force)
2. **Trades, transport, and equipment operators:** 995 jobs (20.6%)
3. **Business, finance, and administration occupations:** 645 jobs (13.3%)

Meanwhile, the top three industry sectors (where people work) were:

1. **Health care and social assistance:** 650 jobs (13.4%)
2. **Construction:** 530 jobs (11%)
3. **Manufacturing:** 520 jobs (10.8%)

Current estimates from Manifold Data indicate that these numbers are largely unchanged since 2021.

Relative to the Province, MOC labour force specializes in certain industries. This indicates that MOC is likely a net-exporter of those goods in the Nova Scotia. MOC specializes the most in the following NAICS industries (1 being the most specialized):

1. **Manufacturing (31-33)**
2. **Information and cultural industries (51)**
3. **Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (11)**
4. **Construction (23)**

Relative to the Province, MOC Labour force is underweight in the following NAICS industries (1 being the most underweight):

1. **Management of companies and enterprises (55)**
2. **Utilities (22)**
3. **Finance and Insurance (52)**
4. **Educational services (61)**
5. **Transportation and warehousing (48-49)**
6. **Public administration (91)**
7. **Administrative and support, waste management, and remediation services (56)**
8. **Accommodation and food services (72)**
9. **Retail trade (44-45)**

MOC can evaluate the potential for import substitution of these industries, whereby economic development initiatives are focused on creating local options for goods and services that are otherwise purchased outside of the Municipal boundaries. This can help to retain more spending in the Municipality as opposed competing trade areas of HRM and Bridgewater.

Commuting Destination

Among the total labour force population (5,180 workers), 70.2% (or 3,636 workers) have a fixed commuting destination (Figure 1-2). 16.58% of workers have no fixed workplace address, which is comparable to Lunenburg County's average at 16.2% and slightly higher than the provincial average at 14.5%. 8.2% work from home, 0.3% work outside of Canada, and 4.7% are reported as uncategorized.

When examining the workforce population who commute to work, 38.6% of the total workers commute within MOC, 12.2% outside of MOC but within Lunenburg County, and 0.4% to a different province or territory. Notably, the percentage of workers who commute to a different census subdivision within Nova Scotia (outside of Lunenburg County) is significantly higher than the provincial and Lunenburg County averages. In MOC, 18.9% commute outside of Lunenburg County for work, compared to the provincial average of 6.09% and the Lunenburg County average of 8.3%. The remaining labour force population either work from home, outside Canada, or do not have a fixed workplace.

These commuting patterns highlight that MOC is conveniently located within commuting distance to key employment hubs in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The twinning of Highway 103 will increase the transportation accessibility of employment opportunities in HRM for MOC residents and has the potential to increase the share of residents commuting there for work.

Mode of Transportation

According to the Manifold data in 2023, private vehicles were the primary mode of transportation amongst commuters (81%). 3.5% of workers commute by walking, which is slightly lower than the provincial and the county averages (5% and 3.9% respectively). 0% reported using public transit or a bicycle. It is important to note that this data solely focuses on commuting patterns and is not reflective of all trips being made. As a result, it will undervalue the trips made by pedestrians to shops and services such as children walking or biking to school, or for social purposes such as a resident visiting their neighbourhood or local park.

The high proportion of residents commuting to work using a private vehicle is to be expected for a rural municipality where residents often make long commutes to their jobs. However, supporting alternatives can help to reduce the cost of vehicle ownership and provide options for those who may not be able to drive whether due to a disability, financial hardship, old age or even young age. Possible actions include working with the Joint Regional Transportation Authority (JRTA) to support a commuter transit route and supporting active transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks, bike lanes and multi-use paths.

Figure 1-2. Commuting Destination

(Source: FBM & Manifold Data Inc., 2023)

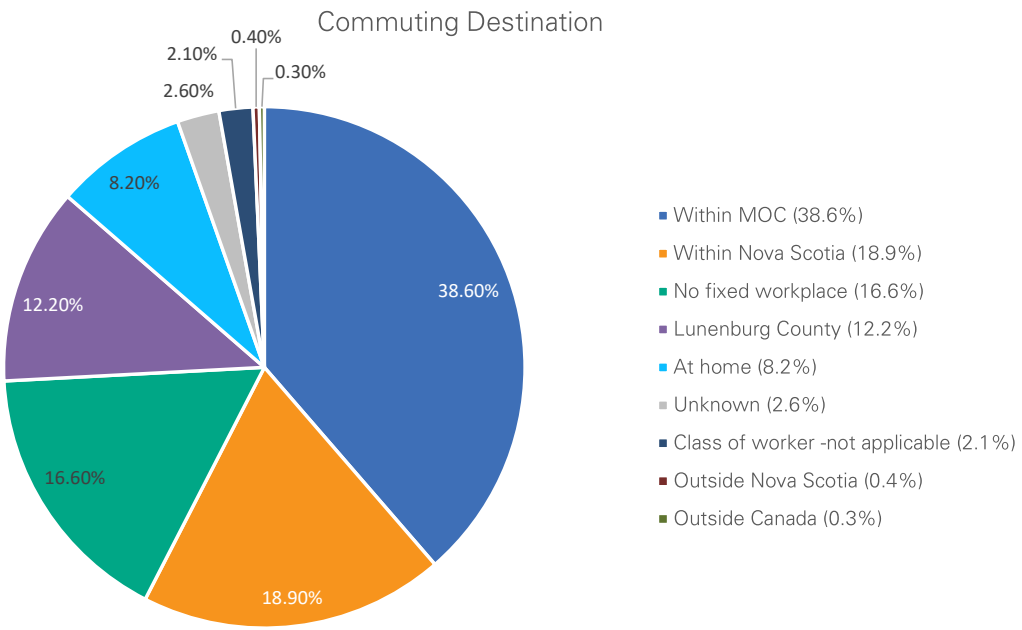
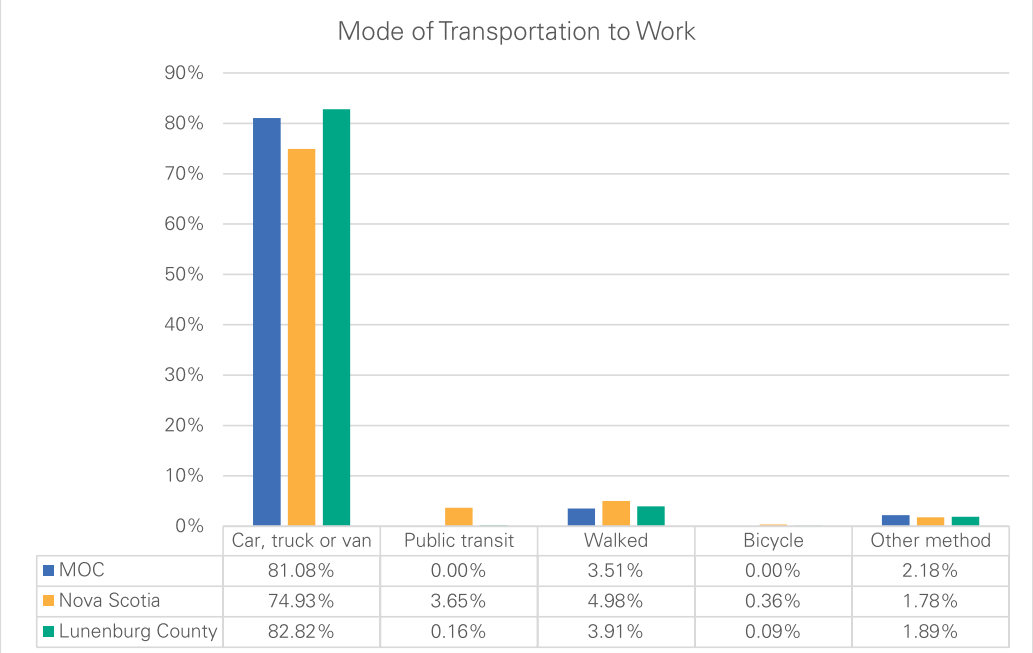


Figure 1-3. Mode of Transportation to Work

(Source: FBM & Manifold Data Mining Inc., 2023)



	Car, truck or van	Public transit	Walked	Bicycle	Other method
MOC	81.08%	0.00%	3.51%	0.00%	2.18%
Nova Scotia	74.93%	3.65%	4.98%	0.36%	1.78%
Lunenburg County	82.82%	0.16%	3.91%	0.09%	1.89%

Attainable Housing

Statistics Canada refers to "core housing need" as households that fall below at least one of the indicator thresholds for housing adequacy, affordability, or suitability, and would have to spend more than 30% of their pre-tax income on alternative local housing that is defined as acceptable, meeting all three housing indicator thresholds. Adequate housing does not require major repairs. Affordable housing has shelter costs equal to or less than 30% of total before-tax household income. Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of residents within a household. The 2021 Census indicates that 9.1% of all households in MOC were in core housing need. When considering only tenant households, this number is higher with 21.6% of households being in core housing need.

In this report, we consider attainable housing to be what is affordable to a household based on their income levels. Therefore, what is attainable for one household may not be attainable for another. To better understand the Municipality's "attainable housing" market in the MOC we reviewed the 2023 MOC Housing Needs Report. This report provides a good analysis of the issue of housing affordability in the Municipality and examines affordability across the income spectrum. The Housing Needs Report goes beyond the 30% of pre-tax income spent on rent to include ancillary costs of rental tenure and home ownership (estimated at 15% and 35% respectively). Figure 1-4 and Figure 1-5 demonstrate what is attainable based on this combined metric of 30% of pre-tax income and ancillary costs for rental and purchasing at varying income levels.

As Figure 1-4 indicates, only households with a combined income of at least $140,000 would have an income high enough for the 2022 single detached dwelling median sale price of $413,750 to be considered attainable. This excludes 81% of couples, 93% of lone parents, and 98% of single persons.

As shown in Figure 1-5, housing affordability has become a growing concern for renters. In 2021, 79% of single persons in MOC had an income below what is required for the average 1-bedroom rental rate of $682 to be considered attainable. Since 2021 average rental prices have almost certainly increased.

Figure 1-4. Estimate of Sales Affordability by Income Level, Renter Households

(Source: Municipality of Chester Municipal Housing Needs Report, 2023)

		2022 median sale price:			$413,750	$471,000	$315,000
		% of HHs below income level			Single Detached Dwelling	Row	Condo Apt
Income level	Attainable sales price	Couples	Lone parents	Single persons			
$90,000	$269,000	53%	81%	93%	no	no	no
$95,000	$284,000	57%	84%	94%	no	no	no
$100,000	$299,000	61%	87%	95%	no	no	no
$105,000	$314,000	64%	89%	96%	no	no	no
$110,000	$329,000	67%	89%	96%	no	no	yes
$115,000	$344,000	70%	90%	97%	no	no	yes
$120,000	$359,000	73%	90%	98%	no	no	yes
$125,000	$373,500	76%	92%	98%	no	no	yes
$130,000	$388,500	78%	92%	98%	no	no	yes
$135,000	$403,500	79%	92%	98%	no	no	yes
$140,000	$418,500	81%	93%	98%	yes	no	yes
$145,000	$433,500	83%	93%	98%	yes	no	yes
$150,000	$448,500	85%	93%	99%	yes	no	yes

Homeownership	Total Dwelling	Single Detached Dwelling	Row	Condo Apt
Est'd income needed to buy median home	$130,400	$138,400	$157,500	$105,400
% of total households below income	**85%**	**86%**	**90%**	**76%**

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada tables (see Provincial Report), Bank of Canada, NSAR MLS®

Moreover, rental rates include existing leases which may have a provincial rent cap applied to them. As a result, the asking market rate for rentals is likely significantly higher than this average.

A 2024 report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives highlighted that living wage for Southern Nova Scotian residents was $25.20 per hour. This was calculated as the gross hourly rate a two-parent family working full-time with two children can afford to meet its basic needs, after government transfers and income tax deductions.

Based on the Housing Needs Assessment approach to determining attainable rent, an individual who is earning the living wage of $25.20 per hour, working 40 hours per week could afford a monthly rent of $1,113.84. This is based on 30% of before-tax income plus an additional 15% for ancillary rental costs such as heating and electricity.

While this is above the 2021 average rent, it should be noted that rental prices have continued to climb significantly since 2021, and that average rent is typically significantly below the asking rent of a new lease. Additionally, approximately 69% of individuals in MOC make less than this amount annually. The living wage should be considered by employers when attempting to attract and retain working age residents to the area.

1.2 Population Projections

After reaching a high in 2001 of 10,781 people, MOC declined in population to 10,310 in 2016. Between 2016 to 2021, MOC reversed this trend along with other Counties across the Province including Yarmouth, Digby, Annapolis and Pictou and grew to a population of 10,690. This growth is due to the increase in intra- and inter-provincial migration to MOC as was described in the demographic profile section. This growth accelerated between 2021-2024 with a spurt of growth that brought MOC to a population estimated by Statistics Canada annual population estimates of 11,848 in 2024. Adjusting for the average difference between Statistics Canada annual population estimates and the Statistics Canada Census for MOC, the 2024 population is adjusted to 11,650.

Figure 1-5. Estimate of Sales Affordability by Income Level, Renter Households

(Source: Municipality of Chester Municipal Housing Needs Report, 2023)

		2021 average rent:			$549	$682	$759	$841
		% of HHs below income level			Studio	1-bed	2-bed	3+ bed
Income level	Attainable rent	Couples	Lone parents	Single persons				
$20,000	$330	2%	4%	19%	no	no	no	no
$25,000	$420	2%	10%	45%	no	no	no	no
$30,000	$500	2%	19%	57%	no	no	no	no
$35,000	$590	5%	27%	66%	yes	no	no	no
$40,000	$670	9%	40%	73%	yes	no	no	no
$45,000	$750	16%	50%	79%	yes	yes	no	no
$50,000	$840	21%	63%	84%	yes	yes	yes	no
$55,000	$920	27%	68%	87%	yes	yes	yes	yes
$60,000	$1,000	34%	74%	89%	yes	yes	yes	yes
$65,000	$1,090	40%	79%	91%	yes	yes	yes	yes
$70,000	$1,170	49%	83%	92%	yes	yes	yes	yes
$75,000	$1,260	53%	83%	93%	yes	yes	yes	yes
$80,000	$1,340	59%	88%	95%	yes	yes	yes	yes

Renting	Average	Studio	1-bed	2-bed	3+ bed
Est'd income needed to rent average unit	$40,200	$32,800	$40,700	$45,300	$50,200
% of renter households below income	**46%**	**33%**	**46%**	**54%**	**59%**

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Custom Census 2021 tables, PVSC

To create the population projections, a 5-year cohort-component methodology was used. This method breaks a population down into 5-year age cohorts and projects them into the future five years at a time in line with the census. During each 5-year period, mortality and net-migration rates are applied to project the size of the population. Birth rates are also applied based on age-specific fertility rates to estimate the size of the 0-5 age cohort. It is important to note that a population projection is not a prediction of what will happen, but rather an exploration of what would happen if certain conditions occurred. Population projections should therefore be used as a tool to understand the implications of different scenarios. Three projections have been developed as summarized in Figure 1-6, each reflecting a different growth scenario based on varying net migration rates.

Components of Population Change

A community's population size hinges on only three factors: 1) Births, 2) Deaths, and 3) Net-Migration. For each projection, we have used the 2021 birth and mortality rates for Nova Scotia as controls – meaning they don't change for the duration of the projections.

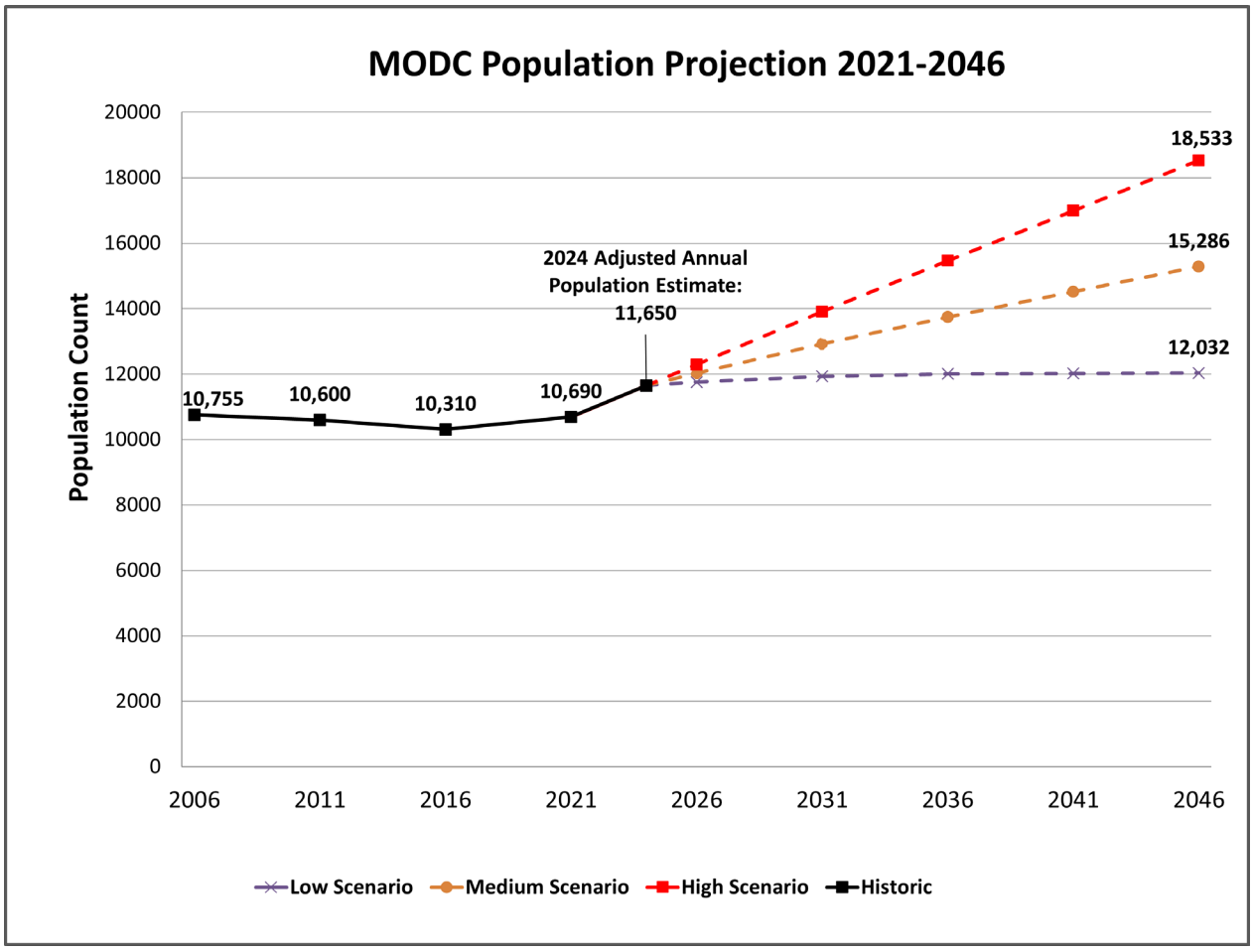
The variable which varies between the scenarios is the age specific net-migration rates.

Net-migration rates are calculated by analyzing the difference between an expected population and the actual population. For example, given a population of 1,000 Nova Scotian men aged 35-39 in 2016, we would expect that five years later in 2021 when this age cohort is now 40-44, that due to mortality there should only be 930 men aged 40-44. Any difference between the expected and actual (recorded by the census) is due to either immigration or emigration. The balance of the two is recorded as net-migration. Calculating the difference between the expected and actual populations, then converting them into a rate relative to the size of the age cohort province wide provided the below net-migration rates for MOC in Figures 1-7 and 1-8.

