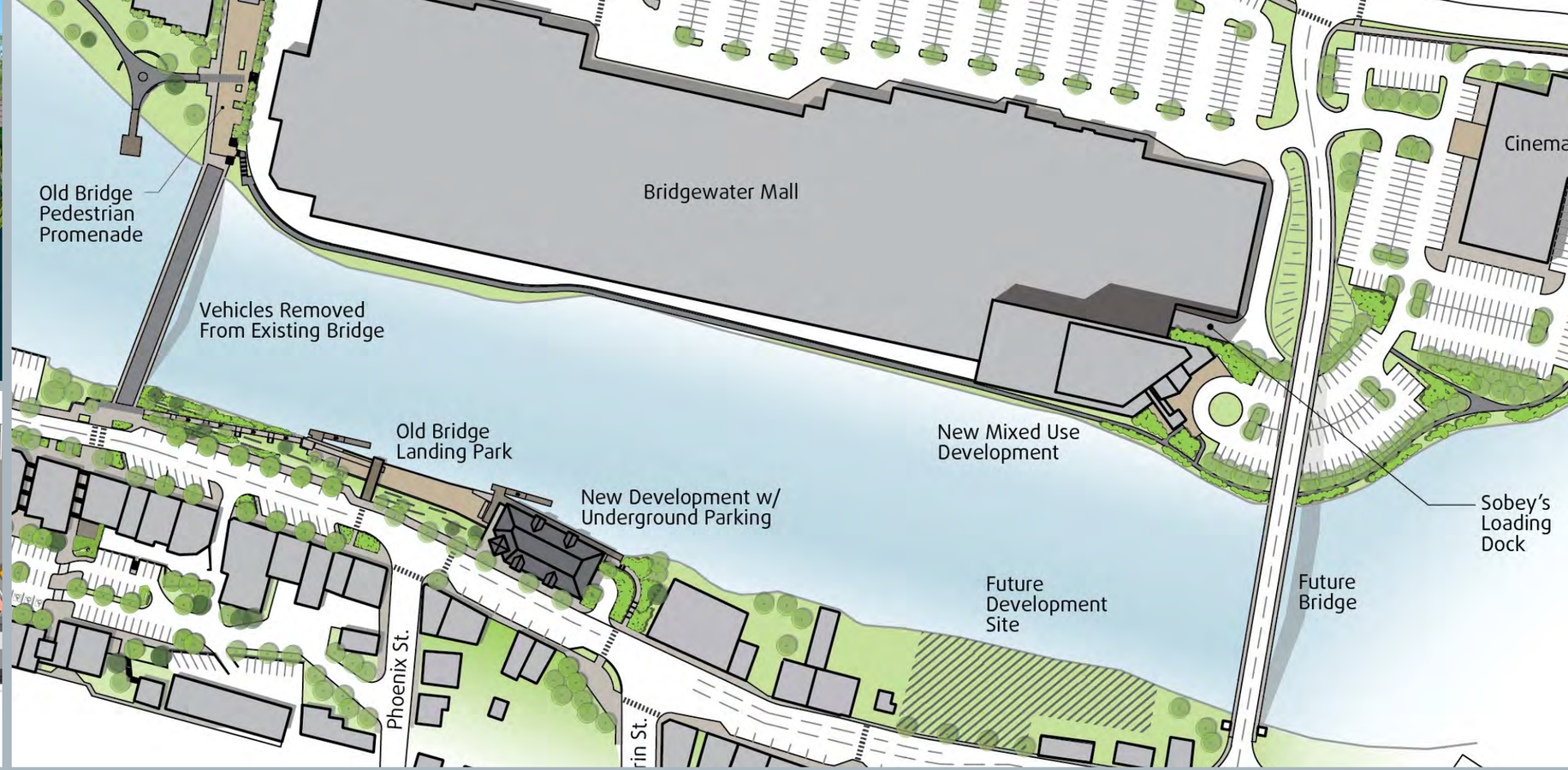
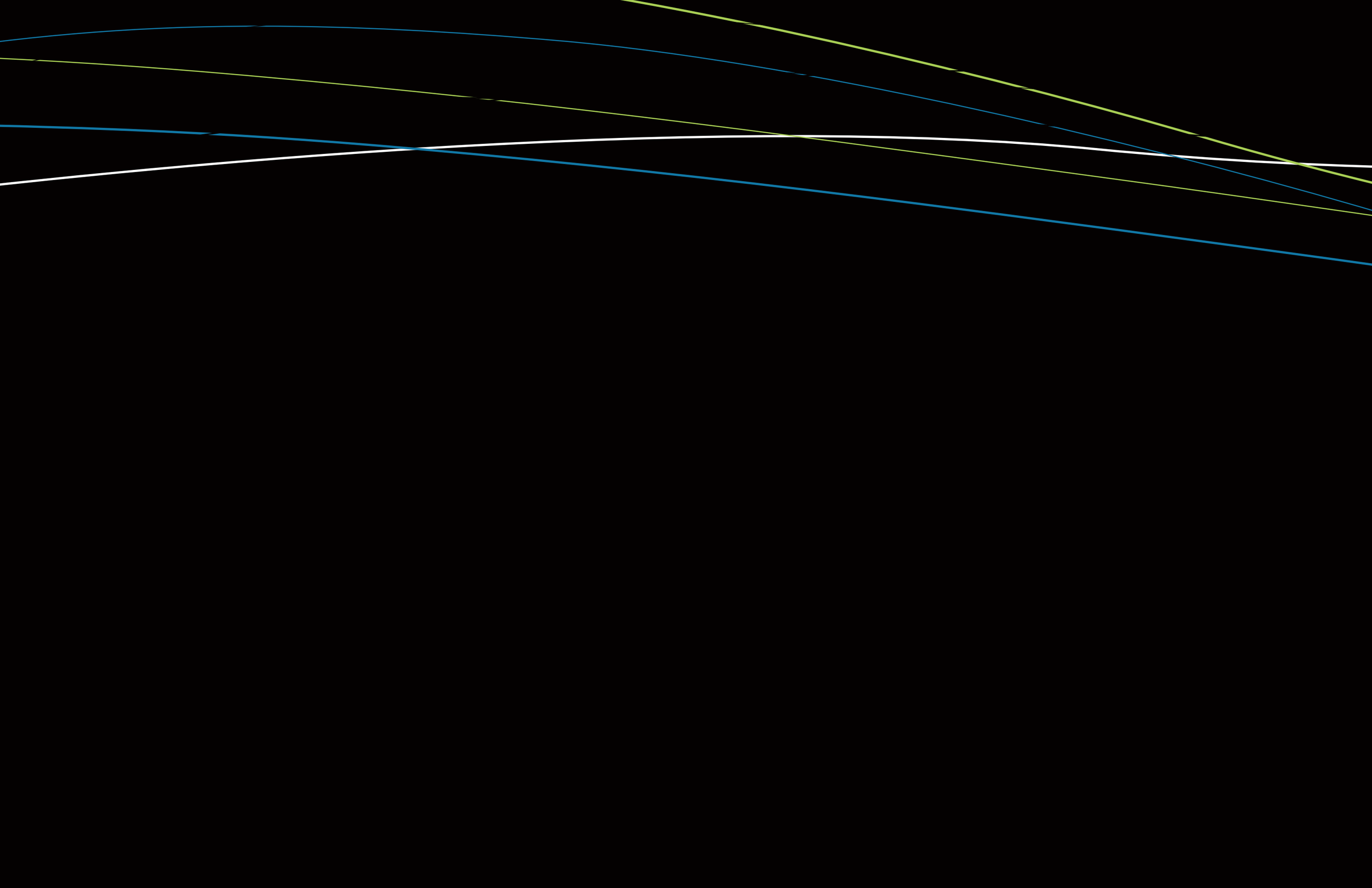


