





The power of planning

You want to do everything it takes to see your community succeed. That includes creating opportunities that lead to local employment and much needed tax revenue.

Land-use planning is an integral part of a community's economic development. In fact, there are many ways in which proper land-use planning can help your local economy develop.

The benefits of good land-use planning:

- Protects important community assets that are needed for economic development.
- Offers a way forward that is clear, predictable and coordinated for everyone involved.
- Improves the physical characteristics of a community as a place to live, work and do business.

Simply put, good planning can optimize the use of a community's land and natural resources, which leads to orderly growth, efficient provision of infrastructure and services - and economic development.

A way forward

This guide is designed to help you build a land-use plan for your community that incorporates economic development objectives. We've organized the guide as a series of zones that transition from a remote or rural area to the business district of a downtown core.

Within each zone we've included a series of specific questions. These are the questions that lead to responsible and successful results. If these resources are not available to you—or you're not getting the answers you need—reach out to us at the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing. **We can help.**



Rural Resource Zones

Resource-based industries remain the backbone of many rural communities. When planning, it is important that these resources are not compromised, and effort is taken to ensure compatibility with other land uses.

More Resources:

Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry
<https://novascotia.ca/natr/>
Phone: (902) 424-5935

Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Mines
<https://energy.novascotia.ca/>
Phone: (902) 424-4575

Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
<https://novascotia.ca/fish/>
Phone: (902) 424-4560

Questions to ask:

- Are there planning provisions that would protect natural resources and limit potential land use conflicts with existing or potential resource-based development?
- Are there planning provisions that would advance and not hinder the establishment and ongoing operations of value-added resource-based manufacturing.
- Does planning address concerns like access, land use compatibility, setbacks, servicing and accessory uses in relation to resource-based development?
- Is Crown Land identified and highlighted in planning documents and are the compatibility of uses on adjacent lands taken into account?
- Has effort been taken to ensure your planning does not duplicate or conflict with other regulatory requirements related to resource uses?



Agricultural Zones

Our province has a limited amount of farmland, despite farming being one of the economic drivers of many rural communities. Encroachment by residential and other types of development affects land prices, making it more difficult to expand farms or sell land to new farmers. Lack of available land can also impact the competitiveness and financial viability of local producers.

More Resources:

Statement of Provincial Interest on Agricultural Land
<https://novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/mgstmt.htm>

Related provincial legislation:
<https://novascotia.ca/agri/laws-and-regulations/>

Contacts:

Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture
<http://novascotia.ca/thinkfarm/>
Phone: (902) 424-4560 or 1-800-279-0825

Questions to ask:

- Does your planning identify and protect agricultural land?
- Do planning provisions limit the conversion of prime agricultural areas for other types of development?
- Have you discouraged the fragmentation of arable agricultural land—or limited the number of new lots (or lot size) where agriculture is given priority?
- Have you considered providing areas for non-agricultural uses—such as forestry or parks—which will allow the land to be used for agriculture in the future?
- Have you provided minimum setback distances between agriculture and non-agricultural development?
- Have you enacted measures to reduce topsoil removal on agricultural land with the highest value?
- Can you direct non-agricultural development to areas with low agricultural potential?
- Have you allowed for a wide range of agricultural uses, ancillary uses and value-added agribusinesses?



Natural Areas and Tourism Destinations

Natural areas, including parks and protected areas, perform many functions, from conserving biodiversity to delivering vital ecosystem services, such as protecting watersheds and soils—and improving air quality. Sometimes overlooked is the broad range of commercial activities that occur in association with nature parks and protected areas. Planning can conserve and develop attractive and inviting areas where visitors are enticed to spend money. Also keep in mind, visitors want authentic experiences—and what makes an area great for local residents will also attract visitors.

More Resources:

Community Tourism Planning Guide

<https://tourismns.ca/development/destination-development>

Tourism Destination Plans

<https://tourismns.ca/development/destination-development/library-plans>

Tourism Business Development Guides

<https://tourismns.ca/development/business-development/business-resources>

Questions to ask:

- Does your planning include measures to support tourism through the protection and preservation of natural landscapes, trails, waterfront land, heritage sites, and scenic vistas?
- Does your planning envision a mix of businesses in tourism destinations to achieve a critical mass of activities, shops, restaurants, and accommodations along with sufficient parking and amenities?
- In areas near natural attractions and tourism destinations, does your planning include provisions to maximize tourism revenues through private sector business and experience development opportunities? (Over 80% of all non-lodging visitor spending consists of shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly area).
- Does your planning address current and future infrastructure and service requirements associated with accommodating tourism in designated areas?



