

Town of Mahone Bay 2025 – 2029 Strategic Plan

March 11, 2025

Our Vision

Mahone Bay is a welcoming and dynamic community that cherishes its rich heritage, nurtures meaningful connections between people and place, encourages creativity, and promotes active living. We are adaptable to the evolving needs of our residents while safeguarding our natural environment for future generations.

Our Mission

Our Mission is to provide high-quality municipal services with a balanced approach that respects both efficiency and the realities of governance. Through responsible decision-making, clear communication, and community engagement, we work to support a thriving and resilient Mahone Bay.

Core Values

Our Core Values are deeply ingrained principles that guide Town Council and staff in the timely and collaborative delivery of services, ensuring support for an optimal quality of life in our community.

- Community Connectedness
- Fairness and Belonging
- Public Safety and Security
- Environmental Stewardship
- Integrity and Civic Pride
- Responsible Leadership

Strategic Pillars

We aim to balance economic prosperity with environmental and community well-being, ensuring Mahone Bay remains vibrant and livable in the present and the future.

1. Community and Partner Engagement
2. Responsible Financial Stewardship
3. Future-Ready Infrastructure
4. Planned Services and Managed Growth

Strategic Pillar #1: Community and Partner Engagement

Goal 1.1: Increase access to Town information and decision-making.

Strategic Actions:

- **1.1a:** Establish communications committee.
- **1.1b:** Develop communications strategy.

- **1.1c:** Increase communications capacity by establishing new staff position.
- **1.1d:** Develop a 'Behind the Scenes in Local Government' series to educate residents about Town operations, including budgeting, decision-making, and service delivery.
- **1.1e:** Develop proactive communications to minimize disruptions to businesses during major infrastructure projects.

Goal 1.2: Strengthen and sustain strategic community partnerships to amplify connections and collaboration.

Strategic Actions:

- **1.2a:** Establish regular stakeholder meetings with community partners to collaboratively identify, engage, and implement initiatives that enhance tourism, community engagement, and economic development.
- **1.2b:** Review and update Town policies and practices related to financial support for community groups, with the goal of enhancing and expanding opportunities for support.
- **1.2c:** Support, promote, and celebrate community-led activities and initiatives using Town communication channels, including exploring the development of a live community calendar with community organizations to book and check events.
- **1.2d:** Partner with local organizations to celebrate and protect Mahone Bay's built heritage and beauty.

Goal 1.3: Invest resources in intermunicipal relationships.

Strategic Actions:

- **1.3a:** Publicly celebrate intermunicipal relationships in the community to foster awareness and appreciation of collaboration.
- **1.3b:** Identify new shared services opportunities via the Municipal Joint Services Board (MJSB).
- **1.3c:** Engage with the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg to explore the potential for shared infrastructure projects at town boundaries.
- **1.3d:** Strengthen collaboration with Riverport Electric Light Commission (RELC), AREA (Alternative Resource Energy Authority), and the new Maritime Municipal Electrical Utility Alliance (MMEUA).
- **1.3e:** Explore opportunities to collaborate with neighboring municipalities to address shoreline protection and eliminate straight pipes.
- **1.3f:** Collaborate with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) to advocate for legislative changes.

Goal 1.4: Foster a welcoming and inclusive community.

Strategic Actions:

- **1.4a:** Work with the Anti-Racism and Diversity Coordinator and the Accessibility Coordinator to ensure meaningful consultation on matters impacting equity-seeking groups and accessibility.
- **1.4b:** Engage in activities to encourage youth participation in civic discussions and create opportunities for their voices to be heard.
- **1.4c:** Develop a "Welcome to Mahone Bay" initiative to support new resident integration.

Strategic Pillar #2: Responsible Financial Stewardship

Goal 2.1: Enhance financial forecasting and transparency.

Strategic Actions:

- **2.1a:** Build analysis regarding non-strategic operating expense growth alignment with Consumer Price Index (CPI) into the annual budget process.
- **2.1b:** Adopt long-term financial forecasting tools.
- **2.1c:** Evaluate and implement best practices for financial reporting and forecasting to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability.
- **2.1d:** Provide public budget breakdowns and spending reports in a simplified, easy-to-read format.
- **2.1e:** Develop a participatory budgeting process.
- **2.1f:** Incorporate climate risks into financial planning and budget analysis.
- **2.1g:** Develop communication materials to increase public understanding of financial constraints, including the Capped Assessment Program (CAP) and its impact on municipal finances.
- **2.1h:** Broaden the Public's understanding of the costs/benefits of operating the Town's electrical utility.
- **2.1i:** Assess internal capacity and develop processes to optimize grant tracking, external funding applications, and reporting. Include summaries of grant funding received in public financial reports to enhance transparency and accountability.

Goal 2.2: Modernize and improve financial services.

Strategic Actions:

- **2.2a:** Conduct a comprehensive review of financial policies and practices.
- **2.2b:** Explore and implement improved accounting software to improve financial tracking, reporting, and decision-making.

- **2.2c:** Develop user-friendly financial tools for the public to increase transparency and access to financial data.
- **2.2d:** Evaluate restructuring the income-tested property tax rebate to include offsets for infrastructure charges.