Town of Bridgewater

Downtown & Waterfront Master Plan

>> Final Report

EKISTICS PLANNING & DESIGN



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Acknowledgements

The Bridgewater Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan is the product of an open and iterative planning process that derives it strength from the commitment, input, and ideas of the Community of Bridgewater. A significant number of citizens took the time to share their ideas, input, expertise, and energy through a variety of forums and opportunities.

The overwhelming interest and support demonstrated by the Town of Bridgewater is indicative of the interest and commitment residents have to their downtown and waterfront. The vision of this plan is that of the public. Any success that this plan has is a direct result of the level of involvement and support shown by the community.

This plan was made possible by the significant involvement of many, including the following key individuals.

Funding Partners

- Nova Scotia Department of Health & Wellness
- Nova Scotia Department of Economic & Rural Development & Tourism

The Client Team

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Steering Committee

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- Debby Smith
- Bill McInnis
- Sandra Mailman

Town Council

- Mayor David Walker
- Deputy Mayor Bill McInnis
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- Jennifer McDonald
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The Consulting Team

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- James Frost

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ORIGINS

IT IS NOT WHAT YOU LOOK AT THAT MATTERS, IT IS WHAT YOU SEE.
- HENRY DAVID THOREAU

The community of Bridgewater is a unique, vibrant, and growing community along Nova Scotia's south shore. Its picturesque location, proximity to some of Atlantic Canada's most prominent tourism destinations, growing potential as a desirable retirement location, and engaged population are only a few of the many positive attributes that define the character of the Town. These attributes also provide the foundation upon which it is possible to build a strong civic identity and a vibrant and sustainable community.

