

MINIMUM PLANNING REQUIREMENTS IN NOVA SCOTIA

Guidebook for Municipal Councils in Rural Municipalities

Department Of Municipal Affairs & Housing

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CONTENTS

1.0 OVERVIEW	1
2.0 BACKGROUND.....	2
2.1 Introduction	2
2.2 Legislative Authority	3
2.3 Why Plan in Rural Areas?	4
2.3.1 The Benefits of Planning	5
3.0 DEVELOPING A MUNICIPAL PLANNING STRATEGY	7
3.1 Participation and Information: Six Steps to Good Planning.....	7
STEP ONE: Build a Team	7
STEP TWO: Develop a Vision.....	8
STEP THREE: Gather Information.....	9
STEP FOUR: Map Information	11
STEP FIVE: Categorize Land Use & Identify Planning Topics	14
STEP SIX: Establish Goals, Objectives, & Policies	16
4.0 MUNICIPAL PLANNING STRATEGY MANDATORY CONTENT	18
4.1 Planning Document Review [Section 3 of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations]	18
4.2 Background and Context [Section 4(a) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations].....	18
4.3 Map Showing Intended Future Uses [Section 4(b) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations].....	19
4.4 Statements of Policy with Respect to the Land Subject to an MPS	19
4.4.1 Residential Uses [Section 4(c)(i) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations].....	20
4.4.2 Commercial & Industrial Uses [Section 4(c)(ii) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations].....	21
4.4.3 Institutional Uses [Section 4(c)(iii) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations].....	23
4.4.4 Recreation and Open Spaces [Section 4(c)(iv) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations].....	24
4.4.5 Resource Uses [Section 4(c)(v) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations]	25

1.0 OVERVIEW

While this guide is written primarily for municipal councillors and chief administrative officers, its contents are also relevant to planners and other staff as a tool to

- further clarify the intent of the minimum planning regulations
- provide context on the legislative authority for the regulations
- provide information on why land-use planning is a benefit to rural municipalities
- give insight into developing a Municipal Planning Strategy
- highlight aspects the mandatory components of the regulations and their implications for rural municipalities

This guidebook is part of a series of documents created by the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing to assist municipalities as they carry out land-use planning in their jurisdictions to meet the minimum planning standards for Nova Scotia. The following resources are also available on the department's [website](#):

1. *Guidebook for Municipal Councils in Rural Municipalities*
2. *Guidebook on Municipal Planning Strategy and Land-Use By-Law Preparation*
3. *Guidebook on Implementing the “Statements of Provincial Interest”*
4. *Guidebook on the Requirement to Engage with Abutting Municipalities*
5. *Model Land-Use By-Law*
6. *Locus User Guide: Municipal Online Mapping Application*
(step-by-step guide to using the Locus mapping web application)
7. *Brochure on Economic Development and Planning*

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2018, the Government of Nova Scotia introduced changes to the Municipal Government Act (Bill 58), which makes planning mandatory for all land within the boundaries of the municipality. Under the new conditions, municipalities are required to have comprehensive planning documents for all parts of the municipality.

This *Guidebook for Municipal Councils in Rural Communities* is the first in a series of guides developed to assist municipalities in applying the requirements of Parts VIII and IX of the Municipal Government Act. It provides information that relates to the mandatory requirement to develop land-use planning documents for all parts of the municipality. It has been written to assist each Chief Administrative Officer and each council in ensuring that the municipality meets the obligations set out in provincial legislation and creates a plan that benefits the community. This guidebook focuses on the information about the benefits of planning in rural areas that are currently unplanned. It also focuses on the mandatory elements of the legislation and regulations. It is the first in a series of guides (see list of titles in “Overview” on [page 1](#)).

The series of guidebooks is meant to provide direction, education, and clarity on the intent of the new legislation and regulations, most significantly concerning the Statements of Provincial Interest and the requirement to consult with abutting municipalities. In combination, the guidebooks provide information that will help municipal elected officials and staff to develop a framework for the content and format of their plan. It is expected that, where applicable, the municipality will employ their planning staff or hire a professional planning consultant to prepare the planning strategy and the land-use by-law for the unplanned parts of the municipality.

The primary objective of the guidebooks is to assist the municipality in applying the practice and intent of planning, in a way that is balanced and fulfils the overarching goals of council and the community. However, when preparing planning documents, municipal staff, council, professional planners, and consultants should always refer to Part VIII of the Municipal Government Act (or to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter) to ensure compliance with the requirements necessary to submit an official municipal planning strategy (MPS) for review to the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

2.2 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The planning regulations were enabled through Bill 58, which expands the stated purpose of Part VIII, Planning and Development, of the Municipal Government Act to ensure that every municipality develops and adopts a municipal planning strategy to govern planning throughout the municipality and fulfils the minimum planning requirements prescribed by section 214 of the act (Halifax Regional Municipality Charter s.229).

Furthermore, the amended legislation requires a council to establish a program for engaging with abutting municipalities when the council is adopting or amending a municipal planning strategy. This approach allows council to determine the content for such a program, subject to any content requirements prescribed by the regulations. The following excerpts list some of the mandatory content requirements from both regulations.

Regulations Respecting Municipal Planning Requirements

Mandatory content

4 In addition to the requirements prescribed in subsection 214(1) of the Act, a municipal planning strategy must contain all of the following:

- a) a discussion of the background and contextual information that informed the goals and objectives of the municipal planning strategy;
- b) a map of the lands within a municipality that depicts the intended future uses of the lands as contemplated by the municipality's municipal planning strategy;
- c) statements of policy with respect to the lands subject to the municipal planning strategy in relation to all of the following:
 - (i) residential uses,
 - (ii) commercial and industrial uses,
 - (iii) institutional uses,
 - (iv) recreational facilities and public open spaces, and
 - (v) resource uses, where resources are present within a municipality
- d) a statement of policy describing the procedures to be followed when reviewing a municipal planning strategy that must provide for public consultation and notice.

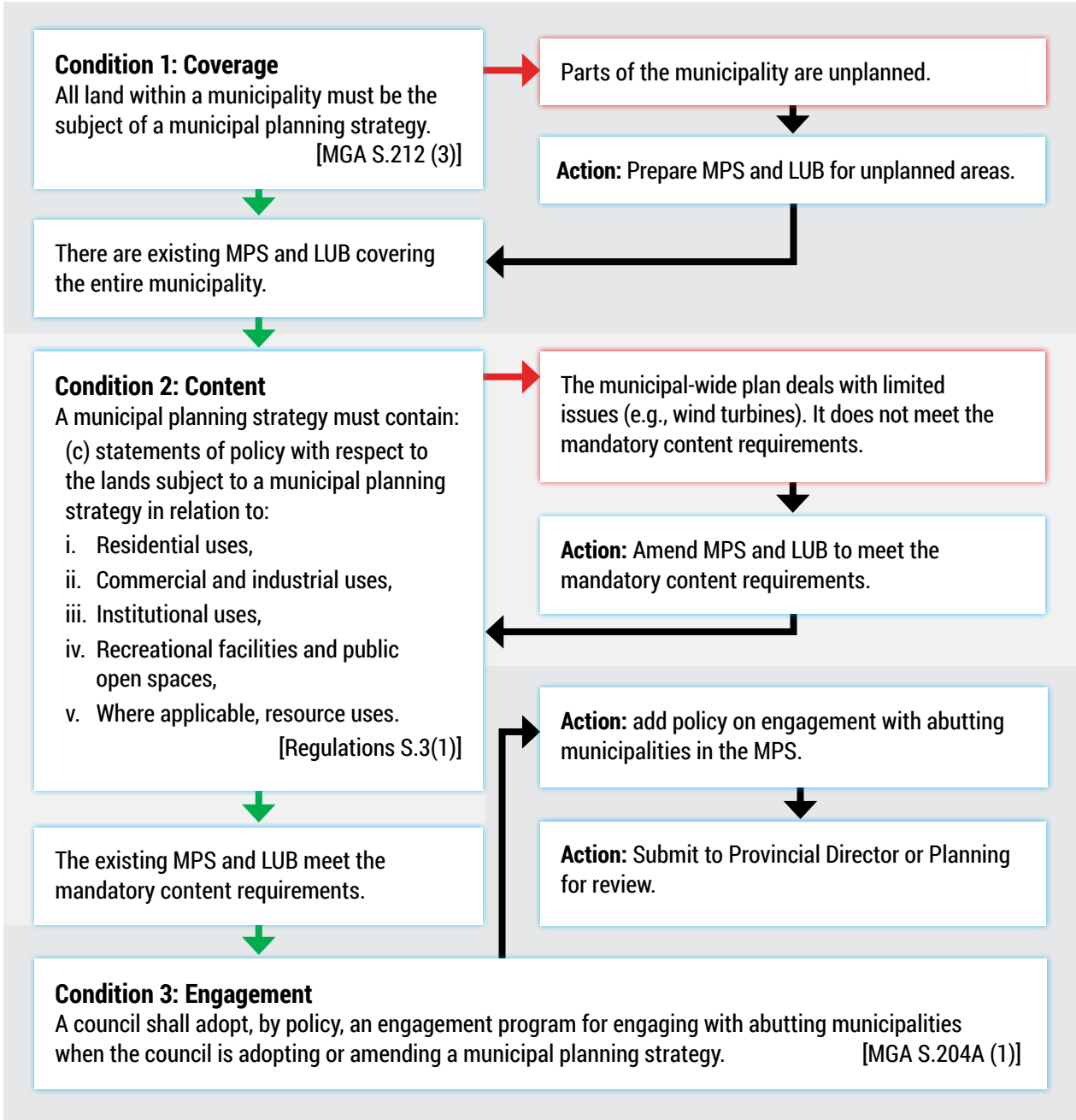
Regulations Respecting the Content for Engagement Programs

Mandatory content of an engagement program

4 An engagement program must include all of the following:

- a) a requirement that council solicit comments from abutting municipalities on the proposed adoption or amendment;
- b) provisions ensuring that engagement deals with topics associated with the statements of provincial interest;
- c) a means for council to consider any comments received from abutting municipalities; and
- d) requirement that engagement with abutting municipalities be completed before the first notice for a public hearing for considering a proposed adoption or amendment.

Meeting the New Legislative & Regulatory Requirements: Process Chart



2.3 WHY PLAN IN RURAL AREAS?

You might question why there needs to be planning in rural areas, which are in many ways quite different from more developed urban areas. Planning is important because land is open to development, and in the absence of rules that regulate what can be built in specific areas, there is no way to ensure that new construction will occur in a manner aligned with the interests of the community. This may not seem significant, but it is. If the community is not actively directing new development towards goals that are articulated by the community and residents, development will be motivated by factors that may be at odds with the community and its values.

For example, new development such as cottage or residential subdivisions can create conflicts with established farming activities, leading to nuisance complaints, while unrestricted development can lead to sprawl, eroding the quality and character of the rural setting. In a planned environment, new development is directed to places where it is compatible with the surrounding land uses and level of servicing. This approach is designed to avoid conflict and to ensure that highly valued places, activities, landscapes, and features retain the character of the community and that new development is sustainable.

Planning at its core is about appropriate development in appropriate places, protecting and enhancing features and activities that are important to the existing community. Over time, this approach can have many benefits. Planning can also prevent, or at least minimize, some of the issues that often arise when land is developed without restriction.

2.3.1 The Benefits of Planning

Planning not only helps avoid what a community doesn't want; it can also help attain what it does want. Rural areas without planning are disadvantaged by not having a regulatory framework for managing new development. This statement may seem contrary to the notion that regulations place encumbrances on property; however, in the absence of planning, an unregulated environment often leads to conflicts between land uses and property owners.

Land-use planning is also an important foundation for local and regional economic development, because the planning process evaluates opportunities and constraints for investments in development, as well as community readiness for it. In addition, new investment, especially in rural areas, seeks regulatory certainty—meaning that companies are reluctant to establish in an area if there is no zoning or by-laws. A new business or industry wants to locate and become established in a zone where it is free to use the land to its purposes, with the knowledge of being able to securely continue business into the future. Investors know that if another, incompatible business locates nearby, their business can be adversely affected. Planning allows everyone to understand the rules that apply to development and, in turn, creates the certainty that investors seek when looking for places to locate a new business enterprise.

Planning also offers other benefits to rural communities and areas throughout Nova Scotia by enabling them to

- take control of the future
- reduce incompatibility, conflicts, and nuisance
- strengthen local economic development
- direct, implement, and protect community values
- address climate change

Take Control of the Future

Planning is a way to improve local decisions that affect land. Planning allows for important development-related decisions to be made by the municipality and serves as a mechanism to put into effect community-based plans for the future. Planning provides an orderly and systematic approach to directing and managing land use, that is accomplished through public hearings and local decisions. Planning protects present and future land uses from complaints by neighbours by informing residents where residential, commercial, industrial, and other uses will be allowed to develop in an orderly fashion. Planning also protects local water resources and other public interests that are critical to the health and wellbeing of residents. Having a comprehensive plan with a land-use element makes subsequent zoning and other land-use decisions more transparent by helping to illustrate the reasons why a decision was made. By implementing a plan, decisions are more credible, defensible, and fair.

Reduce Incompatibility, Conflicts, and Nuisance

Planning is important because it cannot be taken for granted that new development in unplanned rural settings will match or conform to the existing character and setting of the area. In the absence of land-use planning, any kind of new development can take place where land is for sale. Although an unregulated approach allows an existing property owner to do as they see fit with their land, it does not preclude development that is seen as conflicting with the interests of adjacent and nearby landowners. In an unregulated setting, incompatibility and nuisance complaints often arise. Planning leads to appropriate development in appropriate places and significantly reduces conflicts between adjacent land uses and property owners.

Strengthen Local Economic Development

Planning has been shown to strengthen economic development. A locally derived planning strategy for rural areas can address the economic needs and assets of the area. Additionally, planning can provide a framework to support activities of local and regional economic importance.

Planning can reserve, through the designation of land, adequate and desirable sites for economic development. Planning policies can be designed to protect important natural resources, such as agricultural land, beautiful vistas, and forested areas, from inappropriate development. Planning also ensures that potential investors in the area understand the rules, in terms of what is permitted or restricted, and this protects against nuisance complaints once a business or industry has been established. A planning strategy can decrease the level of uncertainty in business decisions, while increasing the level of confidence for businesses and residents to understand how and why decisions are made concerning land use.

On the larger scale, planning helps to reduce inefficient urban sprawl and can lead to economies of scale for the municipality. Planning enables investments in public infrastructure to be designed in a cost-effective way to serve the interests of the community.

Direct, Implement, and Protect Community Values

The review of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ISCPs) prepared by all Nova Scotian municipalities in 2010 overwhelmingly shows that rural residents choose to live in rural settings to enjoy a certain quality of life. In the absence of rules to regulate development, it cannot be taken for granted that the landscape will remain in its present condition. In fact, incremental development not guided by the community can quickly erode the rural setting and character of the community.

Consequently, unregulated change can diminish the quality of life for residents living in the rural parts of the municipality. Formalized, community-directed land-use planning moves the community towards end goals that are locally determined. Planning ensures that changes to the landscape are predetermined and directed by the community. This approach acknowledges and helps to preserve the values that are important to the community.

Address Climate Change

It is becoming increasingly clear that the impacts of climate change, especially related to flooding, are being felt by municipalities across Nova Scotia. This assertion is supported by qualitative and quantitative information recorded and discussed in the Municipal Climate Change Action Plans (MCCAP). The MCCAPs, completed by all Nova Scotian municipalities, cover the entire province and show that flood-related damage is widespread and affects both inland (freshwater flooding) and coastal areas (storm surge). Furthermore, climate change is predicted to exacerbate flooding and related impacts.

Land-use planning provides one of the best opportunities to ensure new development is constructed in places that minimize the risk of exposure to hazards that have the potential to damage property. The guiding objective is to ensure new development is sited and occurs in places that are not at-risk from overland flooding and storm surge flooding or other climate hazards.

3.0 DEVELOPING A MUNICIPAL PLANNING STRATEGY

This part of the guide is for council and other members of your community who are interested in helping to prepare the municipal planning strategy (MPS) for the unplanned areas of your municipality. It outlines a series of steps that will help determine what topics to address in the plan. The information that results from working through the steps can be used by a professional planner, staff, and council, to prepare policy statements, delineate zones, and establish by-law provisions that will implement the planning strategy.

Even though preparing a municipal planning strategy will require input from a professional planner, council is strongly encouraged to become involved in the early stages of its development. Participation from council is important because each member of council is familiar with what is happening locally with respect to issues affecting constituents. Council representation will allow councillors to bring their knowledge of the area to the planning process. Councillors' interest in the wellbeing of the community can thus be conveyed during the process of preparing the plan.

3.1 PARTICIPATION AND INFORMATION: SIX STEPS TO GOOD PLANNING

The process of preparing a land-use plan may seem daunting, but a series of steps can be undertaken to help build the foundation of the new plan.

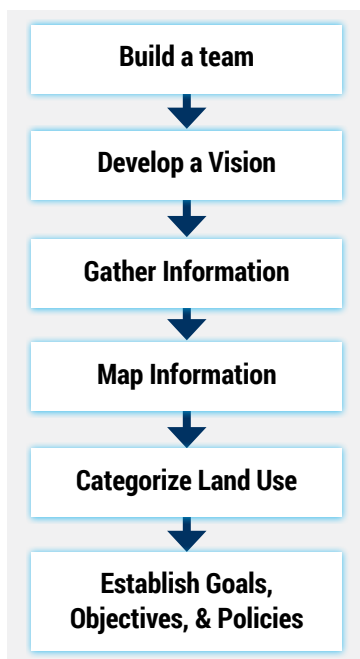
These steps involve establishing a team drawn from staff, council, and the community that will be tasked with working through the steps. The objective is to reach a position in which you have outlined the general intent of the policy statements to be used to address the planning needs of the community.

The steps:

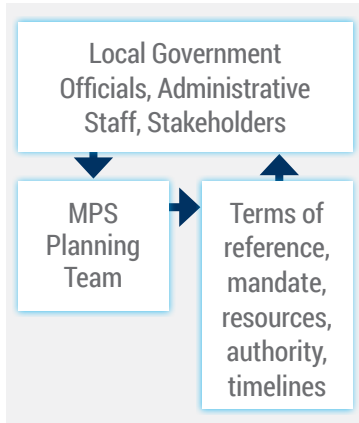
1. Build a Team
2. Develop a Vision
3. Gather Information
4. Map Information
5. Categorize Land Use
6. Establish Goals, Objectives, & Policies

STEP ONE: Build a Team

Information and active participation in the planning process are key to preparing a planning strategy that is representative of the interests of the community. One of the first steps is to put together a team of people who will assist in developing the plan. If the municipality already has a planner on staff, that planner will play a lead role. If the municipality hires a professional planner to prepare the plan, the team will interact directly with the consultant planner to assist in broadening the knowledge base from which land-use planning policy decisions will be made.




Iterative Planning Process



The role of the planning team will be to oversee the overall process of preparing the new planning strategy. It is recommended that council recruit people from the community to serve on the team. Selected public participants should have the trust and respect of others, and, as much as possible, they should represent different interests within the community. Try as much as possible to form a diverse group, rather than having the same few people who are always in civic leadership positions. The plan will have greater support if many people are involved in its development. The planning team should consult with people who have different points of view, even if you do not agree with them. This will help you make decisions with more complete information and avoid some unexpected problems.

The planning process needs to be iterative. As the terms of reference, mandate, resources, authority, and timelines are developed by the MPS Planning Team it should be reviewed by the appropriate staff, stakeholders, and council. It is also strongly recommended that the planning team makes efforts to engage with the public during the entire process of preparing the plan.

During the early stages of the process municipal officials should consider which local organizations can help to carry out actions in the plan. These may include governmental agencies, community groups, and businesses. The strongest plans are usually those that include a wide range of community organizations in their development.




ICSP – Public Consultation & Visioning

Important Messages from the Public on Sustainability

The Top Dozen – Common Themes/Issues/Values Identified During Public Consultation

1. Protecting the environment is extremely important.
2. Diversification/transition of local economies – move away from single employer.
3. Move towards renewable greener energy & related employment opportunities.
4. Stemming out-migration/ attracting new residents and employment.
5. Protect our water resources.
6. Address Climate Change.
7. Strike an appropriate balance between the environmental protection and job creation.
8. Our communities have 'social capital' in spades.
9. Long-term public health is a high priority.
10. Local food production and security is very important.
11. We need transportation alternatives.
12. Quality of life is why we choose to live here.

Source: ICSP Summary



STEP TWO: Develop a Vision

The easiest way to develop a vision statement is by preparing a list of shared values that are representative of the community. Some of this work has already been done and can be found in your Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP), which has a vision statement that was prepared by the community and can provide a good starting point. The text box on the left shows a summary of the top vision statement themes and shared community values identified by rural parts of Nova Scotia when the ICSPs were submitted in 2010. This list may provide a helpful starting point from which to begin shaping a contemporary vision

statement. The purpose of the vision statement is to describe how you want your community to be in 10, 20, or 50 years. Vision statements should aim to be realistic about what is possible for the municipality, but they can also be idealistic, because they are intended to inspire optimism for the future. When preparing the vision statement, you may wish to hold a public meeting to seek input or solicit input by other means such as through online submissions.

