

# ACTIVE LIVING STRATEGY



2025 - 2030

# Introduction

The Town of Kentville is a rapidly growing community with diversifying needs and complex challenges that demand innovative solutions. Parks and Recreation serve as vital tools for navigating this complexity, and our department prioritizes intentional partnerships, effective service delivery, and thoughtful development to build resilient communities.

The past few years have been particularly challenging due to many societal disparities, such as COVID-19, economic shifts, etc., which has significantly impacted health and well-being. Many residents have become more sedentary, affecting both physical and mental wellness. In response, it is crucial to prioritize basic needs, create spaces for belonging, enhance outdoor recreation, emphasize unstructured play, and empower communities. Guided by principles such as Learning with Wskitqamu, which emphasizes connecting with the land and learning from nature, and Afrocentric values like Ubuntu, which highlights collective well-being and interconnectedness, the Kentville Active Living Strategy aims to foster an inclusive environment. These principles inform our approach to Strategic Planning, Community Wellness, and the development of Parks, Trails, and Facilities, helping to address systemic challenges and barriers while improving overall health and resilience in the face of ongoing challenges.

As stated in the Framework for Recreation in Canada, “a rebalancing of recreation is necessary if it is to strategically address the barriers and constraints to participation faced by some people, and to celebrate the rich diversity of Canada’s population.” Recreation belongs to everyone in our community, and as the Parks and Recreation department, we are committed stewards dedicated to meeting these needs. Achieving this requires collaborative action, ongoing communication, knowledge sharing, resource allocation, and joint efforts to improve services.

Based on a thorough review and evaluation of ongoing work within the Kentville Parks and Recreation Department, our community, and our partnerships, four key priorities have been identified:

**#1**

**Strategic  
Planning**



**#2**

**Activation & Capacity  
Building**



**#3**

**Community  
Wellness**



**#4**

**Parks, Trails &  
Facilities**





The Kentville Active Living Strategy outlines a series of strategic actions aligned with these priorities to enhance physical activity in our community. By implementing the Action Plan detailed below, Kentville aims to create a vibrant and inclusive environment where residents can engage in physical activity, leisure pursuits, and social interactions, all of which contribute to overall health and well-being. While our natural spaces offer opportunities for activities like walking, swimming, and skiing, and nearby sports facilities support active lifestyles, many residents still lead predominantly sedentary lives. Systemic challenges, socioeconomic barriers, and aging infrastructure exacerbate this trend.

To address these issues, the Town of Kentville's Active Living Strategy will utilize programs like the Municipal Physical Activity Leadership (MPAL) initiative, developed by the Nova Scotia Department of Community, Culture, Tourism & Heritage: Communities, Sport, and Recreation Division.

## THE MUNICIPAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEADERSHIP (MPAL) PROGRAM

The MPAL program partners with municipal units and First Nation Band Councils to fund physical activity practitioner positions aimed at supporting the development and implementation of community-wide physical activity plans. The Municipal Physical Activity Leadership (MPAL) Program in Nova Scotia has been instrumental in fostering local engagement, providing professional support, promoting equity and inclusion, integrating less-structured physical activity, and employing a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation, the program contributes to creating environments that support active living and improve the health and well-being of residents across Nova Scotia.



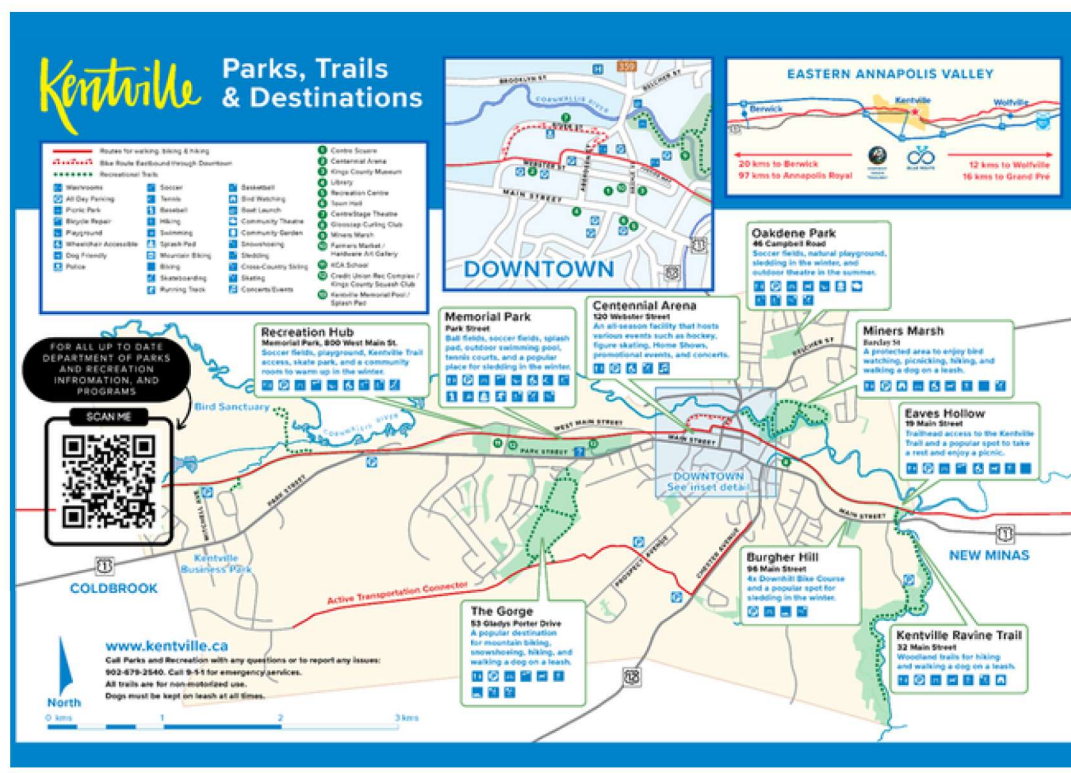
# Community Profile

The Town of Kentville, incorporated on December 7, 1886, is a vibrant town of 6,660 (Statistics Canada, 2021) located within the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people. Covering 17.35 km<sup>2</sup>, Kentville boasts a rich cultural heritage shaped by Indigenous, Black Nova Scotian, Acadian, Loyalist, and New England Planter communities. As the largest town in the Annapolis Valley, Kentville has developed into a key agricultural and economic hub while also emerging as a center for active living and community wellness.

The town's demographics, diverse cultural history, and geography create an ideal environment to amplify physical activity across various settings. In the education sector, institutions like the Kings County Academy promote active lifestyles through comprehensive sports and wellness programs. Kentville's strong café culture and events such as the Apple Blossom Festival foster social connections that encourage participation in recreational activities.

Kentville also prioritizes health and wellness in the health care sector, with Valley Regional Hospital and various wellness-focused businesses offering programs that support active living. The town's workplaces are increasingly recognizing the importance of employee wellness, with initiatives that promote physical activity and work-life balance. Additionally, Kentville's parks and trails provide spaces to reconnect with nature and build community connections. These spaces reflect the growing commitment to fostering a deeper understanding of the land and celebrating diverse perspectives, such as Learning with Wskitqamu and the communal values of Ubuntu, which emphasize shared responsibility and collective well-being.

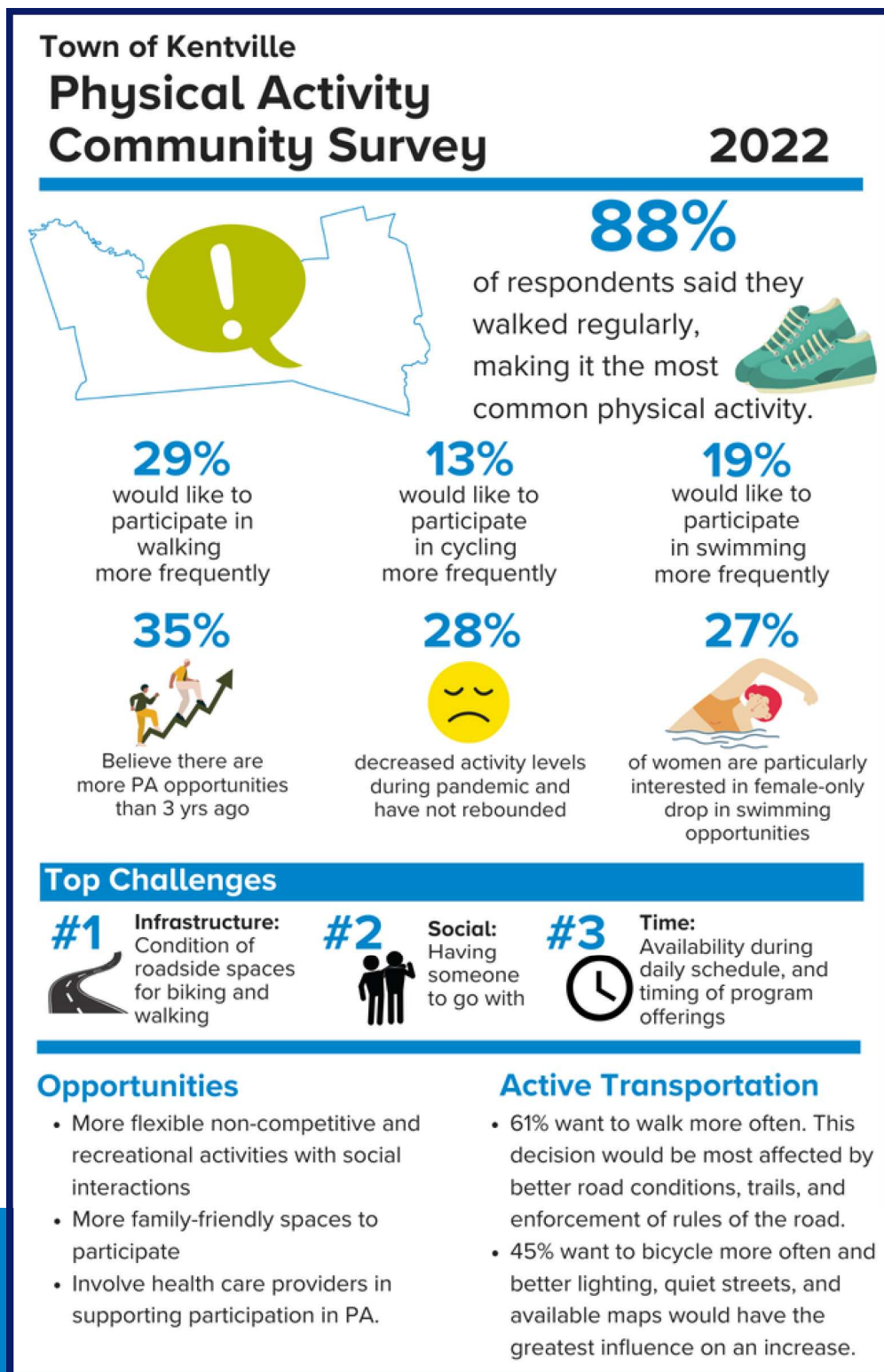
With its focus on sustainability and community well-being, Kentville is well-positioned to enhance active living opportunities while embracing the principles of inclusion and respect for all.



# Community Engagement Methods

## Physical Activity Community Survey

The development of the 2025-2030 Active Living Strategy Action Plan for the Town of Kentville was informed through various methods of community engagement. A key component was a provincially conducted telephone survey by Nova Insights Ltd., which assessed residents' attitudes toward and behaviors related to physical activity. This comprehensive engagement process has provided valuable insights that will shape the strategic actions aimed at promoting active living in Kentville over the next five years.





# Community Engagement Methods

## Community Partner Gathering

A vital method of community engagement for developing the 2025-2030 Active Living Strategy Action Plan is the Annual Partner Gatherings organized by the Kentville Parks and Recreation Department. This department collaborates with various organizations, non-profits, and service providers across sectors such as health care, education, business, and recreation.

The first portion of the 2024 gathering focused on the successes from 2023, where organizations highlighted several initiatives aligned with the Active Living Strategy. Notably, the renaming of Cornwallis Street to Bridge Street promotes community identity and connectivity. The expansion of programs and services addresses local needs, while events like Environmental Day 2023 at Oakdene Park encourage active participation and environmental stewardship.

The second portion of the gathering explored collaborative opportunities for 2024, including developing multicultural and intergenerational programs, offering low-cost activities for individuals with varying abilities, and increasing sensory-friendly events year-round. The department aims to enhance community compassion through youth volunteer opportunities and foster connections with Indigenous and Black/African Nova Scotian groups, supporting the town's commitment to inclusivity and overall wellness.

**Kentville Parks and Recreation staff are committed to continuing and expanding how we support and collaborate with community organizations, groups, associations, not-for-profits and service providers. Staff will do so by following up on suggestions and offerings made during the 2024 Community Partner Gathering!**



## Key Insights 2023 - 2024

Feedback from these gatherings, while not solely focused on active living, revealed key insights:

- **Successful Outcomes and Program Expansion:** Organizations reported significant success and growth through expanded services, highlighting the effectiveness of collaborative programming that promotes active living.
- **Opportunities for Further Collaboration:** Participants expressed a strong desire to expand programs through intentional partnerships, emphasizing the need for joint efforts in promoting physical activity.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** A call for more diverse voices in discussions and policy-making, especially from Black/African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities, underscores the importance of inclusivity in ensuring programs meet the needs of all community members.



Kentville's community organizations exemplify collaboration by engaging in joint programming, co-hosting events, partnering on grants, and sharing resources.

Each year, the department hosts a gathering to discuss community priorities, identify service gaps, and explore how the municipality can support these efforts. This event fosters networking, shares successes and challenges, and highlights opportunities for collaboration to enhance community wellness and resilience. The insights gathered will inform actionable strategies in the Active Living Strategy Action Plan, fostering a more active, healthy, and engaged community.

Kentville Parks and Recreation Department partners with community organizations to offer approximately 30 programs a year, with multiple offerings on a weekly and ongoing basis.

## Community Engagement Methods

### *Community Partner Gathering*

In addition to the Annual Partner Gatherings, the Kentville Parks and Recreation Department employs several other methods to engage the community:

- **Annual Municipal Survey:** This survey gathers broad community feedback to inform planning and priorities.
- **Community-Specific Surveys:** Conducted by the Neighbourhood Outreach Community Coordinator, these surveys focus on specific areas, such as Oakdene Park and Mill Run and Deer Haven, to capture local needs and preferences.
- **SHIFT Partnership Visioning Meetings:** Held twice annually, these meetings review partnership programming and plan for the upcoming seasons, ensuring that collaborative efforts align with community needs.

## Evolving Frameworks:

### *Integrating Priorities and Policies*

The goals of this plan align with various provincial and local strategies for Active Living in Nova Scotia, including Let's Get Moving Nova Scotia and the Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation. At the municipal level, it supports the Kentville Moves: Active Transportation Plan, the Inclusion and Accessibility Plan, the Diversity and Belonging Task Team, and the Municipal Planning Strategy. It also aligns with the Kentville Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Operational Framework, which prioritize community wellness and facilities. Additionally, it complements the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, the Police Strategic Plan, and the Annapolis Valley Regional Economic Development Strategy.

This local strategy is backed by international and national frameworks, such as the WHO's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity and Canada's Physical Activity Strategy. The ParticipACTION Report Card and Canadian Guidelines on Physical Activity provide assessments and recommendations for improving activity levels across age groups.