At the cultural, social, and functional centre of a town, the downtown is very much the heart of a community. A downtown's health, vibrancy, diversity, and prosperity reflects the overall condition and composition of the residential and business community. A vital and lively downtown is essential to the economic health and civic pride of a community, as it stimulates development, fosters creativity, attracts visitors, supports residents, and generates economic activity.

However, these once prosperous economic engines of a community fell into decline in the latter half of the twentieth century for a variety of factors. The rise of the automobile, the evolution of the big box store, and the mass migration of population and services to suburbia are a few of the factors that contributed to the decline of the downtown. Traditional land use planning supported this decline by segregating land uses, promoting monocultural developments, and emphasizing parking over many other needs. These factors together have stressed the downtown environment, leading to physical and economic decline.

Fortunately in recent years, the urban downtown has gone through a renaissance, and has begun to re-emerge as a major focus in planning and revitalization efforts. This renaissance is being driven by several factors, including smart growth planning policy, an increased focus on public health and sustainability, and an understanding of the inherent value a downtown has to the overall vibrancy of a community. As the traditional resource economy shifts towards the new creative economy, many more communities are envisioning a new direction for their Downtown, reinventing their economic and urban planning futures.

The Town of Bridgewater is following just such a trajectory. For over a century, the waterfront downtown of Bridgewater was the economic nucleus of the community. The LaHave River, once the primary transportation route through and into Bridgewater, provided the key economic generator for the Town. Like many Nova Scotian towns, Main Street was only a block away from the waterfront. Formal commerce was physically linked to the essential transportation corridor which the waterfront provided. The location of the railroad, also on the waterfront, reinforced its prominence as the central spine of the community.

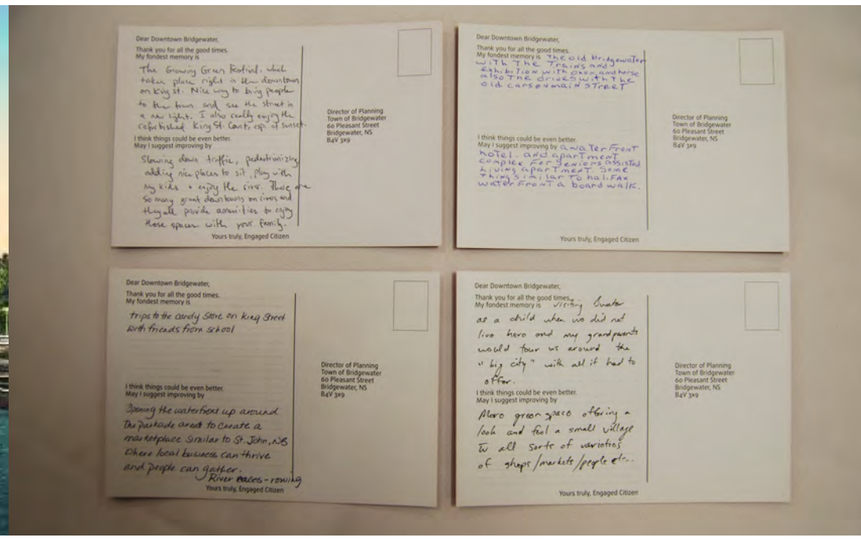
As transportation evolved away from rail and river in the early twentieth century, the physical and social structure of Bridgewater began to change. The suburban migration, the move from Main Street retail towards the mall, and the rise of the automobile in the second half of the twentieth century further accelerated this change, and the economic focus of the Town began to move away from the traditional core of King Street. However, several unique and interesting things happened in Bridgewater. A series of major fires destroyed much of the historic King Street architecture, leading to large blocks of waterfront land remaining open and visually connected to the LaHave River. Unlike newly constructed malls in many towns, which tended towards green space on the periphery of the community, Bridgewater built a mall adjacent to the river, within walking distance of the downtown core. In recent decades, other box retail has co-located in the area, leaving the Town with two major grocery retailers in the central business area, a very unique situation. These events, which have uniquely shaped the physical layout of the Town, have not been sufficient to stop the ongoing decline of the downtown area. In 2012, in recognition of the need to re-conceptualize the Downtown core, and re-imagine the waterfront, the Town initiated a broad scale, visionary master planning process to redefine the centre of the Community. The intent of the master plan is to provide specific program elements, site composition and design, costing and phasing, and planning policy recommendations to enable a realistic and fiscally responsible implementation process This master plan should be practical yet visionary, economic grounded, and respective of the input received during the planning process.