STEP THREE: Gather Information

One of the most important tasks of the planning team is to gather information that helps bring perspective to the topics that will form the basis of planning policies. Planning policies can have far-reaching implications and are associated with many areas of municipal oversight and management. Typically, when preparing an MPS, the team will start by collecting and reviewing existing reports, plans, data, and information that will help broaden the understanding of the kinds of topics and issues relevant to the plan area.

Land-use planning can be an encompassing subject. Gathering information about the area to be planned is therefore an extremely important step in the process of preparing the MPS. Having the appropriate background information will help you to determine the kinds of interests in the land that warrant a coordinated and managed approach and help you to sort information into planning-related themes to be considered for inclusion in the final plan.

Gather Information to Inform Planning Topics



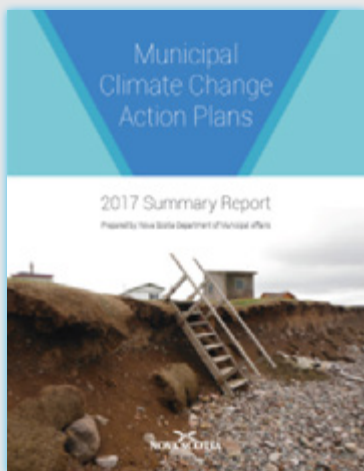
Planning-related information typically falls into one of two broad categories: (1) information that deals with specific issues; for example, protecting water supplies, managing wind turbine development, separating incompatible land uses, or managing cottage development along lake shores; and (2) information that covers broad-ranging thematic considerations that address interconnected topics associated with the overall wellbeing and long-term sustainability of communities. These broad categories of information include

- **economic considerations**, such as where within the land base commercial, industrial, tourist, and other businesses can be established; how economic considerations are coordinated with other parts of the community; and how economic objectives are integrated into a larger economic development strategy facilitated and supported by land-use planning policies

- **social considerations**, such as access to services, access to institutional uses, demographic– and population-related needs such as housing, among many others that will be familiar to staff and council
- **cultural considerations**, such as protecting heritage resources, providing adequate public open spaces, access to areas of traditional public use, places for gathering, supporting the arts, etc.
- **environmental considerations**, such as conserving important ecosystems and biodiversity, protecting water supply recharge areas, addressing climate change, promoting green economic growth, and preserving valued natural features

Build on Existing Work

Planning is multidisciplinary and can involve a wide range of topics. It is therefore important to gather information and to sort it into themes, to see which lend themselves towards incorporation into the MPS and which do not. This is the stage of developing the plan when you should think carefully about the land base, its communities, and all the information you have on hand to guide the development of the MPS.



MCCAP Key Planning-Related Themes

- Build resilience to climate impacts
- Upgrade at-risk infrastructure
- Address flooding issues
- Protect vulnerable assets
- Protect vulnerable people
- Reduce escalating damages
- Develop a climate-resistant economy
- Implement local adaptive actions
- Support regional coordination
- Enhance emergency preparedness & response



ICSP Key Planning-Related Themes

- Protect the environment
- Diversify/transition local economies
- Identify urban growth nodes
- Cultivate renewable energy
- Limit outmigration
- Attract new residents
- Protect water resources
- Maintain quality of life
- Protect rural character
- Promote healthy lifestyles
- Strengthen local food production & security
- Increase housing diversity & affordability
- Transportation alternatives

Your municipality has already prepared two significant planning-related reports that will help your team prepare the MPS and LUB. These are the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) and the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan (MCCAP). Both documents address strategically important topics that are aligned with the management of land, and both reports document changes happening at local and regional levels. The ICSP is based on a four-pillar (social, environmental, cultural, and economic) approach to sustainable community development and covers planning topics that are relevant to rural areas. The MCCAP will help you to determine vulnerability to local climate-related repercussions, including flooding, which is an issue affecting communities throughout the province.

The municipality may also have other reports and studies on hand—for example, capital investment plans, demographic and population trend information, economic development strategies, etc. This level of information will allow a clearer view of how things

are locally. It is therefore worthwhile to read through both reports and other relevant background materials to see if there are topics, issues, or actions that can be addressed by their incorporation into the MPS and LUB. You may be surprised by how many matters affecting communities are interrelated in some way or other to how land is managed.

STEP FOUR: Map Information

A planning strategy requires an understanding of current conditions, as well as of the community's place within the larger regional setting. Moreover, the goals and policies of a planning strategy are greatly affected by current land uses and existing patterns of development.

Preparing maps is one of the most effective ways to convey information. Maps show geospatial relationships and will allow the team to visually depict much of the information gathered in the previous steps. Maps are essential to land-use planning. Several kinds of maps will assist considerably in the preparation of your planning strategy.

- 1. Base Map:** one or a series of maps showing the location of basic physical features, such as infrastructure features (e.g., roads, trails, treatment plants), environmental qualities (e.g., soil type, lakes, streams, wetlands), geophysical characteristics (slope, elevation, land cover), and essential services (including hospitals, firehalls, police stations, schools). These base maps may also include the more general information and community attributes gathered in Step Three.
- 2. Special Features Map:** one or a series of maps showing the location of features that are valued by the community, including the more specific information and community attributes gathered in Step Three. The purpose of a special features map is to identify features of the community that are of special significance for reasons ranging from aesthetics to their role in supporting the local tourism economy.
- 3. Land-Use Inventory Map:** a map showing a categorized inventory of existing land uses, including land that is undeveloped.
- 4. Generalized Land-Use Map:** a map that combines information from the three previous maps (and any additional data required) to show the overall distribution of the community's attributes and any areas of overlap or concentration.

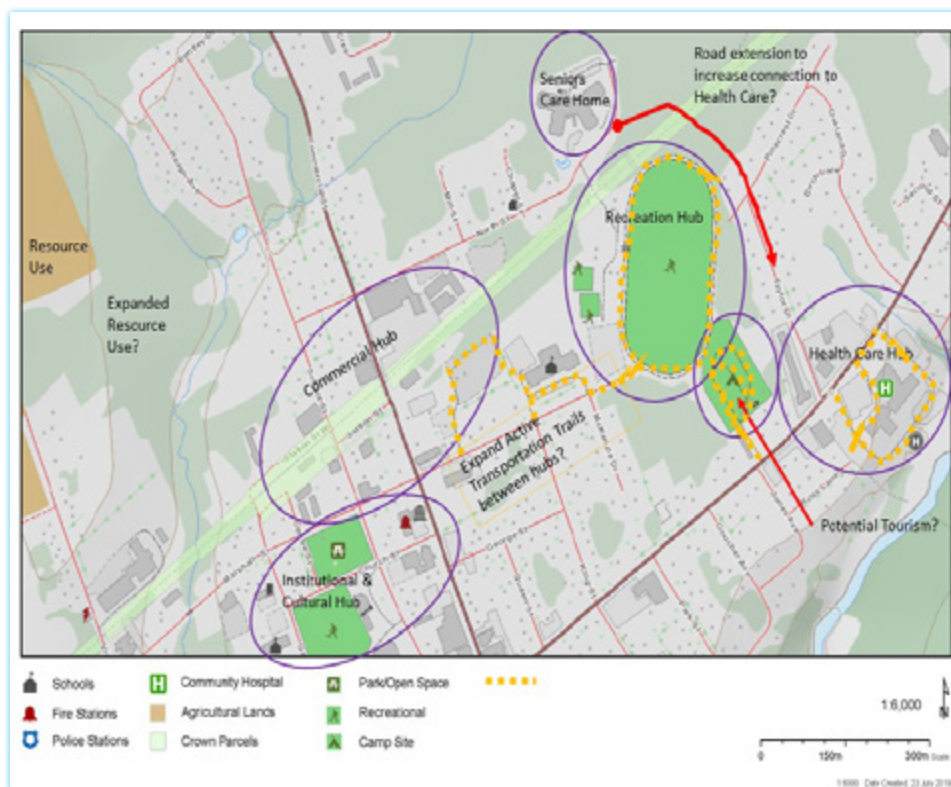
In addition to the various land uses, maps should include other information, concerning, for instance,

- productive agricultural soils and other resource lands
- natural limitations for building site development (e.g., steep slopes)
- floodplains, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive lands
- service area boundaries for public services and community facilities (e.g., public sewer or water)
- the general location of where the council would like to direct future land uses, based on population density, land capability, or other classifications

Example Base Map



Example Special Features Map



Example Land-Use Inventory Map

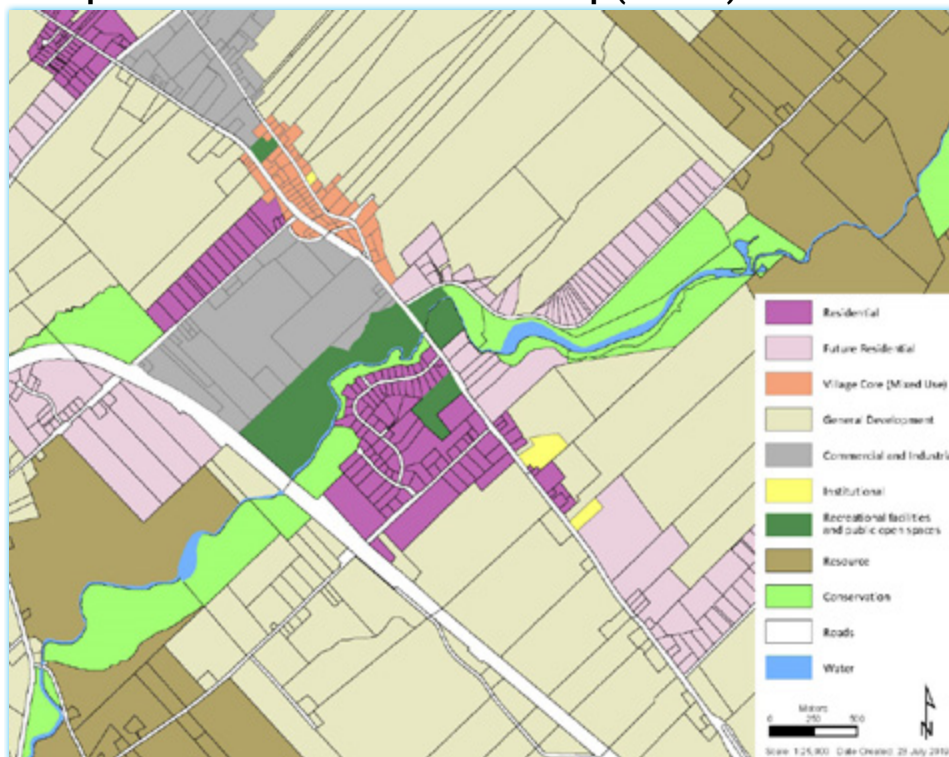


Combining the information in a Generalized Land-Use Map

No community is a blank slate. The maps produced by the team can be combined to create a Generalized Land-Use Map that will help identify the range of interests in land and show where these may overlap. Areas of overlap present a good place to start thinking about formalized land-use planning, because they usually represent places where there are various interests and multiple stakeholders. In unplanned areas, locations with overlapping and sometimes conflicting interests are places that will benefit from planning. Areas of overlap may present opportunities that can be coordinated and strengthened through formalized planning to meet economic or other community objectives. Moreover, the Generalized Land-Use Map will

- give regional perspectives on the land base and present a visual image of the distribution of features and their relationship and proximity to one another
- facilitate the division of land into zones
- help to coordinate interests
- help the planning team and professional planners to determine interconnections, as well as see where the separation of incompatible uses is best accomplished
- assist in the overall preparation of planning policies
- provide a starting point for a map of the lands within a municipality that depicts the intended future uses of the lands as contemplated by the municipality's municipal planning strategy. Such a map, required by the regulations, is often called a **Generalized Future Land-Use Map (GFLUM)**. For more specifics on the GFLUM, see [Section 4.3](#) of this guidebook.

Example Generalized Future Land-Use Map (GFLUM)



Locus Mapping Application

The Locus mapping web application is a tool developed by Municipal Affairs and Housing as a place to start when looking for background information to use for mapping. It is an interactive online data viewer that makes provincial spatial data available for analysis through an online Geographic Information System (GIS). Its purpose is to support the development of municipal planning strategies and, more generally, to support informed and evidence-based decision-making related to economic development and land-use planning. More information on Locus, including step-by-step tutorials and sources of spatial data, is available in [Locus User Guide \(link\)](#).

STEP FIVE: Categorize Land Use & Identify Planning Topics

A) Categories of Land Use

One of the outcomes of mapping information is a visualization of the predominant uses of the land. You should now have a map or several maps showing, for example, where active farmland is located, where residential areas are clustered or distributed, the location of resource lands, and the distribution of open space, forest land, areas used for industrial purposes, water supplies, etc. This information can be used to categorize land into areas that can be zoned for similar uses. The intent of zones is to define, support, and promote specific categories of land use. For example, areas of active farming are generally zoned as “Agricultural” and, as such, allow for farming activities but restrict other, incompatible uses. Areas with homes and amenities associated with houses and families are generally zoned “Residential.”

It will be the task of the planning team to use the maps to identify the categories of similar and compatible land use that characterize the plan area, and to whatever extent possible to draw lines that represent the boundaries between the various categories of land.

B) Municipal Planning Strategy Topics

A municipal planning strategy (MPS) is divided into topics, and each topic is linked to a series of policy statements. Policies direct and guide new development within the context of the goals established by council for a particular use of the land. For example, a typical planning strategy may include topics such as Residential Development, Commercial Development, Public Open Spaces, Drinking Water Supply Areas, Agricultural Land Uses, etc. The objective is to set policies that promote and maximize outcomes beneficial to the community in terms of its social, economic, cultural, and environmental goals, as well as aiming at a more efficient use of resources and infrastructure.

Based on your assessment of the information, a variety of planning-related topics may fall within the scope of interest of council regarding the content of the MPS. For example, if the unplanned area is predominantly rural in character, you may be concerned with such matters as the protection of farmland or other valued resource sites (e.g., forests, mineral deposits, oceanfront, lakeshores); the preservation of unique natural or historical features; the locations of highways and other transport facilities; or the economic and demographic growth prospects of communities located throughout the area. If the unplanned area is distributed around an urban municipality, you might want to take that into account, in terms of connectivity and advancing district interests. You might want to look at regionalization as an MPS topic and establish policies that support engagement with adjacent municipal units, or plan areas in order to advance mutually beneficial interests.

There is a key role for council in identifying the range of potential topics and narrowing them down to those that will be addressed within the new MPS. A professional planner or planning consultant will be able to help you to shape and set policies based on existing conditions and desired future outcomes.

At the bare minimum, your planning strategy must have statements of policy for the following topics (this is a requirement of section 214 of the Municipal Government Act):

- residential uses
- commercial and industrial uses
- institutional uses
- recreational facilities and public open spaces
- resource uses, where these are present within a municipality

**Example Planning Topic:
Youth and Family Retention
and Attraction**

Goal: Council desires to attract, retain, and engage young people and families.

Objective: To support local schools, diversify the community's demographics, and create economic prosperity.

Policy 1: Develop a comprehensive inventory of available housing. To further encourage the in-migration of young families, identify areas where housing opportunities are available.

Policy 2: In residential areas, to focus planning efforts on the design and provision of services for young families and children, as well as older adults.

STEP SIX: Establish Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goals are general statements concerning desired outcomes for the community. While often broadly written, goals should be stated specifically enough so that in future it is possible to assess whether progress has been made in achieving them.

Objectives are more specific and form a subset of goals, providing measurable strategies. Objectives should not stand alone without a goal. If an objective does not fit under a goal but is considered important, then it may be more appropriate to make it a goal.

Policies are the operational actions that a council will undertake to meet its goals and objectives. Communities already have many policies; some of these will relate to the planning strategy, while others may not. You will need to review your existing policies to determine if they need to be coordinated with the planning process.

Specific information on the preparation of policies, as well as examples of land-use policies, can be found in *Guidebook on Municipal Planning Strategy and Land-Use By-Law Preparation*.

Making Choices

As communities consider land-use issues through a planning process, the team will understand that one policy decision may preclude other choices. If, for example, one area of a community is deemed appropriate for residential development, this would mean the area would not be appropriate for industrial development or farmland preservation.

Some areas may be ideal for several complementary land uses and enable a mixed-use or general development zone. In these areas, communities should carefully consider what works well together and what may create conflict. Denser residential areas often benefit from commercial and institutional uses, and appropriately sized and distributed cottage developments can benefit areas with tourism potential. Industrial uses can often be situated near resource uses without many negative impacts; however, more caution should be taken when considering the proximity of residential to resource uses.

Considering proper adjacent land use may seem like common sense, but without planning controls you can't encourage appropriate mixing of land uses or prevent unappropriated mixing. Preparing policies that manage land use is about the process of making choices and understanding the trade-offs resulting from those choices, including those affecting fiscal, economic, aesthetic, environmental, and other considerations.

Involving the Public

An overall challenge of the planning process is to involve the public in order to help build consensus. The challenge is that people often have a difficult time understanding how these plans will work in their everyday lives. To a large extent, developing goals and objectives should be thought of as your community stating its values. As mentioned earlier in this guide, using existing documents that were prepared with public consultation (e.g., the ICSP) will help build consensus.

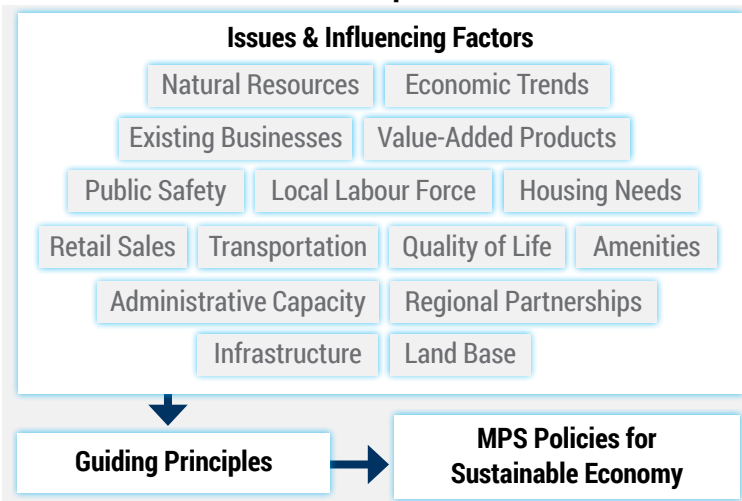
Planning Context & Guiding Principles

A guiding principle is a basic idea that explains or controls how something happens. Guiding principles describe what is wanted in terms of the larger outcome and in many ways can be employed to represent the core values of the community with respect to how development and growth occur. Guiding principles will assist the planning team in setting the goals and objectives from which the policy content of the plan will be derived.

Certain planning principles are common to how land is managed, and council should, whenever possible, align their decision-making with their general intent.

- Land should be compatible with its intended use.
- Adjacent, neighbouring land uses should be compatible with one another.
- Always keep in mind the implications of planning decisions with respect to the

SUBJECT: Economic Development



environmental, economic, cultural, and social objectives of the community.

- Understand the effects of planning decisions and clearly communicate what you understand of them to the public.
- Always strive to balance the interests of stakeholders and evaluate the consequences of decisions against the broader goals and objectives of council and the community they serve.
- Develop a program of public engagement and work together toward a common vision.
- Be consistent with the Provincial Statement of Interest and other provincial planning objectives.

There is no one correct way of developing goals, objectives, and policies. Starting with the development of a broad set of goals and then narrowing to objectives and specific policies is generally a good idea. Guiding principles that have been established by the professional planning community for a wide range of land uses can provide a place to begin the process.

The choice and relative importance placed on the subject matter and corresponding policies and by-law provisions addressed in official planning documents is up to each individual municipality (within the framework of section 214 of the Municipal Government Act) and will vary based on the character and features of the area. However, some themes are common to all planning documents:

- enabling development in a manageable and coherent manner
- engaging the public in discussions concerning land and resource management and protection, and the preservation of human health through the management of natural and built assets
- directing new development to places where existing natural conditions can support it in a sustainable manner, and where it complements adjacent land uses
- supporting and enhancing local amenities
- making the best use of infrastructure
- reducing nuisance and conflict

4.0 MUNICIPAL PLANNING STRATEGY MANDATORY CONTENT

The following section looks at the mandatory components of the Regulations Respecting Minimum Planning Requirements.

4.1 PLANNING DOCUMENT REVIEW [SECTION 3 OF THE MUNICIPAL PLANNING REQUIREMENTS REGULATIONS]

Every municipality is required to review its planning documents to make sure they continue to meet the needs of the municipality and are consistent with legislation and regulations. As stated in section 1.2 (“Legislative Authority”) of this guide, the MPS must include policy on how the MPS and LUB will be reviewed at least every 10 years (this can be waived for secondary plans that are subject to a municipal-wide MPS). In the regulations, a review is defined as

a municipality’s consideration of the content of a municipal planning strategy to determine if it should be amended or replaced to ensure that it meets the purposes outlined in Section 213 of the Act (Section 228 of the Charter) and the minimum planning requirements.

The review should ensure that planning documents reflect the current situation within the municipality and should allow for comments by the municipal council, municipal staff, and the public.

Even though the minimum requirement is to review an MPS every 10 years, it may be in the best interest of the municipality to choose a more frequent review period to reduce the volume of work when a review is required. The longer a plan is in place, the more potential changes will need to be made. A municipality could even choose to look at sections of the MPS annually to make amendments or flag changes leading up to the required review. Implementing changes to policy incrementally can reduce workload for staff and council and make changes more palatable to the public.

4.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT [SECTION 4(A) OF THE MUNICIPAL PLANNING REQUIREMENTS REGULATIONS]

The background and context section of an MPS should answer the basic questions of where, who, what, and why.

1. **Where** is the municipality? This question cannot be fully answered by simply pointing to a map showing the municipal boundaries. It invites consideration of where the municipality fits in the region, province, and perhaps even the nation and world.
2. **Who** makes up the municipality? To fully answer this question, one needs to examine historical demographics and key industries, as well as expected future demographic and economic trends.
3. **What** defines the municipality? A definition should look at important historical events that have shaped communities and tie into the vision statement and goals of the municipality.
4. **Why** are you creating this MPS? Beyond the legislative and regulatory reasons, the answer to this question should address the benefits that strategic land-use planning can bring to the municipality.

The fundamentals of collecting data and information to inform a background and context section was discussed throughout section 2.1, with specific reference to collecting information in the four pillars of economic, social, cultural, and environmental in Step Three: “Gather Information.” More details about gathering background information can be found in [Guidebook on Municipal Planning Strategy & Land-Use By-Law Preparation {link}](#).

4.3 MAP SHOWING INTENDED FUTURE USES [SECTION 4(B) OF THE MUNICIPAL PLANNING REQUIREMENTS REGULATIONS]

A map of the lands within a municipality that depicts the intended uses of the lands as contemplated by a municipal planning strategy is, in planning terms, called a Generalized Future Land-Use Map (GFLUM).

This type of map will have areas called “designations,” which will pertain to classes of land use. These classes would typically be more general than the zones applied to the zoning maps in the land-use by-law (LUB) and may be composed of multiple zone types. For example, a “Residential” designation would typically include all types of residential zones, such as single family, duplexes, and multi-family residential areas, while a “Resource” designation may include a variety of land uses, including forestry, quarrying, mining, wind farms, and even agriculture. A GFLUM should be tied closely to the zoning maps in the LUB, considering what currently exists and the desired land use for the future.

It is recommended that a Geographic Information Systems professional be engaged to create the map once all the information has been collected and the types of land designations have been determined. Much of the groundwork concerning the collection of data and information to inform the GFLUM was discussed in section 2.1, with specific reference to mapping components in Step Four: “Map the Information.” More information on future land-use designations and zoning can be found in [Guidebook on Municipal Planning Strategy & Land-Use By-Law Preparation {link}](#).

4.4 STATEMENTS OF POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THE LAND SUBJECT TO AN MPS

The following subsections deal with the list of five land-use types in section 4(c) of the regulations. It is important to note here that this list and how it is organized is not meant to imply that these land uses are mutually exclusive or that each land use on the list must have a corresponding zone in the land-use by-law (LUB) that matches. It may be appropriate to have any number of configurations, each requiring a different zone in the LUB. For instance, residential and commercial uses often work well together, and areas set aside for resource uses may include some or all of the other land uses. This list is to assure that each of these broad areas of land use are considered in the MPS and have related policy statements.

4.4.1 Residential Uses [Section 4(c)(i) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations]

Planning Context

Planning for residential uses in rural areas involves a few distinct housing-related topics that fall into three main themes:

- identifying where best to site proposed new housing and neighbourhoods
- addressing housing renewal in areas with existing homes
- developing policies that are designed to accommodate existing and future housing needs (based on demographic, socioeconomic, and other kinds of forecasts)

In addition to the more traditional method of planning for housing based on R1, R2, and R3 model of zoning reflective of dense growth centres (with servicing and other amenities that define a community), the municipality may need to develop other types of residential land designations to accommodate the more spread-out, low-density pattern of residential homes in rural settings. These areas are typically characterized by dispersed homes with on-site services on large lots. Properties are often used for small-scale agriculture and small-scale animal husbandry. For these locations, a rural residential or settlement zone with large minimum lot sizes and other by-law requirements may be appropriate. This kind of zoning permits small-scale agriculture, animal husbandry, and family-scale food production.

In general, planning policies that address residential uses in rural areas should concentrate on the way that growth and development take place without central infrastructure services such as water and sewer. The objective for these areas should be to manage new development to prevent rural and suburban sprawl, limit the amount of new infrastructure and servicing required, protect the environment, and provide for economic opportunities associated with resource-related industries such as forestry, agriculture, and resource extraction. Council should aim to locate new housing and other residential areas in and around growth centres with existing (or proposed new) infrastructure and, if possible, within walking distance of services and amenities.

Guiding Principles

1. Maximize the efficient use of existing and new infrastructure and amenities and reduce unsustainable urban sprawl by directing new growth to places already invested in infrastructure, such as that of municipally owned public streets and sewer and water services.
2. Discourage the subdivision of lands in very low-density residential areas unless such development can be served by adequate access, water, and wastewater systems. This can be done through a subdivision by-law that regulates lot size, number of lots, infrastructure standards, adequate water supply, etc.

3. Locate new residential or commercial zones immediately adjacent to existing developed areas.
4. Direct new residential development into designated development areas where services and utilities are available, and where such development will have minimum impact on other rural activities.
5. Treat the neighbourhood convenience store and other local amenities as part of the residential environment.
6. Separate and buffer incompatible land uses and cluster new development around the resources and facilities that support their success.
7. Protect individual property owners from harmful or undesirable uses of adjacent property.

Siting Best Practices

- The principal variables that affect where new residential development is located are based on convenience, safety, economy, and proximity to work and recreation facilities by means of public transportation or the road network.
- Other factors include proximity to community facilities and local open spaces, protection from traffic and from incompatible uses, energy efficiency, choice of housing type, and density.
- When siting new residential development, professional planners can also employ “convenience standards,” which measure maximum time or distance (influenced by the local setting and terrain), based on universal standards that identify reasonable travel distances, to schools, shopping, institutions, amenities, open spaces, etc.
- When locating new residential development in undeveloped areas, other constraints should also be examined, such as environmental considerations (fragile ecosystems), flood risk, water supply recharge areas, proximity to infrastructure and services, and the ability of the area in general to take on new development.
- The capability of the site to sustain the proposed density of new residential development should also be considered. Municipalities may wish to require certain studies to determine this, such as a groundwater supply study, before allowing development to occur. Municipalities are enabled by regulation 6(g) to require such studies.

4.4.2 Commercial & Industrial Uses [Section 4(c)(ii) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations]

Planning Context

Areas zoned for commercial development are dependent upon the business use of the property. Service businesses, office buildings, shopping centres, hotels, entertainment establishments, as well as vacant land with the potential for these types of buildings, can be zoned as commercial.

Where possible, commercial development should be clustered and directed to places where services and infrastructure can support and enhance

commercial activities. Commercial uses will be permitted as-of-right in areas that are zoned for commercial development, and conflicts with incompatible land uses should thereby be reduced. Areas designated and zoned for commercial development may, for example, include by-law provisions that address setbacks, parking requirements, frontage requirements, and other rules designed to guide commercial development to occur in a manner compatible with the existing appearance of the community.

The municipality can identify areas best suited to industrial development. These areas may already exist in the form of industrial parks situated close to transportation routes or compatible services. By formally zoning these areas, the municipality can ensure that the rules applied to these zones serve to support and enhance business opportunities and reduce the potential for disputes with neighbours. Industrial areas can also be incorporated into the municipality's strategic plan for economic development.