Suburban

In today's economy, people are a community's most important asset. The characteristics of a place as well as the availability, quality and affordability of housing can influence the availability of labour for businesses. To encourage entrepreneurship, it should be relatively easy to start a home-based business.

Industrial areas that are typically located on the outskirts of a community have traditionally served as a major source of tax revenues for many municipalities. Only a small area of land in a planning area may be suitable for industrial development as most operations must locate in areas that allow for an easy flow of goods, employees, and customers.

More Resources:

Contacts:

BizPaL:

Access Nova Scotia

<https://novascotia.ca/sns/access/business.asp>

Industrial Real Estate:

Nova Scotia Business Inc.

<https://www.novascotiabusiness.com/industrialands>

Questions to ask:

- Does your planning identify and reserve a supply of land to accommodate industrial development and future expansion?
- Have you considered current and future supporting requirements for transportation systems and other infrastructure?
- Is land near major transportation hubs reserved for industrial and other uses that are both complementary and compatible?
- Is the type, location and amount of industrial land based on a detailed analysis of the competitive assets in regional economy as well as emerging economic trends? And does it align with a Regional Economic Development Strategy?
- Do policies in the planning documents enhance the community as a desirable place to live?
- Do planning documents allow for a wide variety of home occupations and home-based businesses—along with reasonable standards of operation?
- Do you have any materials (such as flow charts) for internal or external use that quickly and easily illustrate how development permits and land use planning works—and how long the approval process can take?



Downtown Business District

Successful business districts and town centers typically offer a variety of businesses, activities, and amenities, with a wide range of opportunities for professional pursuits and personal interests. Retailers, restaurants, and other businesses serving local customers can benefit from being in mixed-use commercial districts that are centrally located and pedestrian friendly.

Waterfronts are part of many of Nova Scotia's downtown areas and play a key role in the development of municipalities. Downtown areas can also be home to Innovation Districts, where leading-edge anchor institutions and start-up companies cluster together. This type of district offers unique planning challenges, requiring a physical platform necessary for connectivity, proximity, and density.

More Resources:

The 20 Ingredients of an Outstanding Downtown

https://www.rogerbrooksinternational.com/20_Ingredients_Handout.pdf

The Role of Mayors in the Rise of Innovation Districts

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/advancing-a-new-wave-of-urban-competitiveness/>

Contacts:

Develop Nova Scotia

<https://developns.ca/>

Phone: 902.422.6591

Questions to ask:

- Has your municipality identified a sufficient supply of land to accommodate commercial development and a mix of uses in the downtown core or business district?
- Are you generally able to approve commercial developments in a business district without having to amend the municipal plan and development regulations?
- Do your municipal planning staff coordinate their work with economic development staff?
- Does your municipality have a designated individual to guide the proponent through the approval process?
- For innovation districts, does planning allow for a mix of institutional, corporate offices and affordable spaces for start-ups to locate next to each other?
- Does planning allow for a pedestrian friendly environment that provides the backbone of the innovation district - strengthening connections between people and firms?
- Are public spaces designed to spur interaction, learning and networking? (For instance, planning could ensure ground floors of buildings are reserved for commercial and gathering spaces such as retail, cafes, bars or restaurants, galleries or performing arts spaces.)



Supporting Economic Development in our regions - Municipalities, First Nations, the Province of Nova Scotia, and the business community are all working together through the Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs) model, to lead a collaborative approach to economic development and strengthen regional economies.

<https://nsrens.ca/>

The Locus app is an interactive online map viewer that makes provincial spatial data available to municipalities and RENs for analysis through an online Geographic Information System (GIS). Its purpose is to support the development of Municipal Planning Strategies and more generally, informed and evidence-based decision-making related to economic development and land use planning.

<https://nsgi.novascotia.ca/locus/>

For more information contact the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing