

Fact Sheet

Introduction

About the Project

The Town of Yarmouth Planning Review is a project that was launched in Winter 2024 to revise the Town's core planning documents. **The Municipal Government Act**, which governs how municipalities operate in Nova Scotia, requires planning documents to be reviewed at least once every 10 years. The Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS or Plan), Land Use Bylaw (LUB), and Subdivision Bylaw guide all future growth and development in Yarmouth. While they have been amended regularly, they last underwent a major review in 2016. The goal of this project is to create a new MPS and updated bylaws that will better meet the needs of the Town and guide development over the next 10 years.

One of the main priorities of this Planning Review is to collaborate with stakeholders and community members to ensure that the planning documents align with the community's vision for itself and address topics and issues that are important to the town's residents. This Plan will be reflective of the residents' needs and aspirations, aiming to better serve the community over the coming decade.

Alongside the Planning Review, the Town is undertaking planning changes under the federal Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) program. More information about this can be found in the Housing fact sheet, as well as a separate set of detailed HAF fact sheets available on the project website.

The Planning Review is being carried out by UPLAND Planning + Design Studio in collaboration with municipal staff.

Project Timeline

The project began in Winter 2024 with a comprehensive background review, followed by initial community engagement in Spring 2024. Based on this input, Issues and Options Reports were developed, which informed the most recent engagement phase in Winter 2025. We are now in the draft engagement phase. This will be followed by the HAF Amendments Package in the Fall of 2025, with the final draft engagement scheduled for Winter 2026. The final plan is expected to be adopted in Spring 2026.

