

MUNICIPAL PLANNING STRATEGY PROCESS

What is a Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw?

A Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) is a legal document, adopted by Council, which sets out strategic policy direction for the Region of Queens Municipality to achieve its vision for a sustainable future. The MPS provides a framework for future economic, social and environmental development of our communities, while at the same time maintaining and enhancing existing development, community assets and quality of life. The document identifies specific land use issues affecting communities and sets out goals, objectives, and policies to address them over the next five, ten, or fifteen years.

A MPS containing policy regulating land use and development must be accompanied by a Land Use Bylaw (LUB). The LUB is a regulatory document, which sets out specific planning and development requirements in order to meet future development goals. This document sets out such things as boundaries of particular zones, types of uses permitted in the zones and minimum lot size and setback requirements.

Public Participation

The Municipal Government Act requires Council to adopt a public participation program for the preparation of planning documents (POLICY 31 – Public Participation Program). The purpose of this Policy is to provide the public with an opportunity to receive and discuss information on any proposed municipal planning strategy, land use bylaw, subdivision bylaw or formal review thereof. Members of the public may express their views in writing or verbally, in order to provide all interested persons an opportunity to have their views heard.

The participation of the public in this process is essential to its success. A decision was made at the beginning of this project to go beyond the Policy and have members of the public directly involved in the preparation of the documents.

To facilitate this participation, the Region was divided into 6 geographic areas, with an advisory committee established for each.

Throughout the planning process, the Region of Queens Municipality hosted many rounds of public information sessions to provide the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment on the proposed documents and to keep the public informed as to the progress of the project. To aid in keeping the public informed, draft documents and other project related information were placed on the Region's website. As well, progress updates were included in Municipal Matters, the Region's quarterly news letter which is sent out to all households in Queens.

Community Sustainability

The sustainability of our communities depends on our ability to find a balance between quality of life, maintaining a healthy natural environment and achieving economic prosperity, which form the cornerstones or pillars of sustainable development. We want to encourage development which will meet today's needs without placing undue hardship on future generations to meet their own needs. The process for determining where we want to be 25 years down the road involves several key steps:

- Identification of issues affecting communities;
- Establishing a vision; and
- Setting goals for sustainability.

Issue Identification

A major component of this planning process was to identify issues and concerns that were affecting communities in Queens. The Area Advisory Committees spent a great deal of time trying to flush out these issues, which were then presented to the public for comment. The issues identified and agreed upon can be generally grouped into three categories and are as follows:

1. Natural Environment

- Establish responsible development practices that protect people and property from environmental hazards, such as flooding and erosion;
- Establish responsible development practices that protect the natural environment from development;
- Establish development setbacks along certain waterways and the coastline;
- Protect the natural beauty / assets of the Region.

2. Economy

- Identify development potential for vacant lands and be proactive in trying to attract all scales of industry and business;
- Establish policy which is supportive of existing service areas throughout the Region;
- Identify and promote key areas of high recreational value which have tourism potential;
- Encourage the establishment or expansion of resource-based industries.
- Promote environmentally friendly and sustainable businesses and industries throughout the Region;
- Capture the economic spin offs from uses such as Kejimikujik National Park, which is a major tourist draw to our area.

3. Social / Cultural

- Protect the mix of land uses found in rural communities;
- Protect existing large and small-scale farms and encourage new operations;
- Establish clear guidelines for new development within the Municipality;
- Plan for an aging population by identifying where in the Region multi-unit senior dwellings should be encouraged;
- Maintain Liverpool as a working harbour while encouraging other industries such as tourism;
- Make communities in Queens more of a destination through the development of green spaces, trail systems and highlighting key natural assets and services;
- Plan for development in a way that works to secure access to key natural areas and areas of recreational significance;
- Promote the wealth of heritage assets in our communities.

A Vision for the Region

The way in which our communities develop today can have a significant impact on the environment, the economy and our quality of life in the future. In an effort to ensure that development occurs in a healthy, orderly and sustainable manner, good land use planning principles must be established and implemented to meet both the short term and long-term community development needs.

Planning for the future of our communities involves articulating a vision of how we would like to see development occur. This vision statement establishes a general development framework upon which are built a series of land use priorities that Council and the public deem important to the future growth of communities within the Region of Queens Municipality over the next ten to fifteen years.

The Region of Queens Municipality will be a place where communities respect the natural environment, possess strong character, enjoy access to a variety of recreational opportunities and continue to develop an economy that builds on the assets of the Region as a whole.

Goals for a Sustainable Future

Achieving the desired vision for sustainable future growth requires the establishment of a clear set of goals to address the economic, environmental social and cultural opportunities and challenges within the Region of Queens Municipality. The goals provide a framework for the formulation of policy that will guide future sustainable development. To this end, Council and the Area Advisory Committees were asked to articulate a single list of goal statements, which they felt reflected the desired direction of future development within the Region of Queens Municipality.

- promote a wide range of housing options throughout the Region to meet the needs of all residents of Queens, including new affordable housing units, high-end condominium development and senior's housing;
- encourage economic development by building on the Region's strengths, recognising the importance of improved infrastructure and identifying the potential of undeveloped lands for new, or expansion of, commercial and industrial related operations;
- encourage land development within the Region of Queens Municipality that protects the quality of the natural environment and the safety of all residents, through such means as sewage collection and treatment, maintaining safe drinking water supplies, establishing development setbacks from water courses, and recognition and protection of environmentally sensitive areas;
- promote recreational opportunities of both an active and passive nature within the Region as a major contributor to a high quality of life for both residents and visitors alike;
- recognize institutional uses such as churches , schools and hospitals as integral parts of our communities that contribute greatly toward a higher quality of life;
- recognize the importance of the Region's culture and heritage and encourage the protection of historically significant properties and promoting the historic character of all communities;
- utilize and properly manage the Region's transportation infrastructure, which includes alternate modes such as active transportation;
- grow our communities through new road, sewer and water infrastructure thereby enabling new economic growth and improving the health and welfare of our residents, while at the same time achieving a balance in maintaining existing infrastructure assets and seizing every opportunity to repair or replace deteriorating systems;
- establish clear rules for implementing a Region wide strategy, which reflects community concerns and is acceptable to the people of the Region.

Upon its formal adoption in 2009, this Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and its implementing Land Use By-law (LUB) replaced:

- *Liverpool's MPS and LUB, which were approved by the Minister of Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations on November 22, 2000;*
- *Brooklyn's MPS and LUB, which was adopted by the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs on April 2, 1998; and*
- *Milton's MPS and LUB, which was adopted by the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs on March 29, 1996.*