The two historic net-migration rates show us that from 2016-2021 fewer people aged 15-24 are being lost to negative net-migration and more people aged 25 – 69 are being gained due to positive in-migration. With regard to maintaining a healthy workforce population, the net-migration rates of 2016-2021 are

Figure 1-6. Municipality of Chester Population Projection, 2021-2046

(Source: FBM)



significantly more advantageous than those from 2006 – 2016. Prior to 2016, the pronounced negative net-migration rates for cohorts aged 15-24, and the neutral or negative net-migration rates for cohorts aged 35-54 provided a strong headwind toward maintaining the existing workforce size.

To estimate the net-migration rates for 2021-2024, the annual population estimate was sensitized by finding the average over count of the annual population estimate above the Census since 2006. This average was then applied to reduce the 2024 population estimate to be in-line with an expected census count if one was conducted in 2024. This sensitized population estimate for MOC in 2024 was 11,650.

The sensitized estimate was used to estimate the net-migration rates for 2021-2024 by uniformly increasing the net-migration rates to the extent needed for the Municipality to have grown from a population of 10,690 in 2021 to a population of 11,650 in 2024. How the net-migration rates have been projected beyond 2024 are detailed in the High, Medium, and Low Growth Scenarios.

Age specific net-migration rates are multiplied against the total age cohort for the projected provincial population, representing the "at-risk" principle approach to estimating net-migration. The Statistics Canada 2023 - 2048 High Growth Projection Scenario was used for all three scenarios for the purpose. Under this scenario, Nova Scotia grows to a population of 1,383,800 by 2046 – an annual growth rate of 1.17% over the next 23 years. It should be noted that even the high growth scenario is significantly lower than the growth rate of 3.24% experienced between 2022-2023. The High Growth projection was chosen as the Nova Scotia Baseline as it represents the second highest Growth Scenario and returns internal migration rates to the average between 1991-2023 as opposed to scenarios M1-M6 which are based on a short interval of immigration. Ultimately the intent of this selection is to capture a projection which reasonably represents a future in which Nova Scotia continues to grow, albeit somewhat slower than the rate of growth between 2021-2023 which we consider to likely be above the future average.

High Growth Scenario

Under the High Scenario, the estimated 2021-2024 net-migration rates are the "new normal" for MOC. Under this scenario, the relative population size of MOC increases from 1.10% in 2021, to 1.27% of the projected Nova Scotia population by 2046. This implies that MOC grows faster than the Provincial average. By 2036 the total population of MOC is projected at 15,466 and a population of 18,533 by 2046.

Figure 1-7. Average Net Migration Rate, 2006 to 2016

(Source: FBM)

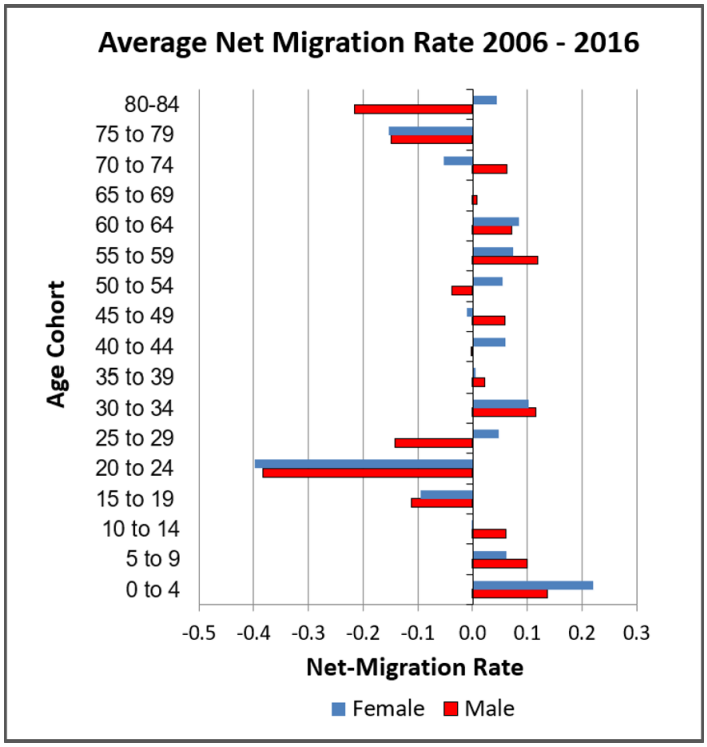
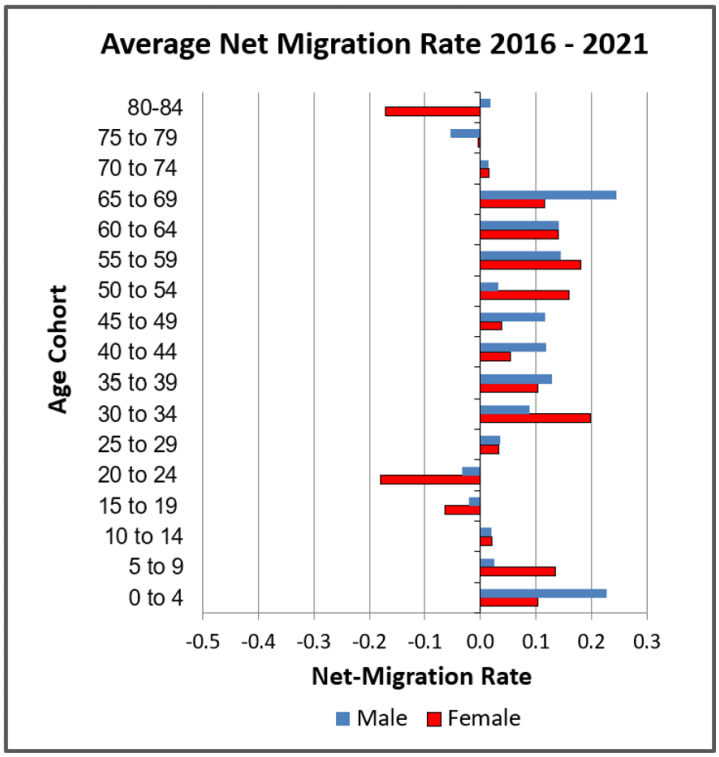


Figure 1-8. Average Net Migration Rate, 2016 to 2021

(Source: FBM)



Medium Growth Scenario

Under the Medium Scenario, the estimated 2021-2024 net-migration rates are tempered post 2024. Under this scenario, the net-migration rates were reduced post 2024 to a adjusted rate which maintains the population of MOC at 1.1% of the projected Nova Scotia population by 2046. To accomplish this, the average net-migration rates of 2011-2021 were uniformly adjusted upward. This implies that MOC grows at a rate equal to the Provincial average. By 2036 the total population of MOC is projected at 13,743 and a population of 15,286 by 2046.

Low Growth Scenario

Under the Low Scenario, the estimated 2021-2024 net-migration rates were a brief anomaly. Provincial population growth passes MOC by and occurs in other areas around the Province. The net-migration rates are equal to those experienced between 2016-2021. While more people are choosing to move to MOC than those leaving, it is only enough to keep the overall population stable with only slight growth between 2024 – 2046. Under this scenario the population of MOC declines from a share of 1.10% of overall Nova Scotia population in 2021 to 0.87% of the projected Nova Scotia Population by 2046. By 2036 the total population of MOC is projected at 12,006 and a population of 12,032 by 2046.

Figure 1-9. Municipality of Chester Age Pyramid, 2021 Census vs. 2036 **High** Projection Scenario

(Source: FBM)

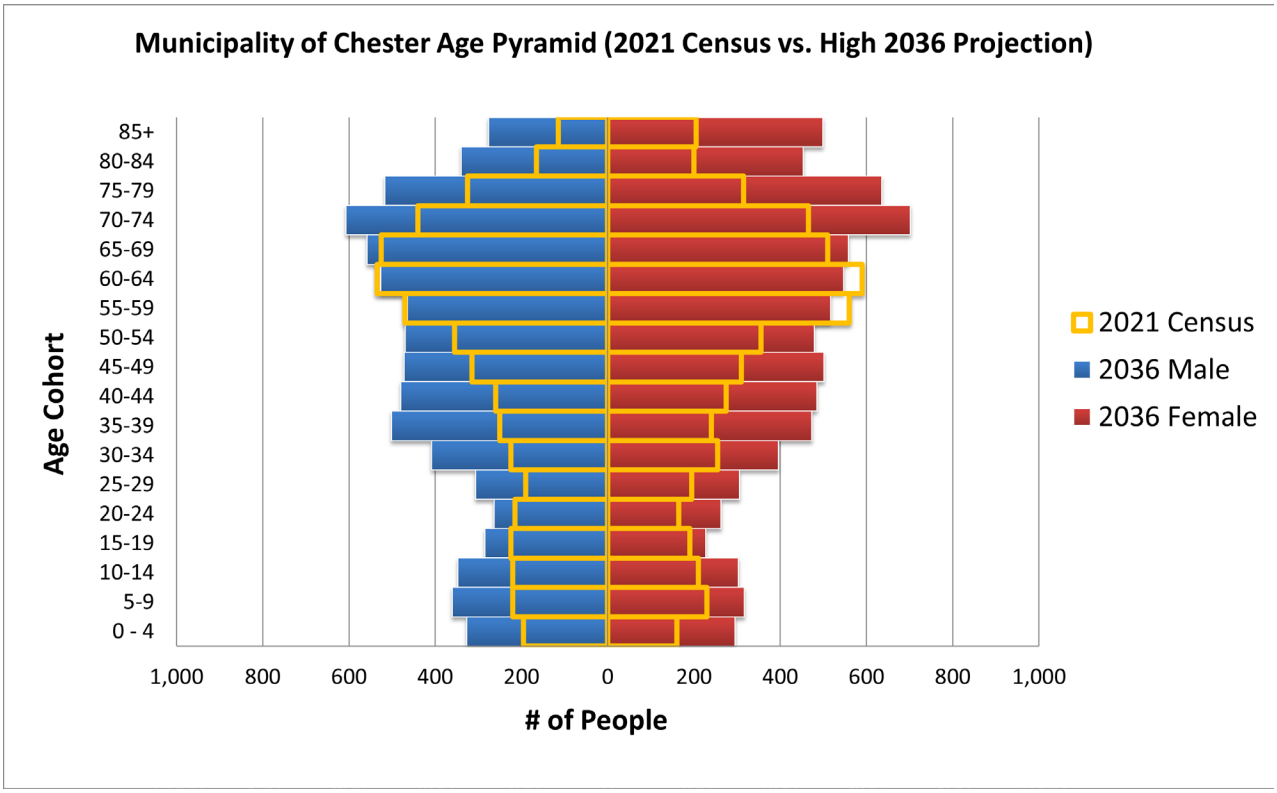


Figure 1-10. Municipality of Chester Age Pyramid, 2021 Census vs. 2036 **Medium** Projection Scenario

(Source: FBM)

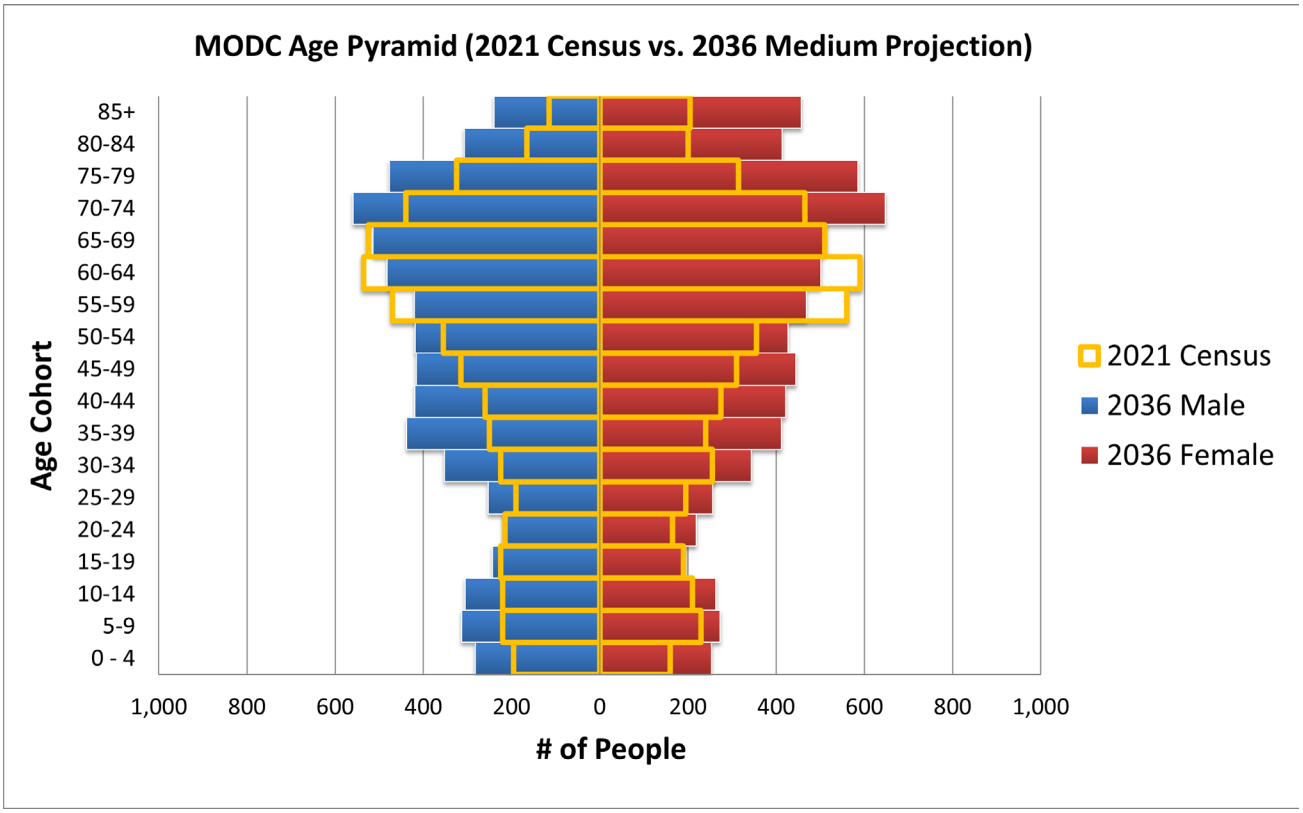
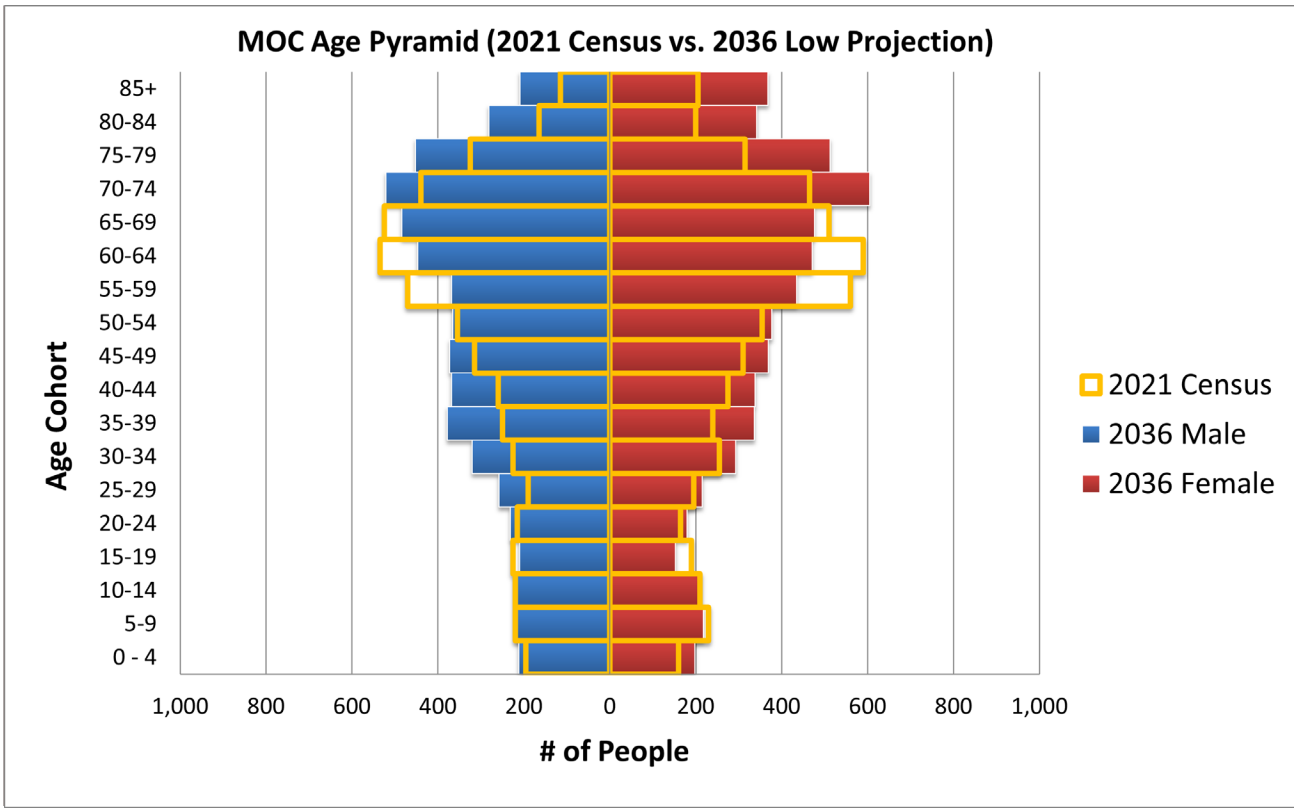


Figure 1-11. Municipality of Chester Age Pyramid, 2021 Census vs. 2036 **Low** Projection Scenario

(Source: FBM)



1.3 Workforce Projections

To project the future workforce size for MOC, the three population projections were taken and multiplied by age specific workforce participation rate averages for Canada for male and females (ages 15-19, 20-24, 25-54, and 55-64). This gives a sense of the potential workforce capacity in MOC moving forward as the population grows and age pyramids evolve.

Under all three scenarios, the total workforce size is projected to increase. However, due to an aging population demographic and strong positive net migration rates for retirement age populations, all three scenarios project that the relative workforce size (% of population participating in the workforce) is projected to be significantly below the estimated 2006 relative workforce size. However, unlike the Low and Medium projections, the High Growth scenario projects that the relative size of the workforce return to 49.8%, approximately that of 2011.