Industrial uses are often divided into two classes: light industrial and heavy industrial. Light industrial generally includes light-intensity manufacturing and warehousing, while heavy industrial involves highly intensive industrial and manufacturing uses. The aim of industrial zoning is to minimize detrimental effects on residential and other adjacent areas and allow industrial activities to occur without conflict with neighbouring land uses. Environmental factors, including noise concerns, are often used to determine which class of zoning certain businesses fall into.

Guiding Principles

1. Align land-use policies with county or regional economic development strategies and targeted industries or industry clusters.
2. Provide support to local industries and commercial economies and connect local producers and consumers of rural products.
3. Assist community economic growth by identifying and reserving adequate and desirable sites for desired commercial and industrial development.
4. Protect present and future land uses from complaints by residential neighbours by informing residents where residential, commercial, industrial and other uses will be allowed to develop in an orderly fashion.
5. Protect water resources and other environmental interests critical to the health and wellbeing of residents.
6. Encourage compatibility of land uses in order to promote health, safety, and economy and to maintain the rural setting valued by residents.
7. Identify opportunities for green economic growth and the generation of renewable energy.
8. In order to be investment-ready, designate and zone land according to its economic potential and the complementary types of land uses anticipated to support economic development.

Siting Best Practices (Commercial and Retail Uses)

- Consider directing commercial and retail uses to existing central business districts, shopping centres, urban growth centres, and highway-oriented retail areas.
- When identifying sites for commercial and retail development, consider the role the uses play in the overall pattern of development and determine their contribution to both council's overall vision for growth, and the part they play in delivering specific community goals.

Siting Best Practices (Industrial Uses)

- Areas identified for industrial land uses should be level or gradable at low-cost.
- The site should be away from flood plains and other environmentally sensitive areas.
- For extensive manufacturing, sites should provide large open areas that allow enough space for storage, access, and parking.
- Where possible, sites should be selected in accordance with their direct access to commercial transport, such as that provided by highways and railways.
- The site should be located within reasonable distance of residential areas that will house the labour force.
- The site should be located close to utilities.
- The industrial use should be compatible with surrounding uses, and consideration should be given to odours and prevailing winds.
- Enough space should be available to preserve or create greenbelts and buffers around sites allowing for noxious uses.

4.4.3 Institutional Uses [Section 4(c)(iii) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations]

Planning Context

Institutional land uses are generally defined as those that serve a community's social, educational, health, cultural, and recreational needs. They may include government owned and operated facilities or be privately owned and operated. Institutional uses form an integral part of a community and should be planned and located to serve the needs of the surrounding residents. Institutional uses are usually situated near residential areas for convenience, allowing people ready access to amenities. This is especially important when taking into consideration the sustainability of livable communities.

Guiding Principles

1. Ensure the use is intended to serve and support the community.
2. Ensure the site is designed to be well integrated with surrounding uses.
3. Ensure the institutional use is compatible with surrounding land uses.
4. Ensure that adequate land is available for community service facilities.
5. Consider permitting institutional uses within several land-use designations. For example, allowing residential areas to permit special housing, such as provided by nursing homes, retirement homes, senior citizen housing, schools, group homes, etc.

6. Where possible, locate new schools adjacent to public parks and residential areas, and place due consideration on the safety of children and the protection of surrounding public amenities.
7. Plan and locate major institutional uses, such as for hospitals, in areas that are protected from incompatible uses and unnecessary noise levels.
8. Locate institutional uses on or near arterial roadways served by public transit and pedestrian links, where applicable.
9. Ensure there is adequate parking to meet the needs of users.

4.4.4 Recreation and Open Spaces [Section 4(c)(iv) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations]

Planning Context

Land used for the purposes of recreation and open spaces valued by the community can be designated and zoned in order to ensure that they remain free from development. Open space can be directed towards recreation purposes or be part of the community's efforts to protect scenic areas, special features of the landscape, and areas of ecological, environmental, or tourism significance. Additionally, open spaces can be incorporated into flood control efforts and green infrastructure projects.

Guiding Principles

1. Identify and delineate existing publicly owned open spaces and recreation areas and facilities.
2. Identify and map land with the potential to serve open-space or recreation purposes, even if it is not owned by the municipality. Council can establish policies to purchase privately-owned land with valued open-space or recreational potential.
3. Identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas and areas that can play a role in mitigating the impacts of climate change; find ways to interconnect these areas into a larger open-space and recreational area network.
4. Identify important water supply recharge areas and zone them as open spaces to protect the resource.
5. Enable by-law provisions that protect river floodplains. These areas can serve a multiple purposes as important components of the municipality's open spaces, passive recreation, and green infrastructure network.
6. Align green infrastructure objectives with environmental protection and open-space planning.
7. Look for alignments between open spaces and the potential for carbon sequestration.
8. Look to your ICSP and MCCAP for areas that fulfil open-space objectives, climate change adaptation, and protection of the environment valued by residents.

9. Prepare policies and by-laws specifically designed to enhance public recreation, provide public access to outdoor spaces and outdoor activities, protect biodiversity, and take advantage of ecosystem services.
10. Support the protection and designation of areas that serve as natural buffers between incompatible land uses and whose buffering capacity can serve to reduce climate change impacts.
11. Protect public recreation uses from incompatible land uses, such as commercial timber harvesting, mineral extraction, or other resource recovery uses, whether these uses occur on-site or on adjacent parcels.

4.4.5 Resource Uses [Section 4(c)(v) of the Municipal Planning Requirements Regulations]

Planning Context

Rural resource uses include primary industries, such as forestry and silviculture, aquaculture, pits and quarries, mining, and energy-related uses. For many rural areas, these industries represent the backbone of the economy and community. The parts of the municipality that are designated for resource use are generally not developed and are left in their natural state. In places where these activities predominate, it is important to limit the introduction of other uses that would compromise the resource use, and effort is taken to ensure compatibility with other existing land uses. Often these resource uses are regulated by other levels of government, such as the province. It is important to coordinate municipal zoning with provincial intentions and regulations.

Guiding Principles

1. Identify and designate lands with potential for a resource-based economy, including Crown land.
2. Establish policies and by-law regulations that support land uses associated with resource extraction and value-added products.
3. Align the regulatory framework with economic objectives.
4. Ensure that mineral resources are recognized and protected through planning provisions.
5. Ensure resource extraction and development are permitted in areas with significant resource potential.
6. Protect neighbouring areas against hazards resulting from the normal operations of mines, pits, and quarries.
7. Ensure your planning does not duplicate or conflict with provincial regulatory requirements regarding resource extraction.
8. Discourage other land uses that will conflict with existing or future resource development.

9. Make sure that zoning provisions permit additional land to be used for the extraction of mineral resources, including land for stockpiling purposes and the building of processing or support facilities (e.g., an asphalt plants).
10. Make sure that planning provisions in resource areas address concerns about such things as access, land-use compatibility, setbacks, servicing, and rehabilitation.
11. Separate and buffer incompatible land uses and cluster new development around the resources and facilities that support their success.
12. Develop planning provisions that would advance and not hinder the operation of private woodlots and other forestry-related uses.