Project Launch
Winter 2024



Background Review
Winter/Spring 2024



Initial Engagement
Spring 2024



We Are Here



Draft Engagement
Fall 2025



Issues & Options Engagement
Winter 2025



HAF Amendments Package Adoption
Fall/Winter 2025



Final Draft Engagement
Winter 2026



Plan Adoption
Spring 2026

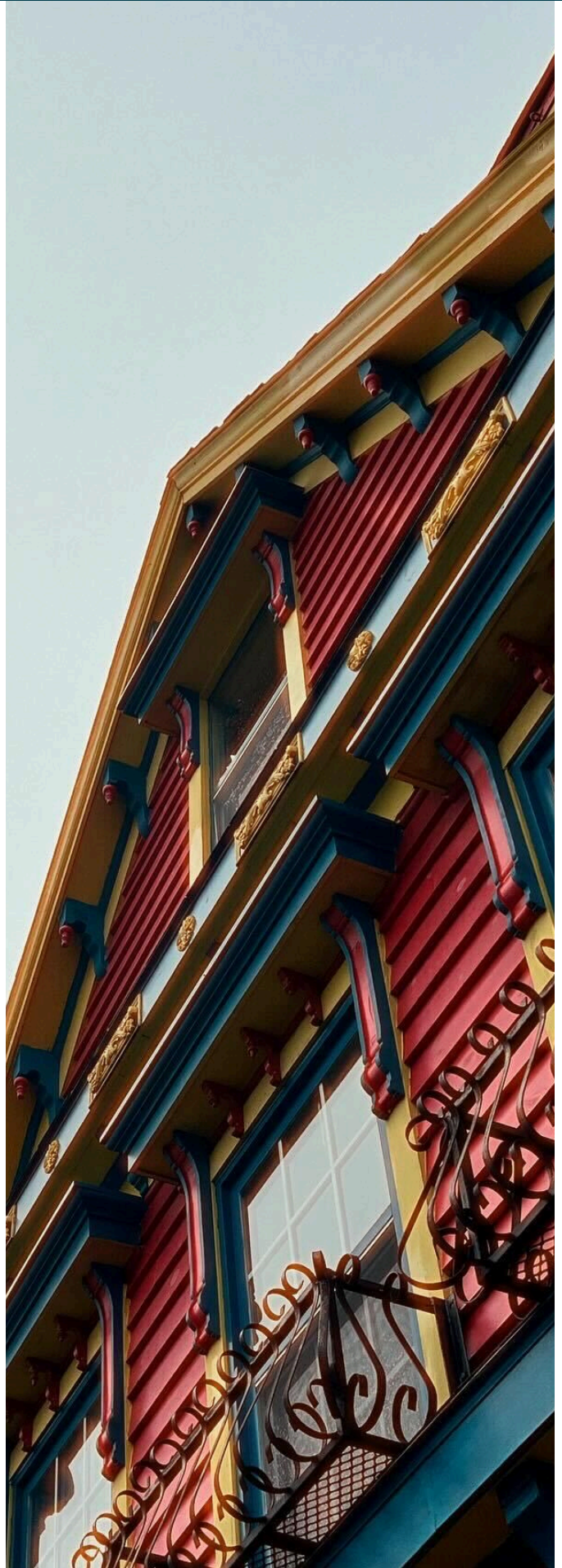


What are the Core Planning Documents for Yarmouth?

The **Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS or Plan)** is the primary planning document for the Town. It establishes the vision, goals, and policies for growth and development. In other words, it is the road map that helps to guide decision making relating to what we build, where, and at what intensity. An MPS looks at many different aspects of life in the community including (but not limited to) housing, economic development, drinking water, and infrastructure. It also looks at important environmental considerations like the effects of climate change, coastal erosion and flooding, and the impacts that these have on development.

The **Land Use Bylaw (LUB)** is the companion document to the MPS, and puts the vision, goals, and policies into action through specific regulations that have to do with development activities. The LUB sets out things like the land use zones (zoning), permitted uses for these zones, standards for development, performance standards, developments to be considered by development agreement, and developments to be considered by the site plan approval process, among other things.

The **Subdivision Bylaw (SDB)** is a document that regulates how land in the Town of Yarmouth can be divided to create new lots, consolidated to create larger lots, and adjusted for new boundaries. It establishes a process of approvals and standards that apply to all subdivisions of land in Yarmouth. It guides decisions on the construction of services being built in new communities, such as streets, parkland, sidewalks, water lines, and sewers.



What is Planning?

Planning is the process by which communities can control change and development in their physical environment. Planning seeks to balance the needs of people, the economy, and the environment by determining where, at what intensity, and in what form certain land uses should take place. It plays a significant role in keeping populations safe and healthy and allocates growth through proactive (or deliberate) transportation and infrastructure planning, making it easier and more efficient for people to get around. Planning matters because:



It helps us prepare for change such as environmental change, like sea level rise, or social change, like an aging population.



It supports our community's character and culture by promoting good urban design, a quality public realm, and by keeping development consistent and complementary.



It protects special and sensitive environments by preventing or limiting development in these areas.



It helps to protect people from developing in areas where the natural environment presents a high risk.



It enables different types and densities of housing to make sure there are lots of options for residents to call home.



It helps to maintain a healthy, sustainable economy by ensuring there is a good balance and proximity between places of work and places to live.



It ensures there is enough available land for resource, industrial, and commercial uses.

Main Themes

These fact sheets outline the primary topics discussed during the project's first two phases of engagement, including:

- 1 **Housing**
- 2 **Economic Development**
- 3 **Environment**
- 4 **Transportation & Recreation**
- 5 **Culture & Heritage**

Each section includes an overview of “What We Heard” during the Issues and Options engagement, followed by a summary of the “Key Changes” proposed.

The “Key Changes” are the primary differences between the existing planning documents and the draft planning documents. Each one includes a brief explanation of its purpose and references to the relevant sections of the planning documents for more information.



Fact Sheet Housing

Housing Accelerator Fund

In spring 2023, the Government of Canada launched the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) to support local governments in making significant changes that will increase the number of homes being built.