Figure 1-12. Municipality of Chester Workforce Size Projection, 2021 to 2046

(Source: FBM)

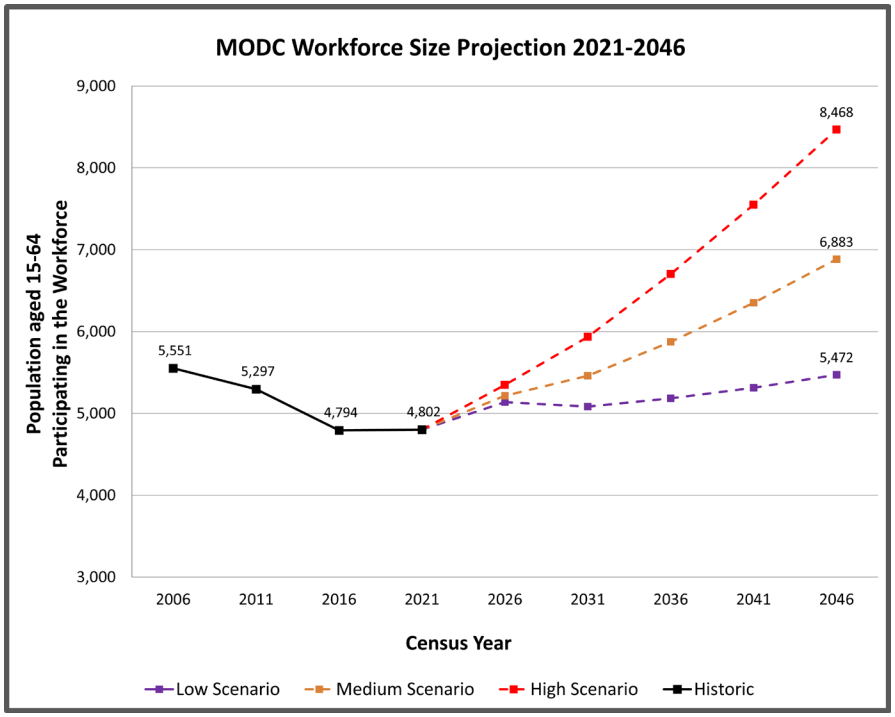
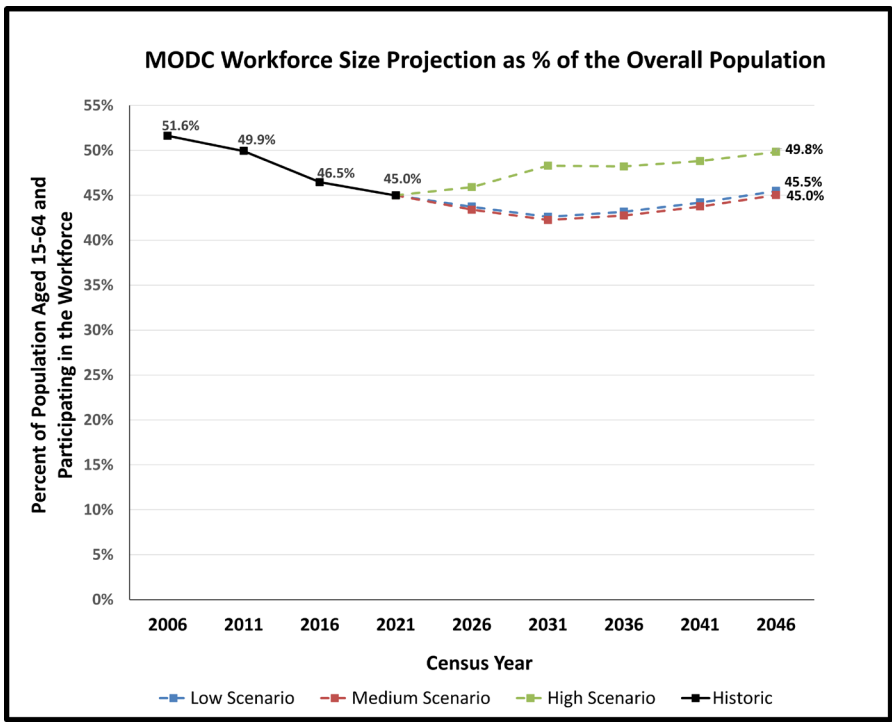


Figure 1-13. Municipality of Chester Workforce Size Projection (as % of the Overall Population)

(Source: FBM)



1.4 Housing Demand Projections

The Low, Medium and High Growth Scenarios in Section 1.2 were used to project the total number of new housing units (housing demand) that could be needed by 2046. The housing demand projections included the findings of the 2023 MOC Housing Needs Assessment Report which estimated that as of the end of 2022, there was a deficit of 335 dwelling units. This deficit was based on housing supply versus demand at the end of 2022 for both market and non-market housing. After accounting for population growth and housing starts in 2022 and 2023, we estimate that the housing deficit has grown to approximately 431 units.

The projected housing demand is broken down into the following categories and sub-categories:

- Single Family Dwellings
  - » Unserviced Large Lot
  - » Unserviced Medium Lot
  - » Serviced Medium Lot

- Missing Middle Housing
  - » Serviced Duplex / Triplex
  - » Serviced Row / Townhomes
  - » Serviced Low Rise Multi Family

It is assumed that at the beginning of the projection that 85% of **new** dwelling units will be in the Single Family Dwelling category with the remaining 15% in the Missing Middle Housing category. By 2046, the proportion of new dwelling units in the Single Family Dwelling category declines to 68% while the proportion of new housing in the Missing Middle Housing category increases to 32%. These assumptions impact the amount of gross land required, as serviced missing middle housing is significantly more space efficient than unserviced single family dwellings. The three scenarios, detailed in Figure 1-14, indicate the following approximate dwelling unit absorption and/or construction rates:

- High Growth Scenario: 169 dwelling units per year (net)
- Medium Growth Scenario: 99 dwelling units per year (net)
- Low Growth Scenario: 28 dwelling units per year (net)

According to CMHC data, the average rate of housing starts between 2021-2023 was 66 dwelling units per year. This is significantly less than what would be required under the Medium and High Growth Scenarios. Under these scenarios, the projected housing demand will greatly exceed new supply, leading to lower vacancy rates, higher rental costs, and higher housing sales prices. This will create a myriad of challenges for MOC, not limited to the attraction and retention of workers.

Figure 1-14. 2046 Housing Demand Projections
(Source: FBM)

Single Family Dwellings

Unserviced Large Lot (30%)		Low	Medium	High
	Dwelling Units	155	507	860
	Gross Land (ac)	154.5	507.3	860.1
Density (units/ac)	1.0			
Unserviced Small Lot (40%)		**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
	Dwelling Units	206	676	1,147
	Gross Land (ac)	137.3	450.9	764.5
Density (units/ac)	1.5			
Serviced Medium Lot (30%)		**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
	Dwelling Units	155	507	860
	Gross Land (ac)	20.6	67.6	114.7
Density (units/ac)	7.5			
Single Family Summary		**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
	Total Dwelling Units	**515.0**	**1691.0**	**2867.0**
	Gross Land (ac)	**312.4**	**1025.9**	**1739.3**
Density (units/ac)	**1.6**			

Missing Middle Housing

Serviced Duplex/Triplex (25%)		Low	Medium	High
	Dwelling Units	25	121	215
	Gross Land (ac)	1.7	8.0	14.3
Density (units/ac)	15.0			
Serviced Row/Townhomes (25%)		**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
	Dwelling Units	25	121	215
	Gross Land (ac)	1.2	6.0	10.7
Density (units/ac)	25.0			
Serviced Low Rise Multi Family (50%)		**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
	Dwelling Units	50	241	430
	Gross Land (ac)	1.4	6.9	12.3
Density (units/ac)	35.0			
Missing Middle Summary		**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
	Total Dwelling Units	**99**	**482**	**859**
	Gross Land (ac)	**4**	**21**	**37**
Density (units/acre)	**23.0**			

TOTAL DEMAND BY 2046			
Dwelling Unit Demand	**614**	**2,173**	**3,726**
Gross Land (ac)	**316.7**	**1,046.8**	**1,776.6**
Density (units/acre)	**1.9**		

1.5 Key Findings - What Does This Mean for the Growth Plan?

Based on the demographic and population projection research, we can create the following profile for MOC:

MOC has a small population, primarily rural population spread out across multiple population centres. The population is aging with a large segment of the population between the age 50-74. Since 2016 population decline has reversed into growth, a trend which accelerated post 2021. Population projections point towards a potential for significant population growth and an increase in the share of the population over the age of 65. Population growth has been driven by intra-provincial migration and inter-provincial migration.

Average and median household income in MOC are close to the Provincial median and average household incomes. However, the proportion of households in MOC with a household income between $20,000 - $45,000 is higher than that of the Province, highlighting a challenge for housing affordability. Meanwhile, the current rate of housing construction is far below what is needed to keep up with the medium and high population projection scenarios which could require up to an additional 3,726 dwelling units by 2046. If housing supply continues to lag housing demand, home prices and rental costs will be likely to rise for existing and new residents.

The local labour force specializes in manufacturing, information and cultural industries, agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and construction. However, without interventions designed to combat existing trends, the share of the population in the workforce is projected to remain below historic rates and to continue to decline in the short to medium term (low and medium scenario projection). This poses a challenge for economic development as the labour pool shrinks relative to the overall population. Additionally, nearly a third of the labour force commutes outside of MOC for work. The twinning of Highway 103 and the potential for the Joint Regional Transportation Authority (JRTA) to make additional transportation investments could increase this trend further by reducing the transportation cost for residents commuting into HRM. Improved transportation infrastructure between HRM and MOC may also provide an opportunity for employers in MOC to hire skilled labourers residing in HRM.

Based on these findings, the Growth Plan aims to:

- Support the development of housing supply to meet the projected demand,
- Strategically direct growth to support the development of complete communities, improve infrastructure efficiency, and support the local economy,
- Ensure growth is well integrated into existing communities by aligning growth with local community character,
- Identify infrastructure investments needed to support growth,
- Retain and attract a workforce-aged population to support economic development.

To develop recommendations to achieve these objectives, public engagement was held with the public, local businesses, non-profit housing providers, and development industry professionals. The results of these engagements are detailed in Section 2.



Section 2: Public Engagement

From September 2024 to January 2025, the Project Team conducted in-person, public open houses in the seven districts of MOC: Chester Basin, Hubbards, East Chester, Western Shore, New Ross, Canaan, and the Village of Chester. In addition to the open houses, community members were invited to engage online through MOC's EngageChester website. The website was used to communicate the updates of the project and to share relevant documents for the projects, including the What We Heard reports from the open house sessions.

The objectives of the open house sessions were to:

1. Present the objectives and the scope of the Growth Plan,
2. Explore existing growth-related challenges in MOC,
3. Present the current Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) policies, zoning regulations and the planned expansion of the wastewater serviced areas, and 4) identify a list of recommended actions to encourage the growth of MOC.

Overall, participants generally shared positive responses to the prospect of smart, focused and well-managed growth and the potential recommendations to proactively plan for the growth in MOC. Throughout the engagements, certain concerns were also raised that the recommendations of this plan have tried to address. The key themes identified by participants during the open house sessions are outlined in the subsequent pages. **Appendix 1** provides a full summary of the engagement logistics, methodology, and results in all three phases.

2.1 Housing Policy that Addresses Diverse Housing Needs

The current housing market is impacting anyone who wishes to work and live in MOC, including permanent residents, seasonal workers, immigrants, families, and seniors. To meet the needs of the evolving population, the Growth Plan should encourage a mix of housing types, such as townhomes, semi-detached homes, and apartments and possible condominiums. The definition of "affordable housing" in MOC should seek to reflect the population's income levels in MOC's communities (other than the Village) which are likely to be lower than those in Halifax Regional Municipality.

Housing incentives would be important and valuable to encouraging housing development to meet affordable and attainable housing needs. There is general interest in implementing a surplus land policy as an incentive to provide affordable and attainable housing. Such a policy should offer clear sets of criteria to determine whether surplus land would be suitable for affordable housing developments. MOC should consider exploring other housing incentive options, including tax abatement and grant programs. Improved coordination with the Provincial government to secure consistent funding for housing incentives would be critical.

Accessibility and support for aging-in-place would allow more residents to continue living in their community without having to relocate to larger urban areas. Additionally, the unique architectural character of each community within MOC should be considered with efforts made to ensure these are preserved.

2.2 Infrastructure Planning to Accommodate Growth

Planning for Sewer and Water Services

Future growth is currently limited by a need for additional sewer capacity and ongoing uncertainty regarding water supply. There are concerns about the existing water supply and quality, including the water source and evaluation standards for ground water capacity. Participants generally agreed that serviced water, wastewater and sewer infrastructure around proposed development areas are necessary for future growth in existing neighbourhoods. Communication with residents is critical when considering infrastructure development to ensure transparency and to gain support from community members.

Investment in developing a safe road network

Offering a safe road infrastructure for all population segments and responding to increased traffic due to growth were highlighted as priority actions. Two main actions identified to achieve this goal were offering traffic calming interventions and investing in active transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks and bicycle lanes. Providing possible examples of investment would be critical as priority actions for road infrastructure will likely be different from one neighbourhood to another. Key factors to consider for traffic calming interventions included the presence of ambulances, fire trucks, large commercial vehicles, industrial trucks, and snowplows. Active transportation should contribute to improving connectivity between neighbourhoods, particularly walking connections to schools.

Investment in infrastructure to accommodate the inevitability of increased traffic along Highways 3 and 12 is needed so that those Highways continue to serve as the "Main Streets" for the Hamlet Areas and offer a safe and welcoming environment for all residents. Attendees also expressed support in conducting a visioning workshop to further examine specific segments of Highways 3 and 12 that need traffic calming interventions. MOC should also consider investing in Old Trunk 3 Road and Route 329 to offer sidewalks and paved shoulders. Working with the Provincial government is critical to coordinating the investment in safer road infrastructure.

2.3 Focus on Public Awareness, Engagement and Communication

Development of a MOC-wide communication plan related to the Growth Plan is important to make people aware of the steps being taken to prepare for growth, to obtain feedback on proposed plans, and to ensure transparency in how decisions are being made. Offering financial transparency is particularly crucial when considering sewer and water infrastructure upgrades, including an equitable cost-sharing of sewer services among serviced properties and open communication on the source and amount of government funding being invested in infrastructure upgrades. Providing as much clarity as possible around the timelines related to growth in proposed future growth nodes would also help generate community support for the projects.

2.4 Attract and Retain Workforce Population

There is a direct link between attracting a strong workforce population and having a vibrant local economy and tax base. However, job opportunities are currently lacking, resulting in a further decline in the workforce population of MOC. Attracting a younger demographic is one of the most urgent actions to mitigate the generational divide in the labour force and to fill the roles and positions needed by the local economy. Additionally, offering a place to live for temporary workers is critical as they play a vital role in sustaining some of the key industries in MOC.

2.5 Growth for the Entire Municipality

The Growth Plan should support strategically focusing growth in areas throughout MOC. Exit 8 should also be considered for future growth along with Exits 6, 7, and 9.

The Growth Plan should ensure that new developments preserve the unique identity of each Hamlet Area. There is support for implementing a commercial building façade program to create an aesthetically appealing environment in commercial areas. It is also important to sustain community events throughout the year to offer a vibrant community environment. It was noted that any design regulation would need to strike the right balance between individual preference, and preserving community character.

The nuisance caused by certain land uses and the environmental impact of development, including the loss of greenfield lands, are important factors that should be mitigated by the Growth Plan.

2.6 Improve Access to Community Services

Improving access to community services is crucially important, particularly in rural areas where connections to local amenities remain limited. Supporting local businesses is important to help create a self-sufficient local economy. Examples of local commercial stores included grocery stores, restaurants, and liquor stores. While reducing or removing minimum parking requirements could help attract new commercial development, this could lead to more on-street parking, which would need to be carefully managed.

Maintaining the level of perceived safety and low crime rates will be critical as the Municipality plans for growth. Healthcare access and daycare availability are also priority actions to support growth as MOC has struggled to attract professionals such as doctors due to a lack of affordable housing, recreational facilities, and limited local businesses. Improved access to public amenities such as public washrooms and community services is needed, and schools could potentially serve as community hubs to meet those needs.

Figure 2-1. Photos from Public Engagement Sessions

(Source: FBM)







Section 3: Local Business and Development Industry Engagement

3.1 Development Industry Engagement Session

An in-person engagement session with developers was held to identify existing barriers and enablers to development in MOC. A summary is outlined below.

Barriers to Development in MOC

A slow regulatory and approval process are main barriers, causing a higher level of uncertainty for development projects. Examples included feedback delays, unclear requirements, and a repetitive application process for similar or modular units. Developers often experience difficulties in developing rural communities due to uncertainty surrounding water supply and availability, costs associated with private water and wastewater systems, and a lack of data of the location of aquifers. Rural communities also tend to have limited assets to attract development, including services, recreational facilities, schools, local commercial stores, and active transportation. Other identified issues included high construction costs, fragmented parcels, and limited opportunities for mixed-use or large developments.

Enablers for Development in MOC

MOC can benefit from minimally restrictive zoning regulations and their ability to construct private roads. Land cost and property taxes are relatively low compared to Halifax Regional Municipality, which is a competitive advantage for development. The planned expansion of municipal sewer infrastructure is also a promising factor for developers as it will expand the possible locations for development. The rural and quiet lifestyle can be a strong sales point for potential residents and MOC can further promote this to attract potential residents. The current workforce population can commute daily from other municipalities, offering a geographical advantage in securing a consistent workforce population. However, this might not be the case for areas further away from HRM, such as Western Shore and New Ross.

Actions to Progress Development in MOC

Overall, MOC offers potential to transition beyond a bedroom community. Recommended actions included promoting the rural-living advantages with consistent branding and encouraging infill development to complete and compact communities.

MOC can reduce the uncertainty of water quality and availability by conducting studies on water availability and creating accessible maps of test wells. Enhancing community amenities such as schools and recreational facilities was also identified as a key action.

MOC should work to streamline the application process by improving municipal development staff communications pertaining to development requirements and applications.

3.2 Non-Profit Affordable Housing Developer Meetings

A series of virtual one-on-one meetings were held with non-profit affordable housing developers to hear their input on the influence of surplus lands, development incentives, and sewer and water servicing on affordable housing development. The full list of interview questions and the summary of responses are provided in **Appendix 2**.

Barriers to Affordable Housing Development

Financial Barriers: Conversations with non-profit housing providers underscored the desperate need to address the existing financial barriers. While grants are common sources of funding for non-profit housing developers, existing grant programs are often piecemeal and small in scale, resulting in difficulties with securing sufficient funding. Property tax abatement programs are also not guaranteed indefinitely, which can be a large barrier for non-profit developers. Non-profit housing developers often experience additional financial burdens due to high upfront costs, including costs to seek professional services such as architecture, engineering, and planning consultation. High cost of on-site wastewater management is also challenging for non-profit developers to afford.

Structural Barriers: Affordable housing developers often lack the equity required to secure financing. Application process for incentive programs is often time-consuming for non-profit organizations with limited staff capacity. The current application process is especially challenging for those with no existing housing portfolio due to the absence of assets to secure during the underwriting process. Non-profit and affordable housing developers also feel that zoning requirements are often complex, discouraging them from considering affordable housing developments.

Development Incentives in Need

Grants for housing renovation projects and reduction for permit fees to reduce the upfront development costs were common responses among non-profit housing developers. Municipalities can also expand housing grant programs to encourage flexibility for housing forms. Municipalities could offer a more efficient application process for housing incentives by offering consistent affordability standards based on CMHC's definition of affordable housing. For example, participants wished that their application would be automatically eligible for local programs if the application meets the CMHC's affordability standard.

Utilizing Surplus Lands

In addition to exploring housing incentives, reducing financing gaps for land acquisition is crucial. For non-profit housing developers, municipal surplus land programs have been the main option to fund the purchase of land. Surplus lands should be offered directly to non-profit affordable housing providers with a buy-back clause rather than at market rate to increase the affordability of the program.

Below were several suggestions to consider when evaluating surplus properties:

Status of land: ideal surplus lands are vacant properties located near services. Access to municipal sewer and water infrastructure are critical in reducing development costs.

- *Size of land*: the land should be manageable in size and scale.
- *Physical environment*: characteristics such as slope and soil type are key determinants in evaluating the suitability for development.
- *Condition of the land*: any environmental remediation should be completed prior to offering as surplus land
- *Zoning*: current zoning should allow for development; flexibility to rezone is also critical.

Recommended Actions for Municipalities

Municipalities' willingness to proactively engage with the non-profit sector is critical. Municipalities can play a crucial role in supporting affordable housing projects by offering more predictable processes for land acquisition, land disposal, and development incentives. Municipalities should provide clear communications to inform what incentives are currently available to non-profit affordable housing developers. Given the high cost of on-site wastewater management, municipalities should conduct studies to examine the capacity and availability of existing wastewater treatment facilities.

3.3 Local Business Engagement

Several virtual interviews with local businesses were conducted to develop an understanding of the current market forces, to determine labour market gaps and challenges, and to align the latter to potential labour force housing requirements.

Current State of the Economy in MOC

Local businesses have identified that some are currently experiencing signs of deflation in multiple sectors, primarily impacting resident spending (particularly seniors, many of whom are on fixed incomes). The overall cost of living remains high, particularly due to increased property values over the past three to four years, which has made housing less affordable for long-term residents. Real estate trends indicate a significant rise in property values, driven by new construction and demand from external buyers, particularly retirees and affluent individuals relocating from provinces like Ontario. There is a feeling that long-time residents may be struggling with the current pace of change in their communities and are hesitant to adapt to growth and change. This is exemplified by personal experiences shared by interviewees who faced challenges when relocating to the area.

Despite the challenges, many local businesses are performing well and feel that the economy is bustling. The demand for services remains high, though some sectors, such as trades, are beginning to see a slowdown. The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed an influx of new residents, but as the economy starts to cool, businesses may need to prepare for shifts in consumer behavior and market dynamics. Overall, while the Municipality has benefited from increased interest and investment, the long-term sustainability of this growth will depend on fostering a more inclusive community atmosphere and addressing the housing affordability crisis.

Positive Aspects of Municipal Governance and Initiatives

MOC is making significant strides in infrastructure development, while the Provincial government's ongoing commitments to twinning Highway 103 is anticipated to facilitate new growth, particularly at Exits 6 and 7. These enhancements will likely position the Municipality as a desirable bedroom community for Halifax and attract both new residents and businesses. The influx of people from Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic underscores this potential, as improved access to urban amenities will make the area more appealing. Many of the newcomers were either retired or remote workers and this could result in more support for local businesses, particularly food and beverage.

Not everyone could comment on recent interactions with the MOC Planning Department; however, the permitting process is considered to be smooth and most have had a positive working experience with MOC.

While MOC faces challenges from interest groups, particularly around heritage and development issues, it is commendable that MOC has maintained focus and navigated these tensions effectively. The opposition was from a small subset of the population and there remains a strong undercurrent of support for development initiatives among the broader population. This suggests that improved communication strategies could bridge the gap between local concerns and municipal objectives.

MOC also benefits from the lowest property taxes in the region, enhancing its attractiveness as a place to live and work. Despite some concerns about staffing shortages, the overall environment is perceived as favourable, with numerous opportunities for growth and an appealing lifestyle. Continued focus on promoting the quality of life, alongside further streamlining the permitting process, will be essential in capitalizing on the current economic boom and fostering community support for future initiatives.

Challenges that Local Businesses Face

Local businesses are navigating a challenging economic landscape characterized by shifting consumer behaviour, staffing shortages, and transportation issues, all of which impact staff retention and service delivery. Moreover, recruitment and retention of skilled workers are significant obstacles for many businesses. Some, particularly restaurants, are unable to operate fully due to staffing shortages. Others, such as the local golf course, have managed to attract staff, indicating variability in labor market dynamics.

Residents appear increasingly price-sensitive and are changing their buying habits and often purchasing only items that are on sale, or otherwise discounted. This trend reflects broader economic pressures as individuals focus on budgeting and cost-saving measures. In response, businesses are striving to expand their offerings to retain local customers and minimize the need for shopping outside the community. Despite positive attributes such as ample parking and community events like the Saturday market, businesses face competition from external sources that can divert local spending.

Limited local shopping options complicate the consumer experience, creating barriers to easy access for residents.

Additionally, as a summer tourist destination, businesses experience substantial seasonal fluctuations, leading to slower winters that impact revenue stability.

Healthcare accessibility also poses a challenge, as local physicians face difficulties related to healthcare availability, particularly for rural residents. This situation may deter potential newcomers and adversely affect community health outcomes.

Taxation concerns further complicate the business environment. There is a perception that rising property taxes, driven by increased assessments, alongside high HST, have contributed to escalated housing costs. Note that since this engagement, the Provincial government has announced a reduction of the HST rate from 15% to 14% to take effect April 1, 2025.

Current State of Workforce Housing

The local housing market faces significant challenges, primarily driven by affordability and supply issues. Recent trends indicate that while interest rates are decreasing nonetheless, home prices remain high. This disparity, coupled with a desirable rural lifestyle—characterized by low crime rates and a strong sense of community—makes MOC an attractive location for residents. However, the demand for affordable housing is considered to be a major barrier in retaining and attracting labour.

There is an urgent need for more rental housing options that are not prohibitively expensive. Many individuals struggle to obtain mortgages, leading some to remain renters for life. Current rental prices for two-bedroom units hover around $1,400 per month, which is prohibitive to residents earning lower incomes. To address this, there is a preference for modest multi-family housing rather than high-end developments. Townhouse models have been suggested as they would integrate well with the landscape and preserve the area's scenic views.

Most staff members live locally, and this helps with staff retention. However, as facilities expand, such as Shoreham's upcoming development, the need for more staff and therefore more housing becomes increasingly pressing. Recruitment efforts may have to extend outside the municipality and include looking to foreign worker attraction. Concerns arise regarding spousal employment opportunities and childcare availability, which hinder the attraction of new talent.

Childcare is a significant barrier for younger families with limited spaces available and places additional financial pressure on young families. While the Province has implemented initiatives for affordable childcare, private sector facilities struggle to compete.

Community amenities and recreational opportunities are also lacking, which if addressed, could enhance the overall quality of life for residents.

MOC should play a larger role in addressing affordable housing by facilitating the construction of rental, purpose-built multi-family units. This includes townhouses and small apartments that cater to various demographics, including seniors and students. Furthermore, the potential for co-habitation living arrangements for seniors could be explored to enhance community integration.

Additionally, government assistance with zoning, funding, and incentives for building affordable housing is crucial. With much of the prime land near water already developed, exploring opportunities closer to the highway could provide viable solutions.

3.4 Key Findings

To address the housing crisis and support local businesses, the Municipality should consider acquiring lands at reasonable prices for the development of substantial subdivisions with multi-family dwellings. This initiative could create affordable housing options and enhance community livability, making MOC a more attractive destination for potential residents and workers.

Additionally, MOC should do more to promote the community to attract new residents and businesses. Leveraging existing resources, such as the Shatford Memorial Trust Fund—which was established to support post-secondary education for local youth—could foster community pride and encourage more families to settle in the area.

To improve economic activity, particularly during the winter months, the Municipality should focus on increasing winter activities that encourage local engagement. Businesses, particularly restaurants, face challenges during the evening hours, with many closing by 8 PM. Developing winter events and activities could help draw residents out and stimulate business operations during these quieter months.

Local businesses could be engaged in developing housing solutions. Businesses might be able to apply for support to become primary renters or develop housing specifically for their employees. There was a consensus among respondents that focusing on multi-family homes with smaller footprints could help alleviate the housing shortage while maintaining the character of the community.



Section 4: Municipal Planning Strategy & Land Use By-law Review

Development in MOC is governed by the *Municipal Planning Strategy* (MPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB), with the exception of the Village of Chester which is governed by the Village of Chester Secondary MPS and LUB. The MPS and LUB were reviewed to assess any potential for increasing density in the form of "missing middle housing" within serviced areas of the municipality. The term missing middle housing refers to housing density between single family housing and mid-size apartments (Figure 4-1). These housing forms are intended to be compatible with single-family homes and form part of walkable neighbourhoods.

Developing missing middle housing in MOC will help to preserve greenfield lands, require fewer transportation infrastructure upgrades, and provide greater tax efficiency for the delivery of services. At the same time, the increased housing density of missing middle housing can help to create vibrant and inclusive communities with a strong economy supported by local business. Compared to many municipalities, MOC has few restrictions on land use. Nearly everywhere, with the exception of the Village of Chester and select neighbourhoods, already allow for missing middle housing. **Table 4-1** summarizes the MPS policy and residential permitted uses under the Land Use By-law for the four most prominent zones/ designations in the Municipality.

4.1 As-of-Right Development

MOC's MPS and LUB already largely allow for what is considered to be missing middle housing through the as-of-right development process. An as-of-right development process means that there is no discretionary approval, rather, if a development application complies with the requirements - the permit can be issued. In a large majority of the zones in the LUB, a property owner can currently build up to 4 units by development permit, and up 11 units by site plan approval. The site plan approval process provides additional zoning requirements but ultimately still serves as an as-of-right development process, balancing the additional permitting requirements with a level of certainty for applicants. Notably, the site plan approval process requires that the applicant demonstrate adequate on-site potable water supply "such as not to negatively impact existing abutting developments".

Generally, MOC's LUB requirements for as-of-right development are unrestrictive and do not provide barriers to the development of missing middle housing. The regulatory capacity, that being the amount of additional density that the zoning could permit, is generally high across the municipality. Because of this, the existing zoning will not be able to direct how or where growth occurs on its own. This could lead to "sprawl and developments which fall short of public expectations for alignment with existing community character.

4.2 Development Agreements

Development of residential uses with 12 or more dwelling units are permitted subject to a Development Agreement (DA). The policy which Development Agreement applications are reviewed against is outlined in Section 9.7 of the MPS (see both General policies in 9.7.1 and residential development policies in 9.7.3). Under General DA policies, Council considers whether the proposed development:

- Meets environmental standards (specifically stormwater standards);
- Contains all the required components listed in Policy A-23;
- Is consistent with the intent of the MPS and municipal by-laws;
- Followed the Public Participation Program and "carefully considered" public opinion;
- Is in the best interest of the municipality; and
- Required site service provision and special area circumstances have been considered (e.g., adequate access to municipal services and public amenities, proximity to water bodies, archaeological significance).

The General policies require the following be included in each development agreement (Policy A-27): a vegetated setback from watercourses, stormwater management improvements, and no disturbance of existing steep slopes, wetlands, or areas prone to flooding.

In addition to the above, Council will also consider the following criteria for residential Development Agreements:

- The development is not subject to undue nuisances or a degrading living environment caused by existing land use activities;
- The building density and design are compatible with the Community Character area and surrounding neighborhood;
- Outdoor space for outdoor recreation is provided;
- Landscaping to create residential character is provided;
- The development includes appropriate type of lighting and sufficient parking;
- The development will not increase traffic volume as to have an undue negative impact on surrounding residential streets;
- It uses screening, setbacks, and buffering effectively to minimize impacts;
- Current wastewater and water services can accommodate added demand; and
- Surface treatments are made of stable materials.

Given that there is no municipally run water source in MOC, it is sensible to have a discretionary process for the review of high-density applications. However, it should also be noted that discretionary processes are a disincentive to development as they typically take significantly longer to receive development approval and create risk that a proposed development may not be approved, resulting in significant financial costs for a developer. Recognizing this, some municipalities

Figure 4-1. Transect Diagram of Missing Middle Housing Typologies

(Source: Missingmiddlehousing.com)



Table 4-1. Summary of Current Zoning Regulations in Hamlet Area

(Source: Municipality of Chester Land Use By-law)

Zone	Hamlet	Gateway	Mixed-Use	General Basic
Policy Goals	Encourage traditional mix of rural land uses in populated areas Identify a range of development standards to apply to moderately intensive uses Be a focus for local infrastructure investment	Accommodate high-growth potential expected at entry points to hamlets and the Village of Chester Ensure that residential, commercial, institutional and light industrial uses are designed to be mutually compatible	Encourage the continued development of the Municipality's traditional mix of rural land uses in populated areas Identify a range of development standards to apply to moderately intensive uses	Exempt common low-impact uses from land use standards Identify a range of development standards that will be applied in order to minimize potential impacts of intensive uses
Approvals Required				
Development Permit	1-4 units	1-4 units	1-4 units	No development permit required
Site Plan Approval	5-11 units	5-11 units	5-11 units	5-11 units
Development Agreement	12+ units	12+ units	12+ units	12+ units

including the Halifax Regional Municipality have eliminated the Development Agreement process and have replaced it with an intensive set of LUB requirements that reflect the community's values while providing greater certainty for developers.

4.3 Hamlet Designation

The MPS designates the communities of Western Shore, New Ross, Chester Basin, and Hubbards as Hamlets. The Hamlet Designation recognizes these communities as hubs of shopping, services, and civic life. Hamlets are denser than their surrounding areas and present identifiable landmarks in the municipality. Accordingly, Hamlets are also highlighted as an area for focused investment in local infrastructure. Each Hamlet has a unique sense of character and preserving and enhancing the existing character is also a priority. Except for Hubbards, each Hamlet has an existing sewer system with Western Shore being the largest sewer system outside of the Village of Chester.

Due to the concentration of commercial uses, services, civic life, and infrastructure, Hamlets are ideally suited for incremental growth. Incremental growth can be understood as a community growing along the next iteration of density without losing it's sense of community character. The existing as-of-right zoning requirements can be refined to ensure that growth is incremental and serves to enhance the elements that residents love about their communities.

4.4 Key Findings

MOC's planning regulations do not inhibit the development of missing middle housing, given that up to 11 units per lot is being permitted by a site plan approval in all of the Hamlet areas and the vast majority of MOC. Residential development agreements with higher density are also largely permitted across MOC. However, until municipal sewer and water services are provided, it is sensible to restrain higher density developments with the Development Agreement process, particularly in areas of higher development concentration such as the Hamlets.

While missing middle housing is permitted as-of-right, it is seldom constructed. This suggests that there may be alternative barriers to its development. Engagement with development industry professionals identified a lack of sewer and water service as one such major barrier to higher density developments. Additionally, the choice to live in missing middle housing is fundamentally a trade-off between preferences. Those who live in missing middle housing prefer to live in walkable communities with amenities and services nearby and are willing to prioritize that preference over the benefits of living in a single-family dwelling. To support missing middle housing development then, communities need to have the amenities and quality of life to justify that trade-off.



Section 5: Growth Plan Recommendations

Since 2016, MOC has been undergoing a period of growth. This has come on the heels of many years of gradual population decline which has resulted in demographic and cultural changes in the communities throughout the Municipality. During public engagement, many residents reminisced about "the way things were", when there were more young people around, more local businesses, and a more vibrant economy and community life. These experiences are not limited to MOC and were subject of the 2014 *Report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy* (also referred to as the *Ivany Report*):

"Nova Scotia is today in the early stages of what may be a prolonged period of accelerating population loss and economic decline. These negative prospects are not, however, inevitable or irreversible."

- Report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy (2014)

The *Ivany Report* established goals for population growth to ensure the economic and demographic viability of the Province. In recent years, Nova Scotia has made progress on these goals as it resumed the population and economic growth that has historically defined it. Like many municipalities across the province, MOC is now part of this broader trend.

While growth presents challenges, it also brings opportunities to enhance the quality of life for residents. In contrast, decline offers few opportunities and often requires municipalities to focus on mitigating its negative consequences rather than planning for a stronger future.

The *opportunities* of growth include:

- A chance to influence how communities will grow while supporting the character that makes each community unique;
- The option for young people to live and work in their community;
- Increased investment into community facilities and services supported by increased tax revenue;
- Increased investment into infrastructure including streetscaping and active transportation; and
- A stronger economic environment to support local businesses.

The *challenges* of growth include:

- Protecting rural areas valued for their agricultural and environmental values from sprawl;
- Managing growth in a way that strengthens community wealth and sustainability rather than creating long-term infrastructure and service costs;
- Maintaining a sense of community character in areas which experience the most growth; and
- Responding to increased housing costs and a lack of options for residents to remain in their community.

Recommendations: Overview

The recommendations for the Growth Plan are broadly categorized into the following four main pillars:

- **Strategic Growth**: the recommendations focus on directing development to areas that are best equipped to support it. The effect of these recommendations is to ensure that regulatory and infrastructure capacity will support higher density growth and that a consistent policy approach is applied to areas with municipal sewer service.
- **Complete Communities:** the recommendations are two-fold. They are first and foremost intended to ensure that growth benefits existing residents by supporting the development of complete communities. Secondly, the recommendations aim to incentivize growth in the Hamlet areas by making investments that will improve the lives of residents and contribute to creating attractive communities to live and work.
- **Missing Middle Housing:** the recommendations support the integration of moderate-density housing within the Hamlet areas while preserving their existing character.
- **Workforce Attraction and Retention Plan:** the recommendations aim to ensure that as MOC grows, residents have opportunities to work locally, reducing reliance on commuting and ensuring that their community avoids becoming just a "bedroom community".

These recommendations support the polycentric and incremental approach to growth. This means that growth is encouraged in the Hamlets around MOC with each gradually developing as complete communities – taking the next natural step of growth. While not all, or even most, of MOC's growth will occur in the Hamlets, focusing development in the Hamlets will help maintain and enhance their role as community and cultural hubs.

This approach aligns with the following Municipal Planning Strategy's objectives:

1. Reducing the impact of development on the natural environment;
2. Recognizing and enhancing the unique character of various parts of MOC;
3. Providing specific areas for commercial and industrial development;
4. Providing cost effective and efficient services to support growth;
5. Allowing and encouraging a range of housing forms to meet the needs of all residents;
6. Encouraging affordable housing;
7. Encouraging and supporting transportation options beyond the private automobile; and
8. Connecting residents and visitors with safe cycling and walking routes.

Table 5-1, **Table 5-2**, **Table 5-3**, and **Table 5-4** provide an overview of the recommendations that fall under each Growth Plan pillar along with practical considerations for implementation (e.g., municipal planning strategy amendment) and an estimated timeline for each recommendation. Each recommendation is explained in more detail following the Tables, addressing the rationale, implementation, expected outcomes, and for each as appropriate.

5.1 Strategic Growth Recommendations

Table 5-1. Recommendation Summary: Strategic Growth

Recommendation	Estimated Timeline
1. Implement a Growth Plan Communication Strategy	Short Term
2. Adopt a Surplus Land Banking Policy	Short Term
3. Align the Boundaries of Hamlet Designations with the Sewer Service Boundaries	Ongoing
4. Establish Growth Share Targets for Serviced Development	Long Term
5. Maintain Sewer Capacity within Each of the Hamlet Areas	Ongoing
6. Prioritize the Development of Potable Water Supply Systems in Areas with Sewer Service Expansion	Long Term

Estimated Timelines

- Short Term = 0 to 1 years
- Medium Term = 1 to 3 years
- Long Term = 3+ years

Recommendation 1: Implement a Growth Plan Communications Strategy

Rationale

Conversations with residents, local businesses, and members of the development industry community highlighted the need to develop a consistent communication strategy to ensure that members of the public understand current and anticipated growth-related challenges that the Municipality is facing, i.e. why the Municipality is planning for growth and the types of solutions and initiatives that are being pursued). The public awareness campaign should help the public develop a nuanced understanding of the challenges, solutions, and the benefits of well-managed growth.

This Growth Plan Communications Strategy can also form the structure and help guide the future engagement needed for certain recommendations of this report. By ensuring alignment with the overall messaging of the Growth Plan, specific recommendations can have their messaging align with the bigger picture of growth in the Municipality. Together, the recommendations make up the whole of the Growth Plan in a cohesive and compelling strategy, whereas individually and without their context in the overall Growth Plan, they may appear unimportant or without a clear purpose. The Growth Plan Communications Strategy will work to make sure that the entire vision and its component parts are clearly communicated to help create public support for the initiatives that are needed for MOC to effectively manage growth.

Implementation

The implementation of the Growth Plan Communications Strategy should be an ongoing initiative, ensuring that residents have access to clear, up-to-date information on growth-related challenges and solutions. A dedicated Growth Plan landing page is recommended as a critical component of this strategy, serving as a public hub for key information.

This landing page could include:

- **Overview of the Growth Plan**: A clear explanation of why the Municipality is planning for growth, what challenges it aims to address, and how residents will benefit from the Growth Plan.
- **Key Recommendations and Progress Tracking**: A breakdown of the Growth Plan's major recommendations, their implementation status, and next steps.
- **Educational Resources**: Supplemental materials to help residents understand complex planning concepts, such as infographics, videos, or FAQs.
- **Public Engagement Opportunities**: Updates on upcoming consultations, surveys, and ways for residents to provide feedback.

An example of a similar type of communication tactic is Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)'s Integrated Mobility Dashboard, which effectively which effectively tracks progress on the implementation of the transportation plan. While HRM's Mobility Dashboard is primarily focused on presenting data and statistics in detail, MOC's landing page should place greater emphasis on storytelling and key messages that explain not only what actions are being taken but also why these actions matter and how they align with the overall vision for growth.

By structuring the landing page around both the big-picture goals and the specific recommendations, the Communications Strategy will ensure that residents see individual initiatives as part of a broader, well-planned approach. This clarity will help build public trust, encourage informed discussion, and foster greater public support for the Growth Plan's implementation. It will be important for MOC to develop consistent key messaging regarding Growth and use these points often to increase their impact. Examples of key messages for the Growth Plan are included in the subsequent page.

Expected Outcomes

The Growth Plan Communications Strategy will help to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Greater Public Understanding**: Ensuring residents have a clear and accurate understanding of growth-related projects while dispelling falsehoods or misperceptions.
- **Stronger Public Support and Collaboration**: Encouraging community buy-in and creating opportunities for residents, businesses, and stakeholders to collaborate on implementing Growth Plan recommendations.
- **More Effective Public Engagement:** Establishing a well-informed public that is prepared to engage in meaningful discussions, leading to more productive and solution-oriented engagement processes.
- **Enhanced Regional and Provincial Coordination**: Strengthening relationships with higher levels of government and adjacent municipalities by demonstrating a clear and well-communicated growth strategy.
- **Increased Transparency**: Ensuring residents and stakeholders understand the Municipality's decision-making process related to growth and development.

Examples of Key Messages

Population Growth

- Nova Scotia's population is growing, and our Municipality is no exception. We need to ensure there is enough housing to meet the community's needs.
- The Municipality cannot choose whether it will grow or not, as that is largely outside of its control. It can, however, choose how to respond to growth in order to ensure a high-quality of life for its residents.
- If the Municipality is not successful in attracting a younger population, the population will continue to become older. This will have negative impacts on local businesses, municipal finances, and the quality of life of residents in the Municipality.
- Well-planned growth in appropriate locations can support improvements to local amenities, services, and infrastructure.
- Newcomers and immigrants have played and will continue to play a crucial role in supporting the economy, culture, and community of MOC.

Housing Shortage

- Housing construction is not keeping up with the demand to live in the MOC, as a result housing costs are increasing.
- The housing shortage is negatively impacting nearly everyone in MOC including local businesses who cannot find workers, workers who cannot afford to live near where they work, young people who cannot afford to buy their first home, families who are struggling to make ends meet, and seniors who are looking to downsize but have nowhere to go.
- Different people have different housing needs. The Municipality aims to support a diverse mix of new housing, which may include but is not limited to, townhomes, semi-detached homes, apartments, and retirement facilities.

The Growth Plan

- 'Charting a Course for Growth' is not a one-and-done plan; it is a strategic foundation upon which recommends actions that MOC can take to adequately plan for growth. It will evolve and respond to future changes and represents a proactive and responsive approach to planning.
- The plan broadly aims to remove barriers to incentivize housing development in areas where

growth can be strategically managed.

- The Growth Plan focuses on emphasizing the importance of the Municipality's Hamlet areas as focal points of a growing Municipality. This ensures that the benefits that come from growth will be shared across the Municipality, rather than concentrating investment into any one specific area.
- Focusing growth in specific areas will help to maintain the rural lifestyles that many residents value. This is a balance that can be thought of as "Town and Country", offering community nodes with shops and services that are surrounded by rural low-density areas.

Key messages can also be created for each of the subjects of the recommendations, for example the need for sewer and water service to support growth:

Sewer and Water Service

- The availability of a municipal sewer service makes the development of housing more affordable, by allowing development on smaller lots and by sharing the costs of sewer infrastructure with others.
- A centralized sewer system can simultaneously reduce costs for development while addressing the environmental impact and health concerns that are associated with on-site septic fields in growing areas.
- Finding a long-term reliable source of potable water supply to support growth will be increasingly more of a necessity to meet the demands of density in strategically identified growth areas (See **Recommendation 6** for further detail on water supply).
- Funding for sewer expansions has been split between Municipal and Provincial sources.

Recommendation 2: Adopt a Surplus Land Banking Policy

Rationale

Utilizing surplus land can be a helpful tool to increase the supply of housing in MOC. Individual surplus lands, when governed by an overall strategy, can be together considered to be part of a "Land Bank". The Canadian Community Economic Development Network explains that municipal land banks specifically are meant to "[return] vacant, abandoned, and tax foreclosed property to productive use efficiently and strategically, while reducing the harm of vacant properties." Land banks can be managed by non-profits but are most often created, owned, and managed by a government entity.

Municipalities can use a land banking framework to move forward community goals, like increasing affordable housing access and supporting the development of community facilities, by being strategic in how they acquire, improve, and dispose of surplus lands. For example, they could donate or sell land at a below-market rate to a non-profit to make the development of affordable housing financially viable.

Implementation

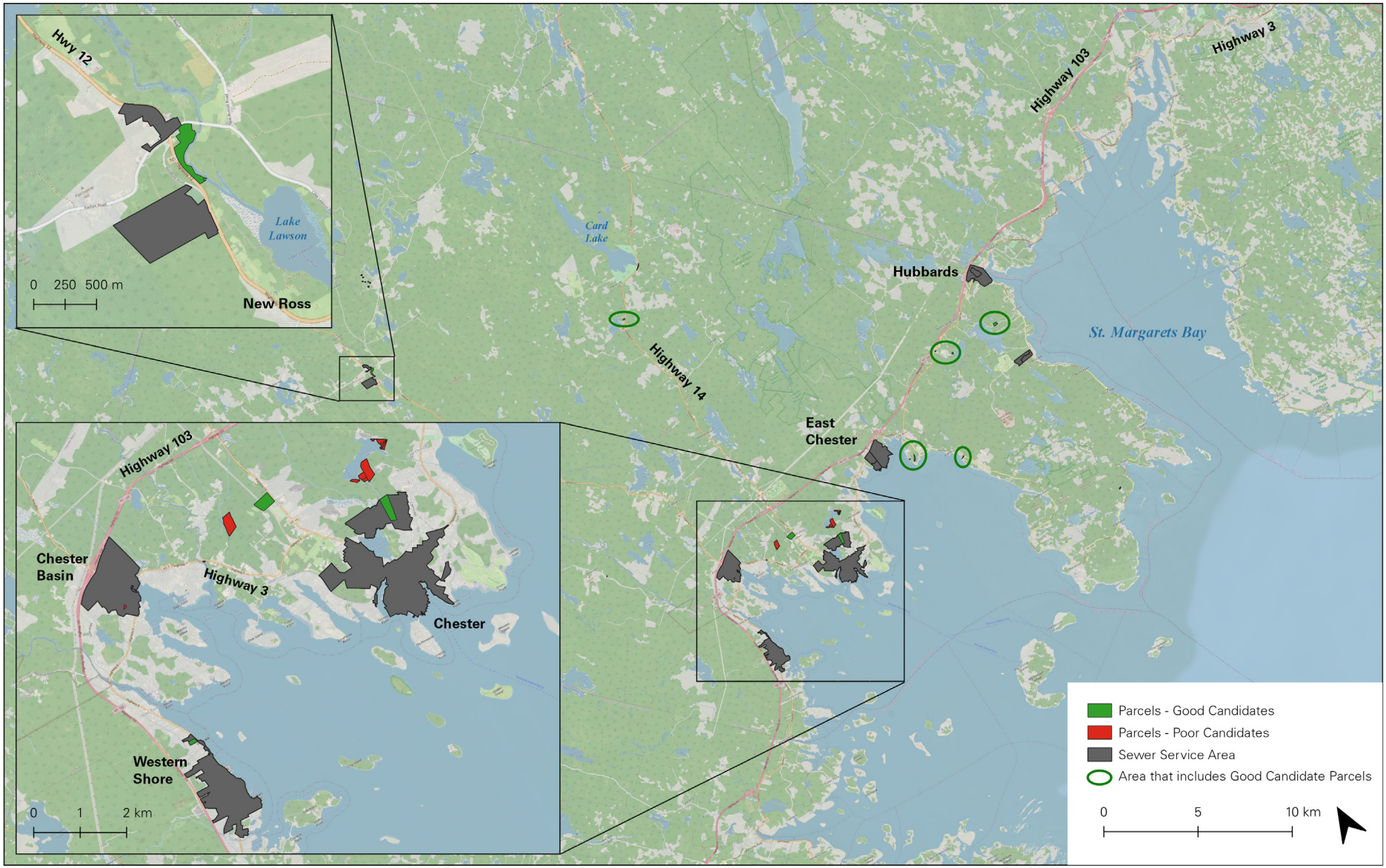
To gain a high-level understanding of the existing surplus lands in MOC, the first step of the surplus land research was to identify locations of existing surplus lands in the Municipality and consider which parcels are likely to be good candidates for development. Good candidates are parcels that have road access, are zoned for residential uses, and are not currently occupied by another use. The smallest parcel that was categorized as "good candidates" was 764.6 sq m in area. **Figure 5-1** illustrates the current available surplus properties, with good candidate parcels highlighted in green. Additional research is required to determine if these sites have environmental or other constraints that could inhibit housing development.

Based on the available information on MOC's surplus properties, several of these "good candidate" parcels are in ideal locations for housing development, being within or adjacent to a sewer service boundary and close to community services in Hamlet Designations. Three such candidates are located in New Ross, Western Shore, and the Chester Periphery, and could be explored for their potential to support the development of affordable housing in MOC.

To determine how MOC might approach managing its surplus lands, the following case studies were researched (See **Appendix 3** for a full analysis of these case studies):

Figure 5-1. Current Surplus Land Map

(Source: FBM)



Case Study 1: Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), NS

- Policy name: *Administrative Order Number 50, Respecting the Disposal of Surplus Real Property*

Case Study 2: Municipality of East Hants, NS

- Policy name: *Disposal of Surplus Real Property Policy* (effective September 2024; formerly called Disposal of Surplus Property Policy, initially adopted in June 2010)

Case Study 3: Town of Salisbury, NB

- Policy name: *Municipal Surplus Land & Land Acquisition Policy* (Effective: February 2024)

Case Study 4: Municipality of the District of Shelburne, NS

- Policy name: *Policy 18 Disposal of Surplus Lands*

Case Study 5: Town of O'Leary, PE

- Policy name: *Land Disposal Program Policy* (Council approved January 9, 2025)

Based on these case studies, best practices are suggested for the following component to create a successful surplus land banking policy in MOC.

- Criteria for Deeming Municipally Owned Land to be "Surplus"
- Evaluating Proposals for Surplus Lands Disposal
- Preparing land for disposal
- Acquiring Land

Detailed recommendations for each of these topic are provided in the subsequent pages.

Expected Outcomes

The adoption of a Surplus Lands / Land Banking Policy will support the Municipality in strategically managing and acquiring land to advance community goals. Expected outcomes include:

- **Increased Supply of Affordable Housing**: Identifying and committing surplus lands for residential development will enable MOC to facilitate affordable housing development through strategic land disposal methods, such as discounted sales to non-profits or targeted Requests for Proposals (RFP's).
- **Efficient Use of Municipal Assets**: A structured approach to surplus lands will ensure that underutilized municipal properties are re-purposed in alignment with community priorities.
- **Improved Capacity for Community and Economic Development**: By leveraging surplus lands for economic and residential growth, the policy will allow the MOC to have greater influence on the development of well-planned communities. This policy may be particularly helpful in the future development of growth areas around Highway 103 Exits.
- **Transparent and Predictable Land Disposal Process**: A clear framework for surplus land designation, evaluation, and disposal will provide consistency, reduce uncertainty, and improve public trust in municipal land decisions.

Key Findings from Case Studies

Criteria for Deeming Municipally-owned Land to be "Surplus"

Municipal departments review Municipally owned land to recommend that land be declared as surplus based on the following criteria:

1. No current, medium, or long-term municipal use of the land has been identified.
2. Retaining ownership is not in the best interest of the Municipality.
3. The land is suitable for development, based on the factors such as:
   - » Low development constraints (i.e. wetland, karst topography, slope, can be reasonably provided road access, etc.)
   - » The land is well located with access to services nearby

A staff report to Council provides a recommendation that a piece of land be designated as surplus and set aside for one of the following purposes:

- **Affordable Housing Disposal** - Direct sale for the purpose of supporting the development of affordable housing.
- **Open Market Disposal** – Direct sale of the land to the public at market value. This may include an offer for the right of first refusal to adjacent property owners.
- **Economic Development Disposal** - Direct sale for the purpose of achieving economic development goals.

Once Council designates a parcel as a surplus land, the best process for the disposal of the property will depend on the objectives of the MOC's surplus lands / land banking policy. If the aim is to support the development of affordable housing, then the disposal process could be in the form of soliciting interest from eligible non-profit affordable housing developers for a direct sale at below market value (See Case Study 3: Town of Salisbury in **Appendix 3**). Alternatively, Council may direct staff to issue a call

for submission open to both non-profit and for-profit housing developers with criteria based on a level of committed affordability. For consistency, the policy should use a consistent affordability standard which aligns with a common definition (e.g., below 30% of household income). Per section 51 of the *Municipal Government Act*, where Council proposes to sell a property valued at more than $10,000 at less than market value, Council is required to hold a public hearing.

Evaluating Proposals for Surplus Lands Disposal

HRM's *Administrative Order 50* outlines general evaluation criteria for the proposals. At a high level, HRM assesses the feasibility of applications based on four main pillars:

- Whether applicants possess financial and operational capacity to manage the subject property based on past relevant experiences and financial stability;
- How the proposal would benefit the respective community;
- How the proposal aligns with municipal jurisdictional mandates and Council's priority outcomes; and
- Proposed purchase price and closing costs.

Where HRM Council can consider donating or gifting land as long as it is used for affordable housing purposes. For MOC, the ability to donate land or sell below market value to a private business is permitted under Section 57(4) of the *Municipal Government Act* where it is for the purpose of increasing the supply of affordable housing in the municipality.

Preparing Land for Disposal

To ensure that the surplus lands that the Municipality disposes of will support the community goals of the land bank and are sold at a rate which aligns with the property's highest and best use, the Municipality should remove barriers before disposing of the land. This could include:

- Proactively complete any "rezoning" necessary to ensure that regulations are conducive to the desired development while meeting the objectives of the Municipal Planning Strategy;
- Where possible, include the site within any municipal wastewater or water service boundaries and if necessary, consider financing mechanisms to extend services to the site such as a Local Improvement Charge under Section 81 of the *Municipal Government Act*;
- Remove any encumbrances to the title of the property such as easements or restrictive covenants that may interfere with future use; and
- Complete geotechnical and environmental assessments on the site to ensure the parcel is suitable for development.

These actions, and others like it, will have differing cost implications. However, those costs will be translated into higher sales price for the lands on the open market, or through furthering community goals by making them more viable such as in the case of donating land to an affordable housing developer. Some actions, such as rezoning or adjusting water and wastewater boundaries, are particularly well suited for MOC to undertake themselves as they are municipal processes that can be completed internally.

Acquiring Land

Section 218 of the *Municipal Government Act* allows for a Municipality to "acquire and assemble land for the purpose of carrying out a development consistent with the *municipal planning strategy*, whether the development is to be undertaken by the municipality or not".

In the acquisition of land, staff will prepare a report to Council which highlights the information about the subject property. The Town of Salisbury's *Municipal Surplus Land Acquisition Policy* includes the following criteria which can be used as a template for the creation of a policy for MOC:

- Economic return or value of the land(s)
- Current zoning
- Potential future use(s)
- Developability of the land (size, location, existing uses/structures, development constraints, municipal services)
- Proximity to primary transportation/municipal services (sidewalks, sewer, etc.)
- Proximity to services and public amenities (medical, educational, food, education, parks, etc.)
- Adjacent land use(s)
- Whether land(s) protect municipal assets or enhance existing ownership (i.e., land adjacent to municipal owned land, etc.)

The acquisition price should be based on a fair assessment of market value and be arrived at by the averaging of two independent property valuation assessments. Once acquired, the municipality may consider it part of a Land Bank and use it in the same manner as surplus lands.

Recommendation 3: Align the Boundaries of the Hamlet Designations with the Sewer Service Boundaries

Rationale

To ensure consistency in planning regulations and land use policies, the boundaries of Hamlet Designations should be adjusted to align with properties included in expanded sewer service areas. This alignment is foundational for all recommendations that target the Hamlet Designations would be applied, such as the siting of public facilities, investment of pedestrian infrastructure, and design guidelines. This is based on the principle that MOC should apply a coherent regulatory framework for areas with sewer service that are within or adjacent to the existing Hamlet Areas. By doing so, MOC can offer a predictable and uniform approach to growth management, avoiding fragmented or inconsistent policy application between serviced and un-serviced properties.

Implementation

To align the Hamlet designations with the sewer service boundaries, amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB) will be needed. Amendments to the MPS and LUB should be made in lock step with changes to the sewer service boundary. MPS and LUB amendments would consist of changing the land use designation and zoning of properties added to the sewer service boundary to the Hamlet Designation. Special consideration will need to be given to any existing uses for properties that may not be permitted under the newly applied Hamlet Zone. To mitigate this, it is recommended that MOC includes an expansive non-conforming use clause that deems any uses existing on the date of rezoning to be considered as permitted uses for that property be permitted for expansion.

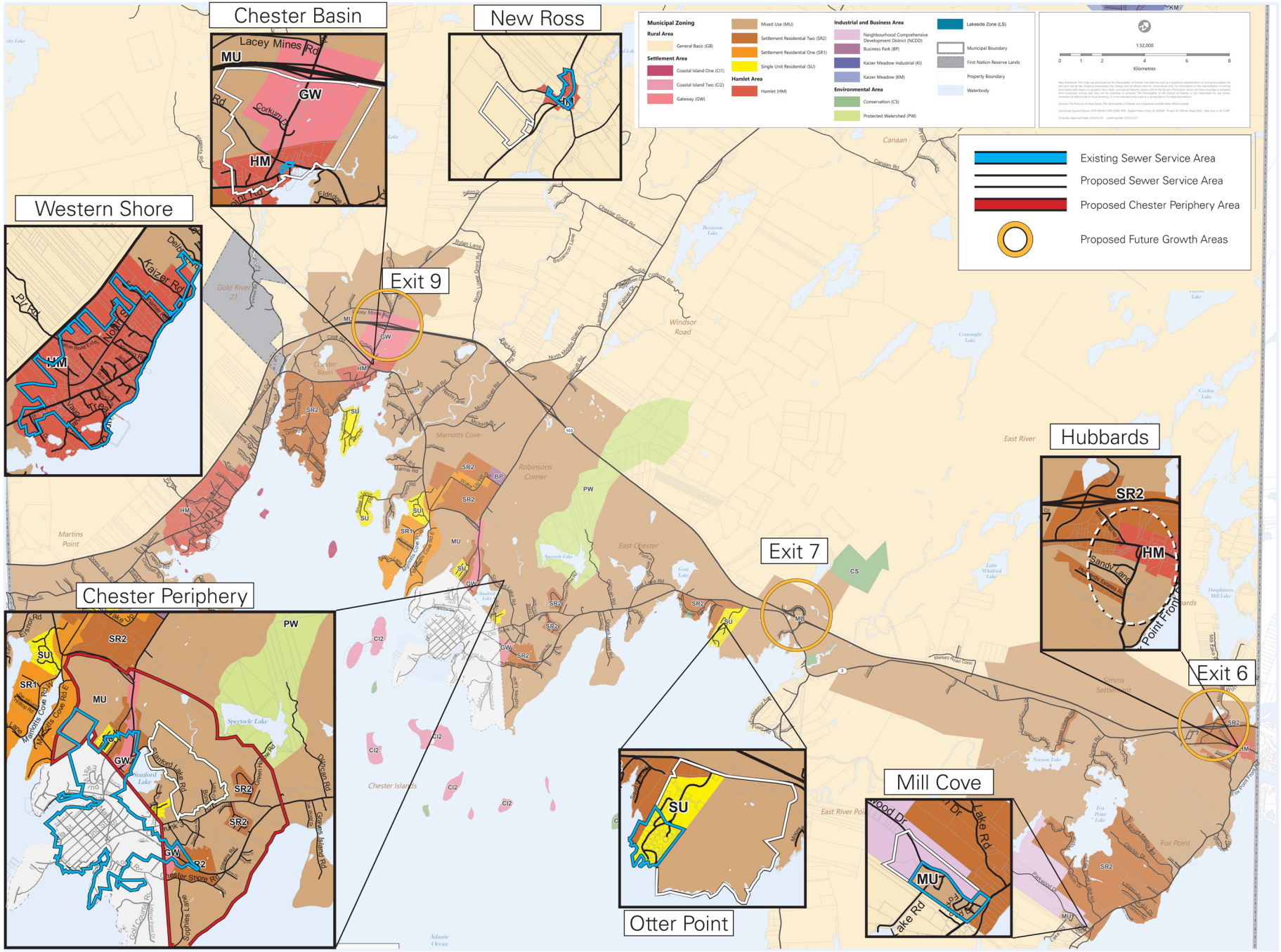
While the Chester Periphery is not itself a Hamlet, it is located immediately adjacent to the Village of Chester which is effectively the Municipality's largest Hamlet. As a centre of culture, commerce, and services in MOC there is likely to be significant demand for development in and around the Village. This process of expanding boundaries is an organic component of growth and is evidenced by the recent serviced residential development on Stanford Lake Road. It is likely that this trend will continue and that sewer service may continue to expand throughout Chester Periphery (Figure 5-2). To support development in the Chester Periphery that is complimentary and cohesive with that of the Village of Chester, a new Hamlet Designation should be created for areas with sewer service within the Chester Periphery.

Before making these changes, it is recommended that MOC conduct one-on-one or small group engagement with affected property owners to explain the proposed changes, what they mean for their property, the benefits of having their property under the Hamlet Designation including access to sewer service and eligibility for infrastructure investments including sidewalks, and ultimately the role that their property plays in the future growth and development of the Municipality.

Expected Outcomes

Aligning the expanded sewer service boundaries with the Hamlet Designations will ensure the recommendations that apply specifically to the Hamlet Designations, such as streetscaping, design controls, and investing in public amenities and services, will apply uniformly to these newly serviced areas. This will match the strategic extension of infrastructure, services, and community amenities and provide a structured and well-planned development pattern.

Figure 5-2. Existing and Proposed Sewer Service Areas vs. Existing Hamlet Zones



Recommendation 4: Establish Growth Share Targets for Serviced Development

Rationale

While the *Municipal Planning Strategy* (MPS) generally aims to focus growth away from rural areas in order to preserve the rural lifestyle, no growth targets are set for serviced areas. Based on the medium growth population projection scenario, an additional 2,173 dwelling units will be required by 2046. Because development in areas with sewer service can be developed on smaller lots, the share of growth which takes place in sewer serviced areas can dramatically change the impact that this growth will have on the Municipality. This can be viewed in terms of the cost of providing municipal services, the amount of greenfield land developed, and ultimately the character and quality of life in MOC.

For example, if 100% of growth takes place on new un-serviced 1 acre lots, an additional 2,173 acres of greenfield land would be developed - more than double the size of downtown Halifax. However, balancing that growth by incorporating serviced lots as shown in Figure 1-14 could reduce that amount to 1,047 acres. That would imply that 46% of growth takes place on serviced lots in a mixture of single-family homes and missing middle housing.

Recommendations of the Growth Plan align with the MPS by aiming to balance growth between existing Hamlets and rural areas. This approach aligns with focusing growth in Hamlet Areas which each have, or are proposed to have, sewer service system. However future growth areas (including Highway 103 exits) should also be factored into growth share targets. It is recommended that MOC develop specific growth share targets for serviced areas in the Hamlets, Highway 103 Growth Areas, and un-serviced areas in order to better understand the implications of different growth scenarios and to measure housing starts against.

Implementation

In determining what percent of growth should take place in serviced areas, the Municipality will need to evaluate the following:

1. The current and proposed capacity of sewer systems;
2. The potential for potable water service to support greater density in serviced areas;
3. A municipal finance cost-benefit analysis of serviced vs. un-serviced development including cost of municipal services and infrastructure vs tax revenue;
4. Environmental and sustainability goals;
5. Economic development objectives, including supporting local commercial development; and
6. Goals of the Municipal Planning Strategy, including preservation of rural areas.

These criteria will need to be evaluated holistically. For example, if criteria 3 – 6 determine that a higher share of growth should be located within serviced areas than the current capacity allows for, then this would make a strong case for increased investment into municipal sewer and water service. This determination will require collaboration between all departments of the Municipality and could benefit from additional public engagement. It is recommended that these growth targets be established no later than the next review of the *Municipal Planning Strategy*.

Expected Outcomes

Developing growth targets will help MOC understand the implications of different growth outcomes regarding the growth and development of the Municipality. Where the growth plan recommends a strategy of focusing growth in serviced areas, growth targets can act as a key performance indicator of whether this goal is being achieved. An example of a comprehensive analysis to establish growth targets was the 2013 report by Stantec for Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) titled "Quantifying the Costs and Benefits of Alternative Growth Scenarios". This study helped to establish HRM's approach to growth targets between urban, suburban, and rural growth. While the growth plan has relied on sound planning principles in its recommendation to focus growth in serviced areas including Hamlets, a quantitative assessment would help to provide greater specificity for developing growth targets.

Recommendation 5: Maintain Sewer Capacity within Each of the Hamlet Areas

Rationale

There are a number of benefits to encouraging new development to be on a municipal sewer service system, including:

- **Health**: A properly managed wastewater treatment facility can reduce potable groundwater contamination compared to individual on-site septic systems.
- **Affordability**: On-site septic fields represent an up-front capital cost which upon a recent

price estimate were appraised at $30,000 for a generic system. In contrast, a central sewer system spreads out the investment cost over time, providing predictable monthly expenses to property owners rather than a large upfront expenditure.

- **Environment**: A central sewer system can provide a higher level of treatment than individual septic systems. As density increases, individual septic systems can lead to nutrient loading and runoff, causing algae blooms and other environmental impacts in local waterways.

In addition to health, affordability, and environmental benefits, sewer service is crucial for maintaining the traditional development pattern of MOC's Hamlets. Properties without a central sewer system (i.e., properties with on-site septic) are required to meet the minimum lot size requirement set by the Nova Scotia Department of Environment's On-site Sewage Disposal Systems Regulations. These minimum lot sizes are based on based on the amount of permeable soil.

Under the best-case scenario, the smallest a lot can be is approximately 2,700 sq m (29,062 sq ft) with a lot width of 37 metres (121 ft). However, lots with less than 1.5 metres of permeable soil can require over 9,000 sq m (96,875 sq ft) and 76 metres (249 ft) of lot width. These lot area requirements make it impossible to create new un-serviced lots which are consistent with the existing fabric of today's Hamlet Areas and limit the ability to create compact, walkable communities.

For MOC's Hamlets to support the incremental housing development and municipal infrastructure investment that this report recommends, sewer service capacity must be available. Without this sewer service capacity, a larger share of growth will occur outside of the Hamlets on large unserviced lots. This development pattern is more expensive to serve with municipal infrastructure and services, has negative environmental impacts, and does not support local economic development objectives. Expanding sewer capacity is critical to maintaining the character, livability, and economic vitality of MOC's communities.

Implementation

To implement this recommendation, MOC should establish a standard for sewer system capacity within the Hamlet Areas. This standard would define a threshold that, when crossed, triggers planning for system expansion. Given the significant lead time required for such planning, waiting until a system reaches full capacity could result in a moratorium on development for an extended period. A suggested threshold of 80% capacity could trigger preliminary planning, with detailed design work taking place once a higher capacity limit is approached. It is recommended that MOC collaborates with its Public Works Department to develop this process internally.

Expected Outcomes

- Incentivize growth in strategic locations;
- Support the development of missing middle housing;
- Allow for the continuation of the traditional development pattern within MOC's Hamlets; and
- Provide improved health, affordability, and environmental outcomes when compared to relying on on-site septic development.

Recommendation 6: Prioritize the Development of Potable Water Supply Systems in Areas with Sewer Service Expansion

Rationale

The Municipality of Chester currently lacks municipal water supply systems, exacerbating concerns regarding the quantity and quality of well water in existing neighborhoods. Zoning regulations in MOC allow for significant residential development throughout most of the Municipality. With planned expansions to sewer systems likely to incentivize housing development, it is essential that MOC prioritize matching sewer service with municipal water supply in order to support the development of missing middle housing. This is especially important if treated effluent from a sewer system is not reintroduced into the water table, as it would prevent the process of groundwater recharge and place additional strain on groundwater resources. The development of water supply systems will support the development of housing in areas best suited to accommodate growth, including the Hamlets and Highway 103 exits.

Implementation

Although the *Municipal Planning Strategy* allows for the takeover of privately developed central water systems, MOC is the entity best positioned to make the investments necessary to establish a municipal water system that services existing communities. Additionally, Hamlet Areas, including Chester Basin and Hubbards, are likely to experience increased development due to the planned expansion of their sewer systems. MOC should therefore prioritize the development of water supply systems for Chester Basin and Hubbards before considering water supply systems in other communities with sewer service such as New Ross and Western Shore.

Conducting a water supply study can determine both the viability of a potable water source and the quantity of groundwater supply, as was done in the 2009 *Hubbards Watershed Servicing Study* by CBCL. If a more recently conducted water supply study suggests that no water supply source is feasible and that ground water quantity is inadequate for projected growth, the Municipality should adjust growth share targets to match available water supply (Recommendation 4).

An example of an implementation process that could be followed has been adapted from the 2018 *Village of Chester Water System Study* by CBCL:

1. Prepare a joint RFP and commission water system studies in the Hamlet Areas which includes an assessment of different water source options;
2. Hold a vote among property owners per the process outlined under Section 81 of the Municipal Government Act to introduce a charge system to help finance the system;
3. Prepare an RFP and commission a pre-design report;
4. Engage the Utility and Review Board to establish water utility regulations and financial framework;
5. Develop a source water protection plan to protect the water source from contamination;
6. Design and approvals; and
7. Begin construction.

Steps 2 to 7 are estimated to take five years. With the additional time required to complete Step 1, construction of a new water supply system could take a minimum of 7 years to begin.

Expected Outcomes

The development of central potable water supply system for the Hamlet Areas would have the following benefits:

- **Reliable Access to Clean Drinking Water**: Without a reliable potable water system, concerns about the sustainability of groundwater quantity are likely to grow. This could lead to resistance to housing development in areas that are otherwise best suited to accommodate such growth.
- **Improved Drinking Water Quality**: Water quality in the Municipality is a common concern for residents due to the underlying geology[1] and the presence of coliform bacteria[2]. A central water supply system can effectively treat and provide high quality drinking water for the benefit of residents and local businesses.
- **Reduced Insurance Costs**: A central water system with fire hydrants can potentially provide significant savings to property owners due to reduced property insurance rates. This was explored in the 2018 *Village of Chester Water System Study*.
- **Improved Feasibility for Housing Development**: A central water supply system can help to incentivize housing development by reducing uncertainty associated with ground water supply risks and guaranteeing a high quality of drinking water. Together, central sewer and potable water systems would create the conditions necessary to support the incremental growth of Hamlets in MOC.

1 Coastal Action. (2020). *Municipality of Chester Resident Water Supply.*
2 CBCL, (2018). Village of Chester Water System Study.

5.2 Missing Middle Housing Recommendations

Table 5-2. Recommendation Summary: Missing Middle Housing

Recommendation	Estimated Timeline
1. Develop a Design Guideline Document for Development Agreements and Comprehensive Development Areas	Medium Term
2. Introduce Design Requirements for Site Plan Approval Developments in the Hamlet Zone	Medium Term
3. Increase the Number of Units Permitted by Site Plan Approval Where Water and Sewer Service is Provided	Medium Term

Estimated Timelines

- Short Term = 0 to 1 years
- Medium Term = 1 to 3 years
- Long Term = 3+ years

Recommendation 1: Develop a Design Guideline Document for Development Agreements and Comprehensive Development Areas

Rationale

MOC's current development agreement process requires developments to be "compatible" with local community character. However, the term "compatible" is vague and open to interpretation. By establishing a detailed Design Guideline document, MOC can provide greater clarity and consistency in the approval process. For example, a Municipal Design Guideline document for higher-density residential development will help ensure that both the public and developers have a clear understanding of what is expected for new residential developments. These guidelines can be referenced in development agreements and serve as a framework for guiding design requirements in as-of-right or site plan approval processes.

The Halifax Regional Municipality has developed a design manual to guide development agreements and amendments to planning strategies and land use by-laws. A similar approach could be adopted for the Hamlet Areas and other designated growth zones within MOC.

Implementation

To implement this recommendation, the *Municipal Planning Strategy* would need to be amended to include a Municipal Design Guidelines document as an appendix to the Strategy. It is recommended that this be included in the next of the *Municipal Planning Strategy*.

Principles that may be considered for inclusion within the design guidelines could include:

- **Site Landscaping:** Incorporate vegetated landscaping, particularly along surface parking areas and between adjacent properties to provide visual buffers, improve aesthetics, and environmental benefits.
- **Encourage Pedestrian Activity**: Incorporate features that enhance pedestrian activity, such as articulated streetwalls, weather protection, active uses along ground floors facing streets.
- **Break Up Large Building Masses**: Add articulation to break down a large mass into multiple smaller sections, creating a more visually appealing building form.
- **Regulate Building Height**: For buildings taller than five storeys, establish maximum dimensions for portions above the streetwall to maintain human scale and ensure a cohesive streetscape (i.e., add stepbacks).
- **Promote Walkability**: Locate parking at the side or rear of buildings, positioning main entrances close to the street to encourage walking and reduce reliance on vehicles.

- **Grade-Related Dwelling Units**: Require ground level dwelling units to offer direct pedestrian access to streetlines to enhance walkability and community integration.

These principles can be adapted to suit the needs and context of specific Hamlet Areas, with the goal of enhancing community character, walkability, and urban livability. The development of these guidelines should be based on engagements with the public and the development industry to ensure they reflect both community desires and development feasibility.

Expected Outcomes

- **Incentivize Residential Development by Reducing Risk**: By providing clearer expectations for development, the risk of a development application being refused at the council approval stage is reduced. This can help to attract housing development as perceived risk is a significant disincentive to development.
- **Enhance Community Character**: New development will support local community character, helping to increase support from residents for housing development.
- **Increase Market Appeal**: Thoughtful urban design will make Hamlet areas more attractive for housing and commercial investment.

Recommendation 2: Introduce Design Requirements for Site Plan Approval Developments in the Hamlet Zone

Rationale

In the Hamlet Zone, the development agreement process applies design requirements to buildings with more than 11 residential units; however, there are currently little to no design requirements for developments of residential buildings with 5 to 11 units which are considered by site plan approval. While this is expedient for permitting and supporting development, it also may result in development that is inconsistent with the local community identity.

Introducing design requirements to developments regulated by the site plan approval process can help new developments align with the existing community character, contributing to a more attractive and cohesive residential neighbourhood.

Implementation

To implement this recommendation, the *Municipal Planning Strategy* and Land Use By-law must be amended to incorporate updated policy and regulations. It is recommended that this be undertaken during the next *Municipal Planning Strategy* review. Any new design requirements should focus on building form (rather than materials) and establish clear, predictable expectations for an applicant.

Potential design requirements could include:

- Encouraging sloped roofs to reflect traditional building forms.
- Establishing minimum building articulation for structures exceeding a specified width.
- Requiring variation in townhouse design to avoid uniformity.
- Setting a maximum front yard setback for commercial buildings to promote pedestrian-friendly streetscapes.
- Locating parking beside or behind buildings rather than in front.
- Ensuring each residential unit has at least one pedestrian entrance facing the street.
- Requiring garage doors be aligned with or set back from the main building facade.

The development of design standards should be guided by public engagement within the Hamlets, and by consultation with the development industry. This will help balance community character objectives with regulatory flexibility to avoid disincentivizing development.

Expected Outcomes

By codifying design requirements into the site plan approval process, residents will have a clear understanding of the design requirements that new developers with which new development must comply. The benefits of this recommendation also align with the prior recommendation including:

- **Enhance Community Character:** New development will support local community character, helping to increase support from residents for housing development.
- **Increase Market Appeal**: Thoughtful urban design will make Hamlet areas more attractive for housing and commercial investment.

While growth and change are inevitable, proactive design standards will ensure that future development positively contributes to the Hamlet communities while maintaining local character.

Recommendation 3: Increase the Number of Units Permitted by Site Plan Approval Where Water and Sewer Service is Provided

Rationale

Currently, up to 11 units are permitted by site plan approval in a large majority of MOC. Although this does not allow the upper end of the missing middle housing spectrum (mid-rise apartments), the current zoning allows for most forms of what is typically considered to be missing middle housing. It is **not** recommended that MOC increase the allowable density through as-of-right or site plan approval processes until areas within the Municipality are serviced by both municipal sewer and water service.

If and when sewer and water service is provided in areas that are well-suited for higher density growth (such as Hamlets and Highway 103 exits), MOC should consider building upon Missing Middle Housing Recommendation 2 to provide predictable design requirements for higher density residential developments. This will give both residents and developers greater clarity regarding the expectations for higher density residential development.

Implementation

This recommendation will require both *Municipal Planning Strategy* and Land Use By-law amendments. It is recommended that this be included in the next review of the *Municipal Planning Strategy* and only enabled for areas with both municipal sewer and water service. Design requirements should be incorporated into the recommended Municipal Design Guideline document from Missing Middle Housing Recommendations 1 and 2 above.

Expected Outcomes

The site plan approval process is most appropriate for in-fill developments in serviced areas that do not require new infrastructure. The benefits of this recommendation are:

- **Incentivize Residential Development by Reducing Risk:** the site plan approval process provides less risk for developments than the development agreement process as the requirements are more clearly laid out. Simply put, if a development complies with the design requirements then it can be constructed.
- **Greater Certainty for Residents:** By codifying design requirements into the site plan approval process, residents will have a clear understanding of the design requirements that new developments must comply with.

5.3 Complete Communities Recommendations

Table 5-3. Recommendation Summary: Complete Communities

Recommendation	Estimated Timeline
1. Adopt a Complete Communities Approach to Public Investments in Hamlet Areas	Medium Term
2. Reduce Regulatory Barriers to the Development of Commercial Uses in Hamlet Areas	Medium Term
3. Conduct Streetscaping Visioning Work for Sections of Highway 3 and Highway 12 within the Hamlet Areas	Medium Term
4. Create a Commercial Building Facade Improvement Program	Medium Term
5. Explore Housing Development Incentive Options	Medium Term

Estimated Timelines

- Short Term = 0 to 1 years
- Medium Term = 1 to 3 years
- Long Term = 3+ years

Recommendation 1: Adopt a Complete Communities Approach to Public Investments in Hamlet Areas

Rationale

The Hamlets of New Ross, Western Shore, Chester Basin, and Hubbards are strategically located across the Municipality and, with growth in the Village of Chester limited by infrastructure and current regulations, these Hamlets are likely to grow as hubs of civic, social, and commercial life. To expand upon their important role as local hubs as the Municipality grows, it is recommended that MOC prioritize locating new investments in public facilities (such as schools, recreation facilities, and libraries) within the Hamlets to ensure that they develop as complete communities. Such investments would support balanced growth across the Municipality.