Goal 2.3: Increase non-tax revenue streams by leveraging Town assets.

Strategic Actions:

- **2.3a:** Develop a strategy to optimize marina and harbor assets.
- **2.3b:** Consider implementation of Marketing Levy to generate tourism-supporting revenue.
- **2.3c:** Solicit donations to support public infrastructure projects.
- **2.3d:** Evaluate electrical generation opportunities with potential return on investment.
- **2.3e:** Explore opportunities to increase utility sales.
- **2.3f:** Evaluate the pros and cons and economic viability of installing parking signs with time limits on Main Street and on Town property.

Strategic Pillar #3: Future-Ready Infrastructure

Goal 3.1: Modernize, expand and replace ageing utility infrastructure to ensure reliable, future-ready services.

Strategic Actions:

- **3.1a:** Develop and implement a phased plan to replace aging utility infrastructure, including water, sewer, and electrical systems, using asset management data to prioritize investments.
- **3.1b:** Reduce water loss and improve water service quality.
- **3.1c:** Strengthen electrical utility resiliency and expand capacity to support new development.
- **3.1d:** Explore large scale battery storage (or equivalent).

Goal 3.2: Develop a comprehensive asset management strategy

Strategic Actions:

- **3.2a:** Finalize Asset Management program to assess the current state of infrastructure and prioritize investment needs.
- **3.2b:** Create detailed, asset management plans for each asset class to guide the repair, upkeep, and replacement of Town infrastructure.
- **3.2c:** Leverage infrastructure projects to include enhancement the Town's aesthetic and natural appeal.

Goal 3.3: Invest in natural infrastructure and environmental solutions.

Strategic Actions:

- **3.3a:** Integrate natural assets into Asset Management program.
- **3.3b:** Update climate hazard assessments and risk mapping for extreme weather events, flooding, and fire risks, and integrate findings into the Town's Asset Management Program to guide infrastructure investments and long-term resilience planning.
- **3.3c:** Complete the Development and Implement the Urban Forest Management Plan.
- **3.3d:** Promote natural beautification efforts, such as harbor clean-up and canopy restoration.
- **3.3e:** Regularly review and update all climate adaptation and mitigation efforts to ensure alignment with evolving best practices, new data, and changing environmental conditions.

Goal 3.4: Improve mobility and accessibility through strategic infrastructure investments that prioritize pedestrian safety, accessibility, and active.

Strategic Actions:

- **3.4a:** Prioritize pedestrian safety by improving and expanding sidewalks, standardizing crosswalks, and enhancing crosswalk signage.
- **3.4b:** Develop and implement an Active Transportation Plan to increase non-vehicle transportation options and promote active living.
- **3.4c:** Implement the Lunenburg County Accessibility Plan to enhance mobility and accessibility for all residents.
- **3.4d:** Manage, assist, and develop the Town's recreational facilities for all ages in partnership with community groups and organizations.
- **3.4e:** Develop and implement solutions to address current and future parking challenges through creative, sustainable, parking solutions.

Strategic Pillar #4: Planned Services and Managed Growth

Goal 4.1: Improve the efficiency of housing and development permitting processes to encourage housing starts and support sustainable growth.

Strategic Actions:

- **4.1a:** Develop and implement housing and development permitting goals and strategies and fulfil the requirements of the Housing Accelerator Fund Contribution Agreement.
- **4.1b:** Conduct an evaluation of planning services for opportunities to improve capacity and effectiveness.

- **4.1c:** Integrate climate hazard assessments and risk mapping into development planning processes to ensure new growth is aligned with climate adaptation and resilience goals.

Goal 4.2: Expand the tax base through strategic redevelopment and business growth.

Strategic Actions:

- **4.2a:** Encourage property redevelopment and business growth while maintaining the Town's small-town heritage character.
- **4.2b:** Explore opportunities to encourage the use of underutilized property.
- **4.2c:** Explore business property tax incentives for new commercial investments.
- **4.2d:** Explore options to encourage targeted housing redevelopment that supports right-sizing for residents, ensuring housing availability meets the needs of changing demographics and market demand.
- **4.2e:** Explore new mechanisms for proactive engagement with businesses and economic stakeholders.

Goal 4.3: Leverage heritage assets to increase economic value and tourism potential.

Strategic Actions:

- **4.3a:** Evaluate developing a Streetscape Plan to preserve and enhance the Town's built heritage, ensuring its continued appeal as a key tourist attraction.
- **4.3b:** Develop communications and incentives to encourage property owners to participate in the Municipal Heritage Property Registration program, supporting the preservation of the Town's built heritage.
- **4.3c:** Consider collaborating with relevant community organizations and businesses to create and implement a comprehensive Heritage Promotion Strategy.

Goal 4.4: Strengthen public safety and resilience through community collaboration.

Strategic Actions:

- **4.4a:** Evaluate the RCMP contract to ensure service levels align with community needs and contractual commitments.
- **4.4b:** Encourage and provide support for the Mahone Bay & District Fire Department's recruitment and retention efforts.
- **4.4c:** Explore alternative approaches to public protection and enforcement.
- **4.4d:** Consider developing and implementing a Resilient Community Plan.