The Town of Yarmouth received \$2.3 million through this program to carry out its Housing Accelerator Fund Action Plan. With this funding, the Town plans to add 119 new homes over the next three years. This is to be achieved through five initiatives:



Initiative 1: Create a Surplus Lands Program for Affordable Housing



Initiative 2: Develop a Parking Management Strategy



Initiative 3: Regulatory Changes to Support Housing



Initiative 4: Create a Priority Approvals Stream for Housing Projects



Initiative 5: Development Incentives Program

Initiative 3 requires changes to the MPS and LUB to help make housing development easier. **Due to the funding timelines for the HAF program, these changes will be made before the new planning documents are complete**, and then carried forward into the new MPS and LUB.

A separate set of fact sheets with detailed information on the HAF is also available on the project website.

What We Heard

- Support for a broader range of housing options, including student housing, accessory dwelling units, entry-level homes, larger rentals, accessible units, co-ops, multi-generational homes, and emergency shelters, to address growth, affordability, and social needs.
- Barriers to housing development include restrictive bylaws, high infrastructure costs, parking requirements, and uncertainty around densification incentives.
- Support for municipal and provincial programs that would incentivize housing development.
- Priority areas for new housing include transit corridors, Starrs Road, the waterfront, and land near major institutions.
- Strong support for mixed-use development, with emphasis on green spaces, amenities, and better transportation to improve livability.

HAF Amendments Timeline

We Are Here
Public Engagement
Fall 2025



**HAF Amendment
Drafting**
Spring/Summer
2025



**HAF Amendments
Package Adoption**
Fall/Winter
2025



The Key Changes

The primary changes in the draft planning documents regarding housing include:



Clear rules for accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

MPS: Section 5.2.8 - Policy 5.2.9 (l)

LUB: Section 6.4

Previously, ADUs were permitted, but the rules were difficult to interpret. The new documents make it clear that every residentially zoned lot can now have an ADU, with some exceptions.



Relaxed lot requirements to encourage residential density and remove barriers for infill development.

MPS: Section 5.2 - Policy 5.2.9 (d)

LUB: Section 7.5, 8.5 & 9.5

The drafts propose to reduce minimum lot area and frontage to make more efficient use of land in new neighbourhoods, and enable infill development on existing large lots in existing neighbourhoods.



Supportive housing is treated in the same manner as dwellings of a similar size.

MPS: Section 5.2.7 - Policies 5.2.9 (h) (i) & (j)

LUB: Appendix A

The draft plan now treats supportive housing (such as small residential care facilities or group homes) the same as other types of residential housing of a similar scale. The definition of supportive housing specifically excludes transitional housing (operated or licensed by Corrections Canada or NS Correctional Services)



Higher density housing permitted around transit routes and key institutions.

MPS: Sections 5.2 - Policy 5.2.9 (e)

LUB: Schedule A

The draft LUB consolidates residential zoning into three “Neighbourhood” zones (N-1, N-2, and N-3) and places the medium density (N-2) and higher density (N-3) areas along transit routes and close to major institutions (hospital, NSCC, etc.)



Streamlining approvals processes.

MPS: Section 5.2.4

Currently, higher-density residential developments often require lengthy approval processes, such as development agreements. The proposed MPS and LUB aim to simplify these approvals by permitting higher densities “as of right”, subject to standards set out in the LUB.



Fact Sheet Economic Development

The Key Changes

The primary changes in the draft planning documents regarding Economic Development include:



Encouraging mixed-use development Downtown.

MPS: Section 5.2.5 - Policies 5.2.9 (f) & 5.3.1 - Policies 5.3.7 (c) & (i)

LUB: Section 10.2

Previous planning initiatives aimed to enhance the appeal of Main Street and other downtown areas by reducing minimum building setbacks and parking requirements. Building on this, the proposed planning documents encourage more mixed-use development by allowing buildings up to six storeys in height and removing the cap on dwelling units on the upper storeys, allowing for more people to live downtown.



Encouraging mixed-use development along Starr's Road

MPS: Section 5.3.2 - Policy 5.3.7 (e)

LUB: Section 11.2

Traditionally a commercial area, the proposed documents view the Starr's Road area as a prime location for added residential development and to support more transit-oriented development in the town.

What We Heard

- Emphasis on boosting the economy through arts and culture, downtown revitalization, and better alignment between business hours and tourism demand.
- Support for mixed-use development to reduce storefront vacancies and balance tourism, commercial, and industrial activity.
- Transportation and connectivity challenges were seen as barriers to economic growth and workforce retention.
- Proposed transportation improvements included better access, airport restoration, and enhanced trail systems for active transportation.
- Underutilized buildings contribute to poor first impressions. Improvements suggested included beautification and better promotion of local assets.
- Calls for stronger promotion of support programs, improved provincial advocacy, and a more proactive economic development strategy.



Consider allowing medical clinics more widely.

The current planning documents limit or prohibit medical clinics in commercial zones outside of the Downtown. Council is considering allowing them more widely, but is seeking public input at this stage to determine the appropriate course of action in the new planning documents.

We want to know what you think!

Visit the project website, or attend an engagement session to share your feedback on this topic and more.



Better consistency and clarity for commercial and institutional uses.

MPS: Section 5.3

LUB: Part 32, Appendix A

The draft planning documents provide clear definitions and consistency across zones for commercial and institutional uses, outlining rules for employment lands, economic development and waterfront development.



Permitting community and cultural uses in commercial areas.

MPS: Section 5.7 - Policy 5.7.4 (j)

LUB: Appendix A

The draft planning documents would permit community and cultural uses in a wider range of zones, increasing residents' ability to access services near their homes and enhancing community vitality.



Fact Sheet

Transportation & Recreation

The Key Changes

The primary changes in the draft planning documents regarding Transportation & Recreation include:



Transit-oriented development (adding residential density to areas serviced by transit).

MPS: Section 5.2 - Policy 5.2.9 (e)

The draft planning documents encourage higher-density residential development near transit routes, especially in the Neighbourhood 2 and 3 Zones, as well as in the Mixed Use 3 Zone, to allow people to access amenities and services more easily.



Bicycle parking requirements.

MPS: Policy 5.6.8 (k)

LUB: Section 28.5

In alignment with the 2010 Active Transportation Master Plan and ongoing efforts to update the Town's approach to active transportation, bike parking is proposed to be required for specific types and scales of development.

What We Heard

- Calls for enhanced transportation infrastructure, with a focus on expanding pedestrian and transit connections.
- Pedestrian connections were a top priority for community members, as they help people access key amenities.
- Interest in increasing accessibility and improving bus stops.
- Desire for more sidewalks, connected active transportation routes, clear road rules for cyclists, and safer crosswalks, particularly in locations like Starrs Road.
- Emphasis on improving transportation networks beyond town limits and developing a comprehensive parking strategy.
- Calls for a sidewalk and trail maintenance plan, along with interest in incentives for businesses to add bike parking.
- Support for enhancing regional transit to improve access to jobs, tourism, and recreation. Improved infrastructure was also seen as a way to support residents' health and well-being.
- Emphasis on enhancing trail systems, such as paving the rail trail and improving connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Support for initiatives like Open Street Sundays, more indoor recreation opportunities, and improved accessibility for recreation.





Pedestrian connection requirements.

MPS: Policy 5.3.7 (c) & (e)

LUB: Section 5.22

The draft planning documents propose new requirements for pedestrian connections for large-scale developments. Requiring these connections will ensure that new buildings are integrated into the broader public pedestrian network.



Changes to parking requirements.

Concurrent Project Underway Now!

The Town is currently working on a Parking Management Strategy (HAF Initiative #2). The findings and recommendations from this project will be incorporated into the next draft of the planning documents.



To learn more about the project, please visit <https://getinvolvedyarmouth.ca/planningreview>

Issues & Options Culture & Heritage

The Key Changes

The primary changes in the draft planning documents regarding Culture & Heritage include:



New Forest Street Architectural Control Area

MPS: Section 5.7 - Policy 5.7.5 (d)

LUB: Schedule E

The Town currently has a heritage conservation district for the area around Collins Road, which helps ensure the long-term integrity of this area. However, there are other areas that have a substantial concentration of heritage and architecturally-significant structures. The draft documents propose basic architectural requirements for Forest Street and adjacent areas to provide some level of protection until such time as a comprehensive heritage assessment can be undertaken for the area.