Emerging frameworks also inspire this plan, fostering a deeper understanding of how cultural values and knowledge systems can guide recreation and wellness strategies. Concepts such as Learning with Wskitqamu encourage a reciprocal relationship with the land, emphasizing the importance of learning from and caring for nature to enhance physical, mental, and community well-being. Similarly, the Afrocentric principle of Ubuntu, which focuses on collective well-being and interconnectedness, offers valuable insights into fostering a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. These frameworks help to ground the strategy in values of respect, inclusion, and sustainability, ensuring that the approach is both innovative and culturally responsive.





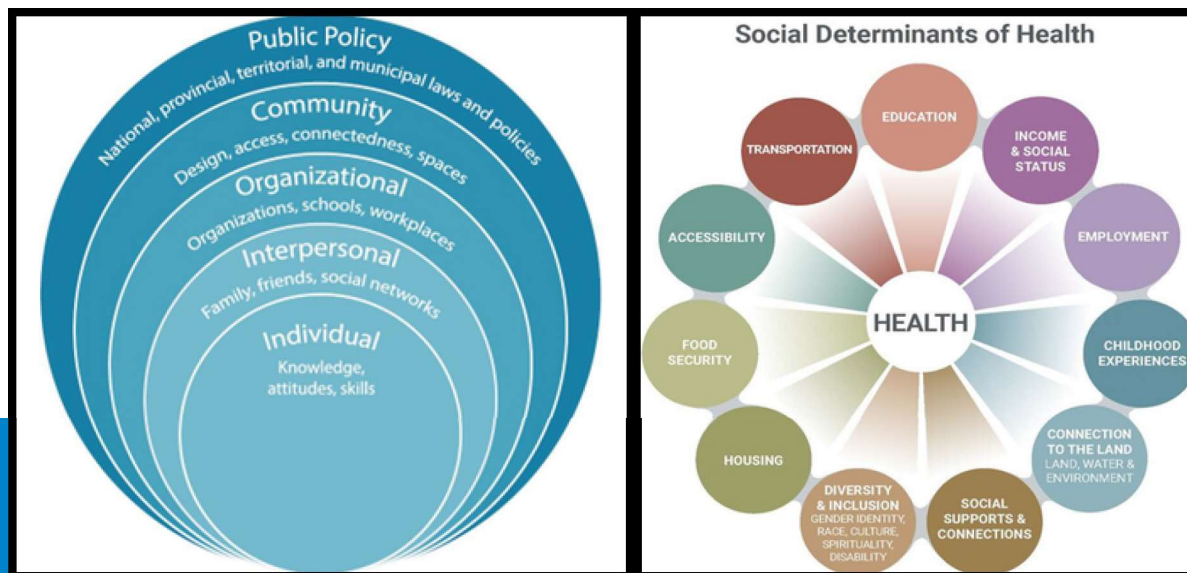
# Strategic Action Plan

The Action Plan outlines a comprehensive set of initiatives aimed at significantly boosting physical activity levels across all demographics in the Town of Kentville. Grounded in extensive research and aligned with international, national, and provincial strategies, as well as insights from community consultations and surveys, this plan reflects our community's shared vision of inclusivity. Our goal is to create an environment where families, friends, and individuals of all ages and abilities can actively participate together, fostering both health and social connections.

Central to this initiative, Kentville's Parks & Recreation Department will spearhead the implementation of diverse, community-driven opportunities that prioritize social interaction, flexibility, and family-friendliness. These programs are designed to be non-competitive and accessible, ensuring everyone can find meaningful ways to be active. Inspired by concepts such as Learning with Wskitqamu, the plan also encourages a closer connection to nature, recognizing how experiences with the land can enhance both physical and mental well-being. Similarly, the principle of Ubuntu reinforces the importance of fostering collective well-being, where physical activity becomes a shared responsibility and a way to strengthen community bonds.

By applying the Social Determinants of Health framework and the Social Ecological Model, this action plan targets the root causes of physical inactivity through tailored, inclusive interventions. These frameworks ensure we address barriers to active living at every level—individual, community, and policy—creating sustainable, long-term shifts in Kentville's physical activity culture. These efforts also reflect a commitment to inclusion and sustainability, aligning with the cultural values of respect for the land and interconnectedness among people.

Through this multi-level approach, the plan is designed to engage all sectors of the community, from healthcare and education to recreation and local organizations, ensuring that every resident has access to opportunities for physical activity. This integrated approach supports Kentville's broader public health goals of building a healthier, more vibrant, and active community, while also addressing the socio-economic factors that contribute to inactivity. By prioritizing inclusivity, collaboration, and sustainability, this plan sets the foundation for a more connected and active Kentville for generations to come, guided by a vision of respect for both people and place.





## MPAL Plan Outcomes:





## Priority Area #1:

### Community Wellness

*Empower Kentville to be a community where wellness is prioritized, and recreation is accessible to all, fostering physical health, mental wellbeing, and social connection. Through diverse programs and community-driven opportunities, we will inspire a lifelong commitment to active living and personal growth.*

#### Action Item

#### Key Setting

#### Timeline

- Offer a social support network through a comprehensive suite of active living programs, including indoor walking, lifelong fitness workshops, free equipment loans, and after-school activities. Consider integrating a mentorship program pairing younger participants with older community members to promote intergenerational engagement and skill-sharing. These initiatives will promote year-round physical activity and healthy habits, with an emphasis on universal accessibility and progress tracking to foster collective well-being ensure community engagement across all ages.
- Partner with a wider range of organizations (e.g., schools, workplaces health agencies, support services) to offer diverse and low-structured recreational activities (e.g., Make Your Move at Work, U.P. Program, SHIFT Partnership Program, Outdoor Family Fun). Create a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs in fostering social connection, inclusivity, and community participation.
- Work with Acadia University's CODE Dept to develop a Kentville Plays Strategy to guide the evolution of initiatives such as the Kentville Playboxes, Pop-Up Play Events, and Event Playzones.
- Design small pockets of play in public spaces (parks, sidewalks, trails, etc.) with community input to ensure they are accessible, inclusive, and intergenerational. Establish a maintenance plan and metrics to evaluate usage and satisfaction among diverse demographics ensuring these spaces promote a sense of belonging.
- Continue to deepen community partnership networks to share knowledge, connect resources, support, amplify and collaborate in meaningful and intentional ways which build and foster leadership capacity and cultural awareness.



Annual



Year 1-5



Year 1-2



Year 2-5



Ongoing





## Priority Area #1: Community Wellness

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### Action Item

### Key Setting

### Timeline

- *Build lasting partnerships with healthcare providers and local wellness groups (e.g., social walking programs) to encourage daily movement and active living, prioritizing the less active population. Collaborate with healthcare professionals to create strategies that address the social determinants of health, and develop ways to measure how these efforts improve community health and participation in active living.*



*Ongoing*

- *Celebrate 'June is Parks & Recreation Month', 'NS Walk Day', and the 'National Day of Play' by planning a variety of structured and unstructured activities, ensuring they cater to all demographics. Implement outreach strategies, such as social media campaigns and community bulletins, to raise awareness and encourage participation. Establish evaluation methods to measure success and community engagement in these events.*



*Annual*

- *Implement a system for regular assessment of the Facility Allocation Policy by gathering feedback from community members and user groups through surveys and public forums. Use this input to identify barriers and ensure equitable access to recreation spaces. Adjust the policy as needed to enhance effectiveness and maximize usage of recreation assets.*



*Annual*

### Success Metrics

- *Participation & Engagement: tracking rates of participation in events, programs, and initiatives.*
- *Community Feedback & Satisfaction: collecting community feedback to assess satisfaction and effectiveness of initiatives.*
- *Partnership & Collaboration effectiveness: evaluating the strength and outcomes of partnerships with local organizations and stakeholders.*
- *Measurable Health Outcomes: assessment of health improvements and physical activity levels.*
- *Inclusivity and Accessibility: evaluation of programs and initiatives for inclusivity and accessibility across demographics.*



## Priority Area #2:






### Active Transportation

*Active Transportation is a comfortable and enjoyable part of everyday life in the Town of Kentville for users of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Residents and visitors will engage fully with the community's local stories and landscapes, strengthening their connection to the land and one another.*

#### Action Item

#### Key Setting

#### Timeline

- | Action Item   | Key Setting   | Timeline |
|---|---|----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a comprehensive audit of existing AT facilities, support services, amenities, and wayfinding infrastructure to identify connectivity gaps. Engage the community through public forums and surveys to gather input.</li> </ul>  |       | Year 1-3 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure inter-connectivity with neighboring municipalities and alignment with other AT Plans, incorporating sustainability considerations into future infrastructure developments.</li> </ul>   |       | Year 1-5 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess active transportation standards in the municipal planning strategy and subdivision bylaw to ensure safe and accessible infrastructure, including the integration of the AT corridor with the Donald E. Hiltz Connector.</li> </ul>  |   | Year 1-3 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Economic Development Officer, Valley Regional Enterprise Network, and Tourism NS to develop a Regional Cycling Map that highlights cycling routes and attractions throughout the Annapolis Valley. Integrate this effort with broader community development planning.</li> </ul>   |   | Year 2-4 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build stakeholder-informed trail networks and promote AT initiatives that foster community ownership. This engagement should include regular meetings and feedback sessions to adapt to community needs.</li> </ul>  |   | Ongoing  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage local businesses through the Kentville Business Commission to promote Workplace Wellness practices and infrastructure improvements, encouraging active transportation in the form of walking and cycling (e.g., providing walking maps, lunch-time walking groups, bike parking, adopting Cycling Nova Scotia "Bike Friendly Business Certification" program, friendly inter-business wellness challenges, etc.). Track engagement and assess the impact on local AT culture through follow-up surveys with business owners and customers, fostering a thriving active community and supporting local economies.</li> </ul> |    | Year 1-3 |



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#### Action Item

#### Key Setting

#### Timeline

- Track implementation milestones in the Active Transportation (AT) Plan, using clear KPIs to assess progress and adjust timelines based on community feedback.



Ongoing

- Organize seasonal events year-round, such as bike-to-school days and indoor winter walks, alongside targeted cycling programs like Learn to Bike Workshops, Bike Week activities, and Inter-Community Rides. Integrate local history and environmental education to foster a deeper connection to place. Collaborate with Annapolis Valley Recreation departments and local cycling clubs to encourage community participation and raise awareness of active transportation options.



Ongoing

- Launch campaigns that inform residents and visitors about the benefits of AT and how to safely use the available infrastructure.



Year 1-5

- Integrate placemaking initiatives, such as interpretive planning, public art, and playful elements into AT infrastructure. These elements can reflect cultural heritage and natural landscapes, providing opportunities to educate the community about the interconnectedness of the land and its people.



Year 4-5

#### Success Metrics

- Participation & Engagement:** tracking rates of participation in events, programs, and initiatives.
- Infrastructure Development & Improvements:** evaluating the effectiveness of infrastructure changes and upgrades.
- Community Feedback & Satisfaction:** collecting community feedback to assess satisfaction and effectiveness of initiatives.
- Health & Well-Being Impact:** measuring improvements in access to active transportation and overall community health.
- Partnership & Collaboration effectiveness:** evaluating the strength and outcomes of partnerships with local organizations and stakeholders.





### Priority Area #3:

#### Outdoor Education & Environmental Sustainability

*Cultivate a community deeply connected to nature, where nature-based learning and ecological responsibility inspire sustainable practices. Empower residents to protect and enhance the environment, promoting long-term health and resilience for both people and the planet.*

#### Action Item

#### Key Setting

#### Timeline

- *Embed climate change considerations into the planning and maintenance of all outdoor recreation infrastructure to ensure long-term sustainability and adaptability, aligning with Kentville's climate action and sustainability frameworks.*



Ongoing

- *Develop an overarching Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan that aligns with municipal development goals and the Kentville Active Living Strategy, prioritizing recreational use, environmental sustainability, and nature-based play. Introduce a public consultation phase, including workshops and surveys, to gather community input before finalization.*



Ongoing

- *Establish robust maintenance protocols and fiscal strategies for outdoor spaces, ensuring their longevity and ecological health, in line with Kentville's commitment to responsible fiscal management and environmental stewardship.*



Year 1-5

- *Create policies to minimize the environmental impact of municipal programs and external organizations using recreational sites, promoting responsible stewardship and public education in support of Kentville's sustainability objectives. Incorporate an annual policy review timeline to assess relevance and effectiveness, adapting based on new environmental standards or community feedback.*



Year 4-5

- *Foster community programs that blend physical activity with environmental education, engaging residents of all ages in exploring local ecosystems, and promoting Kentville's vision of an active, healthy community.*



Ongoing

- *Create educational materials, including digital resources like apps and websites, to promote outdoor activities and sustainable practices, enhancing awareness of Kentville's natural resources and supporting community resilience.*



Year 2-3



### Priority Area #3:

#### Outdoor Education & Environmental Sustainability

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#### Action Item

#### Key Setting

#### Timeline

- Strengthen partnerships with local organizations to enhance outdoor learning and conservation efforts, leveraging shared resources for greater impact, and aligning with Kentville's community engagement goals.
- Work with healthcare providers to incorporate nature-based activities into health programs, emphasizing the mental and physical health benefits of outdoor engagement, consistent with Kentville's public health objectives.
- Implement training programs focused on outdoor education, active living, and inclusivity, addressing the specific needs of diverse groups while promoting Kentville's commitment to community capacity and leadership development.
- Assess outdoor spaces for access barriers faced by underserved populations, and develop a follow-up action plan. Track progress and periodically reassess barriers to ensure all community members can engage in outdoor activities.



Ongoing



Ongoing



Year 1-5



Year 2-5

#### Success Metrics

- **Participation & Engagement:** Track participation rates in outdoor education programs and environmental sustainability initiatives, including community events focused on nature-based learning.
- **Environmental Impact:** Measure improvements in local ecosystems and biodiversity as a result of community engagement in sustainability programs, such as tree planting or clean-up events.
- **Community Awareness:** Assess changes in community awareness of environmental issues and sustainable practices through surveys and feedback mechanisms, comparing pre- and post-initiative data.
- **Inclusivity and Accessibility:** Evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs aimed at reducing barriers for underserved populations in accessing outdoor education and recreational opportunities.
- **Health & Well-Being Impact:** Monitor improvements in physical and mental health outcomes related to increased outdoor activity, utilizing health assessments or surveys before and after participation in nature-based programs.

## Conclusion

The Kentville Active Living Strategy 2025-2030 provides a comprehensive roadmap to create a healthier, more vibrant community where physical activity, social connection, and environmental stewardship are central to daily life. Building on a strong history of collaboration and municipal commitment, this strategy aligns with national and provincial frameworks, while reflecting the unique needs of Kentville residents.

Through targeted initiatives in Community Wellness, Active Transportation, and Outdoor Education & Environmental Stewardship, Kentville will empower its residents to lead healthier, more active lives. The success of this strategy depends on a collaborative approach that involves not just the Parks and Recreation Department, but also all municipal departments, community organizations, and local stakeholders. By fostering inclusivity, sustainability, and shared responsibility, Kentville will strengthen its infrastructure, promote active living, and enhance the well-being of all its residents.

This strategy is designed for long-term impact, ensuring that the Town of Kentville remains a welcoming, sustainable, and active community for years to come.