The siting of public facilities is one of the most effective tools that municipal governments have in supporting the development of complete communities. Public facilities can help to act as "anchors" for local commercial businesses by increasing social activity and bringing potential customers into the community. The availability of public and commercial amenities in turn helps to attract residential development in the surrounding areas.

Implementation

The *Municipal Planning Strategy* already identifies the Hamlets as community nodes that should be prioritized for infrastructure investment. As the Municipality grows, it is recommended that MOC take a proactive approach and support the growth of Hamlets as complete communities by:

- Working with the South Shore Regional Centre for Education and the Department of Education to address barriers to the strategic location of schools within the Hamlet Areas;
- Developing a municipal surplus land banking policy that includes an objective of supporting the development of public facilities in the Hamlet Areas;
- Prioritizing the acquisition and retention of surplus lands within the Hamlets to support a municipal land bank;
- Adopting a site selection criterion that municipal facilities be located within or within proximity to the Hamlet Areas; and
- Making amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy to include reference to Complete Communities and adding a focus for investment in municipal facilities under Policy CC-41 (intent of the Hamlet Area designation).

Expected Outcomes

Implementing this recommendation will ensure that public facilities are strategically located in key local hubs across the Municipality. These investments will in turn help to support vibrant social life in these nodes, which will bolster commercial and residential development. Together with the other recommendations of this plan, this recommendation will encourage the development of complete, vibrant, and prosperous local hubs across the Municipality.

Recommendation 2: Reduce Regulatory Barriers to the Development of Commercial Uses in Hamlet Areas

Rationale

Through our public engagement, we heard strong support for offering more commercial uses within the Hamlets and concerns that expanding highway commercial development could out-compete local businesses in the Hamlet Areas. A complete communities approach supports the growth of local businesses by locating anchor uses (See Recommendation 1) within the Hamlets to increase customer traffic and by investing in streetscaping to make these areas more attractive and accessible.

The Hamlet Zone currently limits commercial uses to 500 sq m of floor area per lot and 2,800 sq m of developed land (including parking). These restrictions limit some of the commercial uses desired by residents, pushing commercial development to highway-adjacent areas that are less walkable and less integrated into the community fabric.

For example, the Independent Grocer in Mahone Bay has an approximate floor area of 930 sq m and occupies 3,500 sq m of developed land, while the Chester Shore Mall, which includes a Foodland and multiple local businesses, has a total floor area of 3,230 sq m and a developed area of approximately 12,620 sq m. Neither of these commercial developments would be permitted within the Hamlets today, despite the important services they provide to residents.

Implementation

Allowing appropriately scaled commercial development ensures that daily needs can be met locally, reducing the need for residents to travel long distances and supporting small businesses within the community. MOC should consider adjusting the Site Plan Approval allowance accordingly:

- Increase the maximum floor area per premises to 1,500 sq m.
- Remove the maximum total developable land area.
- Adopt commercial building design requirements for buildings in the Hamlet Areas.

These changes will allow for local commercial uses such as grocery stores and multi-tenant commercial buildings that are compatible with local community character, while excluding large format commercial (or "big box") construction, which typically ranges between ~3,000 sq m for smaller retailers and up to 15,000 sq m for large retailers such as Costco and Walmart.

Expected Outcomes

To ensure that new commercial development enhances walkability and the public realm, these changes should be paired with design requirements under the site plan approval process, such as:

- Requiring vehicle parking to be located beside or behind buildings rather than in front, reinforcing a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.
- Encouraging active frontages and building orientation that supports a vibrant public realm.
- Integrating streetscaping improvements, such as sidewalks and street trees, to create an inviting and accessible environment.

These adjustments will allow the Hamlet Areas to grow as complete communities where local businesses can thrive, residents can access essential services close to home, and streets serve as both economic and social hubs.

Implementing this recommendation will help support the development of complete communities by supporting commercial development within the Hamlet Areas. This will also support existing local businesses who desire to expand their businesses beyond what is currently enabled. Tangentially, an increase in local commercial business in the Hamlet Areas will also help to incentivize housing development. It is recommended that this recommendation be implemented in line with the next review of the Municipal Planning Strategy.

Recommendation 3: Conduct streetscaping visioning for sections of Highway 3 and Highway 12 within the Hamlet Areas

Rationale

Highway 3 serves as the main street for Western Shore, Chester Basin, and Hubbards while Highway 12 is the main street for New Ross. While often overlooked, streets are one of a community's most

important public amenities. Main streets have an important role in community life as a place for socializing, recreation, and commerce. Through public engagement, we heard concerns about the impact of increased traffic and speeding on pedestrian safety along the sections of Highway 3 and 12 which bisect each of the Hamlets.

Traffic speed is largely a function of street design rather than posted speed limits. Straight roads with wide lanes, paved shoulders, and little complexity naturally encourage higher speeds. However, streetscaping interventions such as narrowing travel lanes, providing sidewalks on both sides of the street, planting street trees, and painting crosswalks help to slow traffic by visually indicating that a driver is in a community setting. Streetscaping visioning exercises should be completed for the Hamlets to determine the most appropriate interventions for improving safety and comfort along specific sections of Highway 3 and 12 while still supporting the efficient movement of vehicles.

Implementation

To implement this recommendation, the Municipality should:

- Conduct streetscaping visioning exercises for sections of Highways 3 and 12 within Chester Basin, Western Shore and New Ross.
- Empower local community champions and civic groups to build grass roots support.
- Coordinate with potential Provincial funders including the Department of Cultures, Heritage, and Tourism as well as the Department of Natural Resources.
- Begin discussions with the Department of Public Works around potential changes, and advocate for any necessary recommendations that may be outside of the Departments typical design standards.

Because of the planned expansion to the Chester Basin sewer system, it is recommended that the Municipality begin streetscaping visioning for this community as soon as possible. By doing so, identified streetscaping changes can be aligned with any construction in the right-of-way for the expanded sewer system.

Additionally, MOC should continue to support the implementation of recommendations from the Hubbards Streetscape Project Community Plan and ensure their alignment with future growth as part Highway 103 Exit 6 Community Plan.

Expected Outcomes

Implementing this recommendation will:

- Enhance pedestrian safety, comfort, and walkability by slowing down traffic and providing more generous spaces for pedestrians.
- Support local businesses by increasing foot traffic and economic activity.
- Incentivize housing development by making the communities more attractive places to live, and therefore to develop housing in.
- Encourage active transportation by providing attractive alternatives to driving including visiting neighbours or shops and services including community facilities.

Recommendation 4: Create a Commercial Building Facade Improvement Program

Rationale

During public engagement, residents highlighted the architectural character as something that they value about their community. The creation of a municipal program to support facade improvements for buildings can help preserve the unique community character while contributing to a vibrant local economy by making the area more attractive and welcoming to customers. The facade improvement program will be especially crucial in the Hamlet Areas, where the majority of commercial activities are likely to occur.

Implementation

A commercial building facade improvement program can help to rejuvenate commercial storefronts, spurring re-investment and increasing community pride. Commercial areas with enhanced building facades can encourage both residents and visitors to spend more time in the community, which in turn increases revenue for business owners. These programs also help to leverage private capital by providing cost-sharing funding for facades upgrades.

The Town of Bridgewater has had great success with their commercial facade improvement program[3], which has resulted in an enhanced streetscape for all King Street. This program offers a maximum grant of $5,000 for eligible projects looking to renovate existing facades, which includes cladding, trim, windows, doors, and lighting. MOC should consider adopting a similar program which can also align with Recommendation 1 of the Missing Middle Housing Section. Factors to consider for the facade

3 Town of Bridgewater (n.d.), *Facade Improvement Program.*

improvement program may include:

- The proposed illustration preserves the historical design elements to the greatest extent possible;
- Ensure that lighting locations and designs are pleasing and comfortable for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers (the design of the lighting is also critical to offering an attractive commercial district); and
- Materials and colour palettes are compatible with adjacent buildings.

Expected Outcomes

- The Hamlets offer attractive and vibrant local commercial areas while preserving a sense of local community character.
- Business owners are motivated to rejuvenate their storefronts.

Recommendation 5: Explore Housing Development Incentive Options

Rationale

Conversations with residents, developers, and non-profit housing providers all highlighted the need for encouraging more affordable, adequate, and diverse housing development. Although the current MPS and LUB largely allow for the "missing middle" housing forms, developers usually look for housing incentive options that can support the financial cost of development.

Implementation

Exploring housing incentive options will require the Municipality to carefully examine their financial, operational, and legal capacities to manage these programs and to continue their efforts to identify housing needs through community communication and engagement. Potential directions include but are not limited to:

- Use consistent affordability standards for all housing incentive options, such as CMHC's definition of affordable housing.
- Offer auto-enrollment of applications that meet the above affordability standard.
- Consider offering grant programs to encourage creation of missing middle housing, including townhomes, semi-detached houses, and backyard suites.
- Consider offering grants for housing rehabilitation projects.
- Consider offering a reduction or waiving of permit fees for affordable housing projects.
- Consider offering property tax abatement programs for affordable housing projects.

Expected Outcomes

- There are adequate and affordable housing options in MOC that meets the diverse needs of the current and prospective residents, attracting more people to live in the Municipality.
- Developers are encouraged and incentivized to develop housing in MOC.
- Non-profit affordable housing providers have more opportunities to receive housing incentives to provide affordable housing with an efficient application process and consistent affordability standards.

5.4 Workforce Attraction and Retention Recommendations

Table 5-4. Recommendation Summary: Workforce Attraction and Retention

Recommendation	Estimated Timeline
1. Develop a Resident Attraction Program Promoting MOC	Short Term
2. Work with the Local Business Community to Identify Skills Gaps and training	Ongoing
3. Focus Business Investment Attraction Efforts in Sectors that Support Population Growth	Short Term
4. Maintain Regular Communications with All Levels of Government to Ensure Awareness of Programs, Funding and Challenges Related to the Workforce	Ongoing
5. In Collaboration with Stakeholders, Develop a Succession Planning Program for Local Businesses	Short Term
6. Develop a "Workforce Action Group" Comprised of Local Stakeholders	Short Term
7. Identify Local Employment Opportunities for Local Youth	Short Term
8. Explore Workforce Attraction Programs for New Immigrants	Short Term

Estimated Timelines

- Short Term = 0 to 1 years
- Medium Term = 1 to 3 years
- Long Term = 3+ years

Recommendation 1: Develop a Resident Attraction Program Promoting MOC

Rationale

A resident attraction program would play a vital role in helping MOC be recognized as a desirable place to live and work. The program would be measured by an increase in workforce-age residents filling the current employment gaps. In addition, identifying new business investment opportunities and growth areas in the Municipality could effectively attract new workers to MOC.

Through engagement with local business communities, it was identified that there is an opportunity for relocation of the current workforce commuting from the Halifax area to work in MOC. As these workers already have pre-existing employment within the Municipality, identifying any barriers that may exist for their relocation will be critical.

Implementation

Specific actions may include:

- Create a "value proposition" for MOC that highlights the Municipality's key attributes, such as quality of life, career opportunities, and amenities.
- Develop a marketing campaign targeting workforce-age residents to address local businesses' staffing gaps.
- Partner with local businesses to promote job openings.

Expected Outcomes

Implementing this recommendation will ensure that MOC is recognized as a desirable place to live and work, measured by an increase in workforce-age residents filling current employment gaps.

Recommendation 2: Work with the Local Business Community to Identify Skills Gaps and Training

Rationale

Ongoing communication with the local business community is essential in understanding challenges within the local labour force and in identifying new trends. There is an opportunity to provide additional training for the local labour force to help retain these workers and perhaps provide opportunities for advancement in their career. MOC has an opportunity to work with partners to provide training programs specific to local business needs.

Implementation

Recommended tactics include:

- Conduct quarterly meetings with business leaders to identify skills gaps and emerging industry needs.
- Develop and administer an annual employer survey to assess current workforce challenges and training priorities.
- Work with local business communities to identify relevant training programs to meet their needs.
- Connect local businesses with partners to encourage and support on-the-job training initiatives and apprenticeships.
- Identify funding opportunities through government grants for workforce development programs.

Expected Outcomes

Expected outcomes are outlined below:

- Training programs are provided that lead to workforce retention.
- Tangentially, a consistent, happy workforce may also attract new workers to the area, contributing also to Recommendation 1 from this section.

Recommendation 3: Focus Business Investment Attraction Efforts in Sectors that Support Population Growth

Rationale

By offering strategic investment for attracting the workforce population in sectors that support population growth, new businesses will be able to meet their workforce needs. The Municipality should actively work with land developers to attract new businesses to growth areas. The Municipality can support the development of new businesses by pursuing labour force attraction initiatives to fill positions within the new businesses that will be located within the growth areas.

Implementation

MOC can implement this recommendation by taking the following actions:

- Develop a list of target businesses that would enhance livability and economic sustainability.
- Engage with local and regional land developers to assess available commercial spaces and infrastructure needs for business development.
- Develop a business investment package outlining the benefits of establishing operations in MOC, including available workforce, incentives, and community growth projections.
- Expand workforce attraction programs to ensure new businesses have access to skilled labour.

Expected Outcomes

Expected outcomes include:

- New businesses can contribute to offering a vibrant economy of MOC.
- New businesses are able to meet their workforce needs with increased support from the Municipality.

Recommendation 4: Maintain Regular Communications with all Levels of Government to Ensure Awareness of Programs, Funding, and Challenges Related to the Workforce

Rationale

The Municipality should maintain open communications with the Provincial and Federal governments to ensure that they are apprised of all new programs and initiatives, as well as funding to support workforce development. Collaboration with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities can help to support this.

Implementation

Recommended actions may include but not limited to:

- Develop an inventory of current programs, policies, and funding that relate to workforce initiatives, including key contacts of representatives of said programs.
- Schedule quarterly meetings with representatives from regional, provincial, and federal governments to discuss workforce needs and funding

opportunities.

- Have the list of programs, funding, and initiatives available on MOC website.
- Communicate MOC's workforce needs with government representatives that will lead to new programs or funding that supports MOC businesses.

Expected Outcomes

Expected outcome includes:

- MOC is fully appraised of current and future programs to support workforce development.

Recommendation 5: In Collaboration with Business Owners, Develop a Succession Planing Program for Local Businesses

Rationale

In an effort to retain existing businesses within the municipality, it is important to develop and work with businesses to ensure that they have succession plans in place. By working with local development organizations, financial experts, and educational institutions, MOC can play a role in ensuring that there is succession planning programs, supports, and services for local businesses.

Implementation

Recommended actions may include but not limited to:

- Survey local businesses to determine the number of owners nearing retirement and assess their interest in succession planning.
- Analyze potential barriers to succession, such as financing challenges, a lack of successor candidates, or knowledge gaps.
- Engage with economic development organizations, educational institutions, financial institutions, accountants, legal experts, and any other relevant community members to offer business transition planning services.
- Create a step-by-step guide for business owners outlining best practices for business transition, including ownership transfer, financial planning, and leadership development.
- Organize succession planning workshops and seminars led by industry professionals.

Expected Outcomes

Implementing this recommendation will allow the existing local businesses remain operational and continue to be a part of the local economy.

Recommendation 6: Develop a "Workforce Action Group" Comprised of Local Business Representatives

Rationale

In an effort to ensure that MOC is aware of local business challenges and opportunities, establishing a workforce action group comprised of local businesses and key organizations is crucial. Meetings should be held on a regular basis as a means of information sharing and identifying customized MOC solutions to address workforce challenges.

Implementation

Recommended actions may include but not limited to:

- Determine key organizations to be part of the workforce action group.
- Identify the mission and objectives of the group.
- Determine meeting frequency and communication exchange.

Expected Outcomes

Expected outcomes are outlined below:

- **Customized workforce solutions for MOC**: regular meetings with the workforce action group will help MOC to identify specific workforce challenges and action items.
- Strategic and focused investment to offer an attractive business environment in MOC.

Recommendation 7: Identify local employment opportunities for local youth

Rationale

Retaining local youth within the community as an important, long-term economic development goal seeking creative opportunities for youth, such as internship programs or co-ops placements is an opportunity to provide a labour force for existing businesses as well as positioning local youth for future employment opportunities.

Implementation

Recommended actions may include but not limited to:

- Survey local high school and post-secondary

students to understand career interests and employment barriers.

- Engage with local businesses to identify industries needing young workers and potential internship / co-op opportunities.
- Promote success stories of local youth securing meaningful employment in MOC.
- Identify existing mentorship programs which pair youth with experienced professionals for career guidance.

Expected Outcomes

Implementing this recommendation will:

- Encourage youth population to remain within MOC as they find meaningful employment opportunities for them.

Recommendation 8: Explore Workforce Attraction Programs for New Immigrants

Rationale

New immigrants should have access to information so that they can find meaningful employment within MOC, filling the current staffing gaps and contributing to addressing the needs of new businesses. Working with the federal government on their immigration, employment programs in MOC has an opportunity to market the municipality and local employment opportunities. As noted elsewhere within this report, housing will play an important factor in attracting new immigrants to the municipality for employment with local businesses.

Implementation

Recommended actions include:

- Create a "Work in MOC" promotional campaign showcasing job opportunities, quality of life, and community support for newcomers.
- Educate local businesses on hiring immigrants through federal and provincial programs
- Support immigration efforts underway by regional, provincial and federal agencies to attract skilled workers to support local businesses.

Expected Outcomes

Implementing this recommendation will:

- Offer career opportunities for new immigrants: New immigrants find meaningful employment within MOC, filling staffing gaps and contributing to addressing the needs of new businesses.

Appendices



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Appendix 1: What We Heard - Full Results

Public open houses were held in all three Phases of the Growth Plan on the following dates:

- Phase 1: September 9th and 10th, 2024
- Phase 2: October 28th and 29th, 2024
- Phase 3: January 7th and 8th, 2025

The sessions were held in the afternoon and evening hours so that residents could attend the session that would be most convenient for them.

Each open house included an introductory presentation and was followed by discussion using engaging questions to gather feedback from participants. The Project Team recorded feedback from attendees during the presentations, facilitated group discussions, and held individual conversations with participants. The Project Team also prepared printed material including maps and interactive panels for participants to share their feedback using sticky notes. Following each Phase of engagement, materials were made available through MOC website for community members to view and download at their convenience.

Discussion questions included:

Phase 1:

- What do you consider to be the current growth-related challenges in the MOC?
- What do you feel are the three most important things to prioritize when planning for growth in MOC?
- Which housing type(s) would be most appropriate in the identified "Future Growth Areas"?

Phase 2:

- Are the visions for Growth in MOC effective in managing growth? If not, what is missing?
- What infrastructure would be needed to support the projected growth? (ex. Roads, sidewalks, and trails)
- What types of community services (Ex. Fire services, libraries, and recreation facilities) would be needed and where?

What We Heard from Phases 1 and 2:

1 Housing Policy that Addresses Diverse Housing Needs



- The current housing market is **impacting anyone** who wishes to work and live in the Municipality of Chester. This includes permanent residents, seasonal workers, immigrants, families, and seniors.
- The Growth Plan should encourage **a mixture of housing types** including townhomes, semi-detached homes and condominiums.
- Participants recognized the need for more **retirement homes** and neighbourhoods that could offer a **mix of residential and commercial spaces**.
- Developers should be aware that the definition of "affordable housing" in MOC would need to reflect the population's income levels in the communities, which is likely to be lower than those in Halifax Regional Municipality.
- Housing design policy needs to include **accessibility** considerations and **aging in place**.
- Preserve **architectural character** of buildings and maintain the distinct identity of each community within the Municipality.

2 Infrastructure Planning to Accommodate Growth





- The **lack of sewer capacity** and uncertainty regarding water supply are limiting growth.
  - » Many participants expressed concern about the existing water supply, including the water source and evaluation standards for ground water capacity.
- Significant discussion was had regarding the process used to determine the capacity and location of new sewer systems in the Municipality. Some believe this process was not adequate and that project-specific consultation should be held prior to determining where sewer systems will be built.
- Several residents noted the importance of responding to **increased traffic** due to growth.
  - » Attendees recommended enhancing street designs and implementing traffic calming interventions to reduce traffic speed.
  - » Traffic along **Highway 12** is increasing.
  - » **Old Trunk 3 Road** should have sidewalk. People with young children use this road to walk and cycle to other neighbourhoods and to the Village of Chester.
  - » **Highway 3** is the "main street" for Western Shore and Chester Basin. Enhancing pedestrian infrastructure and implementing traffic calming interventions will create a safe and welcoming environment for all residents.
- Residents were generally supportive of improving **active transportation** infrastructure including sidewalks and bicycle lanes.

"Without water, you can't do anything"

"It isn't safe to let my children cross the street to access the park"

3 Improve Public Awareness, Engagement and Communication



- Participants believed that offering **transparent processes** for engagement and communication with residents is essential.
- Ensure that feedback from attendees is fully considered and that the outcomes of the Growth Plan are not predetermined.
- Residents desired clarity around the timeline for growth in targeted growth areas and the proposed periphery areas.
- Some residents felt that **racism and an aversion to newcomers** remain persistent in rural Nova Scotia. Education on the important contributions that immigrants, both past and present, have made to the community is crucial.

4 Shared Benefits and Financial Transparency



- Ensure that communities across the Municipality equally benefit from the municipal investments and spending that arise from the Growth Plan.
- Participants called for more **transparency on whether their taxes will be impacted** by the Growth Plan and the source and amount of government funding being invested in infrastructure upgrades.

5 Attract and Retain Workforce Population



- Many participants recognized the link between attracting a strong workforce population and having a vibrant local economy and tax base.
- Residents noted that **job opportunities are lacking**, resulting in a further decline in the workforce population of the MOC.
- Some residents felt that there is a **generational divide** in the labour force, with younger generations being less interested in filling the roles and positions needed by the local economy.
- While **temporary workers** play a crucial role in sustaining some of the key industries in Chester, those workers will not be able to grow their businesses if they cannot find a place to live.

6 Growth for the Entire Municipality



- Preserve a **sense of local identity** in each community. There was a desire to ensure the uniqueness of the individual Hamlet's community character is represented in new developments in Hamlet Areas.
- Many participants questioned the exclusion of **Exit 8** from the identified growth areas, highlighting developments along Exits 6,7, and 9 would not benefit all communities in the Municipality.
- **The shoreline area should remain accessible to the public.** Several participants were concerned about the loss of public shoreline access due to private waterfront development.
- Consider the **environmental impact** of development, particularly the health of surrounding forests. This is also important in preserving the charm of the local community.

7 Improve Access to Community Services



- **Rural connections for amenities and local services need to be improved**. Encouraging residents to use local services has been a challenge.
- Residents valued the **level of perceived safety and a lack of crime** within their communities. With an increasing population, additional RCMP coverage will be required to maintain this.
- Participants described desirable growth as "**having its own economy**", with local commercial stores and public services. Examples included grocery stores, restaurants, liquor stores, amenities, and schools.
- **Healthcare access and daycare availability** have been prominent issues associated with growth.
  - » The Municipality has struggled to attract professionals such as doctors due to a lack of affordable housing, recreation facilities, and limited local businesses.
- Public washrooms, community services, and recreation opportunities are lacking in the Municipality. **Schools** can be better utilized to address those community needs.

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with us for the Growth Plan.
For ongoing project updates and opportunities for future engagement sessions, visit
www.engagechester.ca

Appendix 2: Non-Profit Affordable Housing Developer Interviews

In December 2024, the project team conducted a series of virtual one-on-one meetings with non-profit and affordable housing developers to on the influence of surplus lands, development incentives, and sewer and water servicing on affordable housing development.

What We Asked:

1. Each meeting was guided by the following discussion questions. The project team also asked follow-up questions as necessary.
2. Could you start by briefly telling us about yourself and your role in affordable housing development? Do you have any experience developing affordable housing in the Municipality of Chester?
3. What barriers to development are non-profit and affordable housing developers (like yourself) facing in the development of affordable housing?
4. Recognizing that municipalities do not build housing but do create regulations and facilitate the development process, what development incentives do you feel that Municipal Governments could provide to support the development of housing by non-profit and affordable housing developers?
5. One incentive that the Municipality of Chester is considering is the gifting of surplus lands to affordable housing developments. What should be considered when evaluating whether surplus land will effectively support the development of affordable housing?
6. How would you describe the influence of sewer and water serve availability on affordable housing development?
7. Do you have any additional comments?

Appendix 3: Surplus Land and Land Banking Case Studies

Case Study 1: Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)

Policy name: Administrative Order Number 50, Respecting the Disposal of Surplus Real Property

Legislative authority: *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c.39

Policy overview: Council approved the initial Administrative Order 50 in April 2013. The Order aimed to establish a consistent approach for the disposal of surplus lands by identifying the status of surplus properties and the category of disposal method.

Required processes for the disposal: HRM Staff will work with the Business Unit to review the existing inventory of surplus lands to determine the category of those lands. The Regional Council will determine the category of surplus lands based on the review by the HRM Staff. The categories include *Economic Development* and *Affordable Housing*, with specific surplus disposal methods and approval processes.

Economic Development:

Surplus land in this category should be "sold to maximize land use or value, foster employment, [encourage] neighbourhood regeneration, or to generate revenue (including property taxes) that [could] be invested in new municipal infrastructure" (Page 2).

Disposal method should be determined based on an individually recommended process.

Affordable Housing:

In this policy, "affordable housing" is defined as "housing that meets the needs of a variety of households in the low to moderate income range" (Page 1).

Disposal of surplus lands for this category can take place via direct sale of lands or call for submissions (open to eligible non-profit organizations).

Case Study 2: Municipality of East Hants, NS

Policy name: Disposal of Surplus Real Property Policy (effective September 2024; formerly called Disposal of Surplus Property Policy, initially adopted in June 2010)

Legislative authority: *Municipal Government Act* s.273 (13)

Background context:

As of 2024, the Municipality of East Hants disposed of four properties under this policy (South Rawdon Community Hall, former Burntcoat School Property, Shubenacadie Community Hall, and E.H. Horne School).

» The policy was revised in September 2024 to clarify the scope and the objectives of the policy.

Criteria to determine the usefulness of surplus lands:

2.2.1: No long-term use has been identified

2.2.2: It is no longer in the best interest of the Municipality to retain ownership of the property (i.e. cost to maintain the property outweighs the benefit of retaining)

2.2.3: Retaining ownership exposes East Hants to liability or risk (i.e. a vacant building or land would be more vulnerable to vandalism and trespassing).

Required processes for the disposal:

- All Municipal departments must be included in the process to review the surplus land of interest and confirm that the property will not serve the immediate or long-term purposes of the Municipality and is therefore eligible for the disposal.
- The Council will declare the disposal of surplus land and will determine the method of disposal.
- A public hearing will be required "if the property that is being sold for less than fair market value is valued at more than $10,000" (2.6.2).
- Council will categorize each real property based on disposal potential. Figure 5-2 highlights the categories of property disposal:

Case Study 3: Municipality of the District of Shelburne, NS

Policy name: Policy 18 Disposal of Surplus Lands

Legislative authority: *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. M. 50

Criteria to determine the usefulness of surplus property:

When Council decides to offer a minimum bid for the sale, Council will be responsible for determining the minimum bid based on the assessment criteria. Key

determinants include:

- Current status of the property (i.e. is it serviced land or unserviced?);
- Presence of water frontage; and
- Access to road (i.e. does the property abut a public or a private road?)

Required processes to facilitate the disposal:

- All department heads need to be notified of potential surplus property. The Departments should have at least 14 days to determine if they may need the property to serve municipal purposes.
- When the property is declared surplus, information for the sale of the property should be available in local newspapers and the Municipality's website and in social media. The notice should include the location of the property, assessment value, and intended use of the property.

Case Study 4: Town of Salisbury, NB

Policy name: Municipal Surplus Land & Land Acquisition Policy (Effective: February 2024)

Legislative authority: *Local Governance Act*, SNB 2017, C. 18

Affordable housing definition: CMHC standards ("consisting of housing at a rate of less than 30% of a household's income before tax")

Criteria to determine the usefulness of surplus property:

- Council will identify the purposes of surplus lands, including economic development and affordable housing.

Required processes to facilitate the disposal:

- Council will first designate the land as surplus land.
- In general, the Town issues a solicitation of proposals to the public, communicating the bidding process, submission guidelines, and location and intended use of the surplus lands.
- The Town can also send solicit proposals for non-profit organizations. This option is primarily aimed at supporting non-profit developers providing affordable housing.
- Following the RFP process, the Chief Administrative Officer will conduct a confidential evaluation of submitted proposals. The evaluation will be based on the criteria set by individual RFP's.

Figure 5-3. Surplus Real Property Disposal Categories

(Source: Municipality of East Hants, Disposal of Surplus Real Property Policy, 2024)

Category	Description
Economic Development Disposal	Real Property that has economic development potential where: • There is an opportunity to grow or expand targeted industries and employment; and/or • Generate financial return to East Hants, such as through property tax assessment growth. This excludes Real Property in Municipal business parks.
Community Interest Disposal	Real Property known to have potential for community use, in particular where: • There has been a prior community or institutional use of the property; and/or • By location or scarcity of available property and/or services, the consideration for community use would reasonably arise.
Ordinary Disposal	Real Property of an ordinary or routine nature.
Remnant Disposal	Real Property that is remaining or subdivided lands which: • By nature of their location, size or dimensions have limited or no reasonable use.
Extraordinary Disposal	Real Property having a legal distinction which includes conditions or extraordinary process with respect to its preservation or disposal, including but not limited to: • Heritage properties; • Properties held in trust or upon condition; and/or • Open Space properties acquired through the subdivision process.
Intergovernmental Transfer	Real Property requested by another level of government.

Case Study 5: Town of O'Leary, Prince Edward Island

Policy name: Land Disposal Program Policy (Council approved January 9, 2025)

Legislative authority: PEI Municipal Government Act, Division 5

Affordable housing definitions: "Social Benefit means a benefit to the community as a whole through the provision of affordable housing or non-market housing or both." The policy does not specifically define affordable housing.

Background context: As part of its plan to use the federal Housing Accelerator Fund, in 2024 the Town of O'Leary began working to "create a land bank policy for the allocation of municipality-owned assets for the development of affordable housing" (Town of O'Leary, October 9, 2024, Public Meeting Presentation).

Criteria to determine the usefulness of surplus lands: "Surplus Municipal Land means land owned by the Town of O'Leary that is no longer required for municipal purposes."

Required processes for the disposal:

- Council declares the subject land as surplus and decides the fair market value.
- The Town posts a public RFP.
- Proponents submit a proposal.
- Proposal Review Committee, appointed by Council, reviews proposals.
- The committee scores the proposals based on a set of Assessment Criteria and submits a recommendation to Council.
- If Council accepts a transfer less than fair market value, the PEI Municipal Government Act requires a public notice be posted at least 14 days prior to disposal of the land.

5.3 Key Findings

Non-profit affordable housing developers have identified that municipal surplus land programs are a key incentive and factor in the viability of the development of affordable housing projects. Access to land is critical to supplement a lack of equity and helps to support the financing and underwriting of their development projects.

Non-profit affordable housing developers emphasized that the evaluation of surplus land should consider:

- *Status of land*: Ideal surplus lands are vacant properties located near services. Access to municipal sewer and water service is critical in reducing development costs.
- *Size of land*: the land should be manageable in size and scale. Large parcels should be pre-subdivided into building lots.
- *Physical environment*: Characteristics such as land slope and soil type should be key determinants in evaluating the suitability for development.
- *Zoning*: current zoning should allow for development with the flexibility to rezone as needed. Ideally, the work of re-zoning is completed prior to the transfer of surplus lands.

The case studies also highlighted potential directions for the Municipality to offer fair and reasonable disposal policies, including:

- Confirm with all municipal departments that the surplus land can be disposed of for developers;
- Offer a disposal category tailored to non-profit and affordable housing developers. Establishing a category helps the Council to determine the most reasonable method of disposal (e.g., direct land sale to non-profit developers, calling for submission); and
- Non-profit affordable housing developers should have access to information on the surplus properties available for disposal. Municipal websites and local newspapers can contribute to informing the disposal of surplus properties.

Appendix 4: Population and Workforce Projection Data

Figure 5-4. High Population Projection Scenario Data

(Source: FBM)

	2026 Scenario			2031 Scenario			2036 Scenario			2041 Scenario			2046 Scenario		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
0 - 4	249	224	473	294	265	558	327	295	622	354	320	674	381	344	724
5-9	252	206	458	311	272	583	360	317	677	397	351	748	429	379	808
10-14	255	259	514	287	235	522	348	303	651	400	350	750	439	386	825
15-19	218	203	421	252	251	503	285	227	512	345	295	640	397	341	739
20-24	237	201	437	229	214	444	264	263	526	297	239	536	358	307	666
25-29	296	258	554	313	289	602	306	305	611	343	357	700	377	334	711
30-34	284	300	584	399	370	769	409	396	805	404	416	820	442	471	914
35-39	308	341	649	379	399	778	502	473	975	505	496	1001	503	518	1022
40-44	327	306	634	398	418	816	480	485	965	609	562	1171	608	582	1191
45-49	317	341	658	393	380	773	473	501	974	563	578	1141	697	658	1355
50-55	381	397	778	385	430	815	469	479	949	560	613	1173	660	701	1361
56-59	435	443	877	459	481	940	465	517	981	559	574	1134	662	720	1382
60-64	553	639	1192	505	513	1018	527	547	1074	534	584	1119	637	650	1286
65-69	600	640	1240	618	688	1305	558	558	1116	577	588	1165	587	625	1213
70-74	517	526	1043	590	655	1245	607	702	1309	547	573	1120	564	599	1163
75-79	385	454	839	452	514	967	517	636	1153	531	680	1211	479	558	1037
80-84	245	277	523	289	400	689	340	453	793	388	558	946	399	597	996
85+	153	264	417	221	356	577	276	499	775	331	615	946	383	759	1142
Total	6012	6278	**12290**	6774	7131	**13906**	7510	7956	**15466**	8246	8749	**16994**	9003	9531	**18533**

Figure 5-5. Medium Population Projection Scenario Data

(Source: FBM)

	2026 Scenario			2031 Scenario			2036 Scenario			2041 Scenario			2046 Scenario		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
0 - 4	241	216	457	265	237	502	282	253	536	295	264	559	307	274	581
5-9	246	200	446	286	249	536	313	273	587	335	291	626	350	304	654
10-14	248	253	501	264	214	478	305	263	569	334	288	622	356	307	663
15-19	211	197	407	227	228	455	243	188	431	283	237	520	310	260	570
20-24	228	193	421	200	187	387	216	219	435	231	179	410	271	227	497
25-29	286	249	535	280	260	540	253	256	509	270	290	560	286	251	537
30-34	274	291	565	363	336	699	352	344	696	326	341	667	345	379	724
35-39	299	332	631	344	364	708	438	412	850	423	418	840	398	417	815
40-44	319	298	617	366	385	750	419	422	841	517	474	991	499	477	976
45-49	309	333	643	363	351	714	416	445	861	476	489	965	577	543	1119
50-55	374	389	763	359	403	761	419	427	846	479	532	1011	547	586	1132
56-59	427	435	862	433	454	887	420	469	889	489	501	989	558	614	1173
60-64	544	629	1174	478	484	963	483	501	984	472	517	988	546	555	1101
65-69	591	630	1221	587	655	1242	514	509	1023	517	523	1040	509	540	1049
70-74	509	518	1028	562	623	1185	559	648	1207	488	506	994	491	519	1010
75-79	382	447	830	434	488	921	477	586	1063	475	609	1084	414	477	892
80-84	238	273	512	271	380	651	307	414	720	335	497	832	332	517	848
85+	148	260	408	203	338	541	240	457	697	272	543	815	298	648	946
Total	5877	6144	**12021**	6285	6635	**12920**	6657	7086	**13743**	7017	7498	**14514**	7393	7893	**15286**

Figure 5-6. Low Population Projection Scenario Data

(Source: FBM)

	2026 Scenario			2031 Scenario			2036 Scenario			2041 Scenario			2046 Scenario		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
0 - 4	210	196	406	210	197	407	212	198	410	209	195	404	205	191	395
5-9	218	196	414	215	215	431	216	218	434	218	220	439	216	219	435
10-14	240	243	483	218	189	407	215	209	424	216	211	427	218	213	431
15-19	233	196	429	232	207	438	209	152	362	206	171	377	206	170	377
20-24	251	189	440	233	171	404	232	180	412	210	126	335	207	144	350
25-29	272	237	508	275	232	507	258	215	473	257	225	483	236	171	406
30-34	262	283	546	320	301	621	320	293	613	304	277	581	304	290	594
35-39	299	311	610	316	318	634	378	336	715	374	327	702	359	313	673
40-44	314	280	594	345	329	674	368	338	706	434	357	791	427	348	775
45-49	303	329	632	338	316	654	373	369	742	400	382	782	467	403	870
50-55	361	386	747	328	384	712	366	377	743	405	438	843	436	459	895
56-59	417	431	848	399	436	835	368	435	803	412	434	845	458	502	960
60-64	556	629	1185	467	468	935	447	471	918	420	471	891	471	475	946
65-69	582	626	1208	576	636	1212	484	476	960	464	479	943	441	479	920
70-74	497	509	1006	527	595	1122	521	605	1126	438	454	892	420	456	876
75-79	395	420	815	427	438	865	452	513	966	447	521	969	375	386	761
80-84	230	261	491	263	330	593	281	342	623	291	402	693	285	407	692
85+	142	248	391	182	300	482	209	368	577	220	403	622	219	457	676
Total	5781	5972	**11753**	5871	6061	**11932**	5909	6097	**12006**	5925	6094	**12019**	5947	6084	**12032**

Figure 5-7. Projected Workforce Size Aged 15-64 Summary Table

(Source: FBM)

Workforce Size Population Estimates Aged 15-64

	Historic Estimate	Low Scenario	Medium Scenario	High Scenario
2006	5,551	-	-	-
2011	5,297	-	-	-
2016	4,794	-	-	-
2021	4,802	-	-	-
2026	-	5,139	5,216	5,349
2031	-	5,084	5,459	5,936
2036	-	5,184	5,874	6,704
2041	-	5,312	6,351	7,550
2046	-	5,472	6,883	8,468

Figure 5-8. Projected Percent of Population as Workforce Aged 15-64 Summary Table

(Source: FBM)

Percent of Population as Workforce Aged 15-64

	Historic	Low Scenario	Medium Scenario	High Scenario
2006	51.6%	-	-	-
2011	49.9%	-	-	-
2016	46.5%	-	-	-
2021	45.0%	-	-	-
2026	-	43.7%	43.4%	45.9%
2031	-	42.6%	42.3%	48.3%
2036	-	43.2%	42.7%	48.2%
2041	-	44.2%	43.8%	48.8%
2046	-	45.5%	45.0%	49.8%



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