Expanded policy for adaptive reuse of heritage properties and former institutional buildings.

MPS: Section 5.7 - Policy 5.7.4 (h) and (i)

LUB: Section 6.2

The long-term preservation of buildings often depends on using them for modern purposes. The draft planning documents expand the policy that allows Council to consider new uses for registered heritage properties, and also expand this tool to allow creative ideas in former institutional buildings (schools, churches, etc.)

What We Heard

- Strong support for dedicated cultural spaces, such as artist studios and venues, as well as downtown revitalization to support cultural events and expand nightlife options.
- There is interest in building on the success of previous cultural events like Congrès Mondial Acadien.
- Calls for improved town promotion to boost tourism and attract more visitors.
- Support for an integrated wayfinding strategy to help both locals and tourists navigate the town.
- Emphasis on celebrating the multicultural community, including Indigenous and African Nova Scotian histories and unique local stories.
- Some concerns have been raised about existing heritage regulations being too restrictive. There is interest in easing certain requirements, such as parking mandates.
- Concerns have been raised about the cost of maintaining heritage buildings and the aesthetic appeal of older buildings.
- Support for expanding the façade improvement program.
- Interest in exploring incentives for property owners to formally designate buildings as heritage properties.
- Calls to update the Town's heritage map and improve murals that reflect local heritage.



Fact Sheet Environment

The Key Changes

The primary changes in the draft planning documents regarding the Environment & Climate include:



Updated coastal regulations to use the most recent data available.

MPS: Section 5.5.2, 5.5.7 (b)

LUB: Section 24.2.2

The most up-to-date data helps ensure safe vertical elevations and guides where new development should occur, taking sea level rise and storm surges into account to protect both buildings and resident safety.



Addition of a watercourse buffer.

MPS: Section 5.5

LUB: 24.3

The riparian areas along watercourses in the town provide habitat for a variety of plants, a spawning ground for fish, and a nesting area for animals. The draft documents propose requiring a 7.5-metre buffer between development and watercourses to protect this sensitive area, with exceptions for development that needs to be at the water.

What We Heard

- Support for responsible waterfront development, updated flood and sea level rise projections, climate adaptation, and a reserve fund for mitigation.
- Concerns were raised about stormwater runoff, with support for limiting impermeable surfaces and strengthening wetland protection.





Continue current approach to inland flooding, with policy support to align with new provincial mapping when it is released.

MPS: Section 5.5.3 - Policy 5.5.7 (d), (e), and (f)

LUB: Section 24.4 and 24.5, Schedule C

Broad Brook and its floodplains were mapped in 1977. That mapping currently informs restrictions around development in these hazard areas. However, the Province is currently updating flood mapping across Nova Scotia to use modern mapping methods and account for climate change. The draft MPS provides policy support to update Yarmouth's flood mapping in alignment with future Provincial data releases.



Consolidation of two environmental zones into one (no impacts to environmental protections).

MPS: Section 4.11 - Policy 4.11.1 (b)

LUB: Section 21

The draft planning documents propose consolidating the Environmentally Sensitive (E-S) Zone and the Floodplain (O-2) Zone from the previous documents into one zone called the Flood and Environment Zone (O-2). This measure helps streamline the documents and remove redundancies.



Rainwater management regulations for large-scale developments to mitigate impacts on adjacent properties.

MPS: Section 5.5.5 - Policies 5.5.7 (h) & (i)

LUB: Section 3.8 & 3.11

Development can reduce the amount of rainwater absorbed into the ground or alter its flow across the land, which can lead to flooding. With more development expected and climate change bringing stronger storms, these issues may become more common. New rainwater management regulations will help ensure that future development handles runoff properly.