1.1 Study Purpose and Commission

This report was prepared by Ekistics Planning and Design, in association with Cantwell & Company, SNC-Lavalin, and Form:Media, and is the culmination of a six month long study process founded on extensive public engagement and best practices research. The project was commissioned by the Town of Bridgewater in acknowledgement of the need to envision and plan for the future of the Downtown, in a manner that is sustainable, visionary and pragmatic. Originating in the fall of 2012, this study followed a broadly based public engagement program that sought input from a variety of stakeholder groups and the public through a range of formats and opportunities.

The resulting Bridgewater Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan is reflective of the ideas and community dialogue heard throughout the process. The vision for the master plan came into focus during a series of public events where participants outlined their ideas for the Downtown. While many of the key issues that emerged were complex, with divergent viewpoints and perspectives, the one overarching theme that connects the community together is the overwhelming love for Bridgewater. In moving forward, it will be important for the Town, the public, and key community and stakeholder groups to come together and work collectively to address the issues of this plan. This is the best way to successfully address the long term implementation of the various plan elements and projects.

This study was organized into a three phase process that was structured around a comprehensive public engagement program, and was designed to generate a new vision for Downtown Bridgewater.



Phase One: Understanding

Phase one began in September 2012, with a kickoff meeting between the study team, the project steering committee, and Town staff. The group reviewed project timelines, deliverables, and the protocol for the study, as well as conducted a rainy walk of the study area. The steering committee was comprised of Town staff, Provincial representatives, the Bridgewater Development Agency (BDA), and elected officials. Policy information, past studies, best practices and planning research, and base maps were thoroughly reviewed to inform the study process. At the conclusion of phase one, an opportunities and constraints exercise was completed, looking at the physical, cultural, and social structure of the study area. A summary of the best practices research and the opportunities and constraints exercise is included in subsequent sections of this document.

Phase Two: Engagement

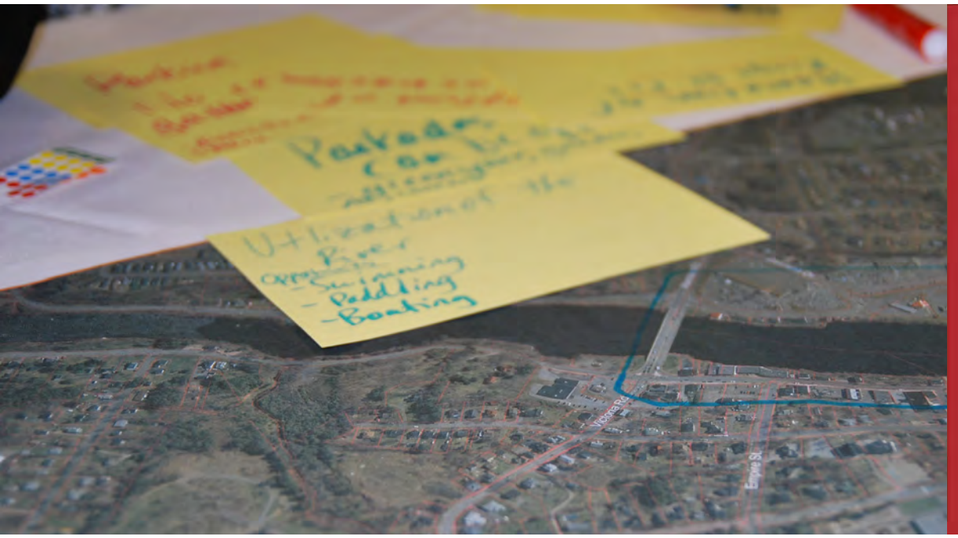
In order to be truly successful, any master planning process must be based upon the values and input of its community. The programs, policies, and project components must be reflective of the needs and wants of its citizens, as they are the people who know their community the best. In working to understand these needs and wants, a multi-faceted engagement process consisting of a series of workshops, web-based communication, traditional public meetings, and guerilla-style outreach was completed in order to solicit the broadest range of input possible. While the public consultation period extended throughout the study process, the majority of the energy was focused on the 'Consultation Week', held November 19th to 22nd, 2012.

Engagement Postcard

The engagement postcard was a more 'guerilla-stye' consultation tool designed to spark interest in the project, and get ideas flowing. Launched in the weeks prior to the formal public engagement, the postcards were distributed to key locations like Town Hall, Bridgewater Junior Senior High School, and a senior's residence. The public response was overwhelmingly positive, with well over 300 postcards returned. While the occasional card took a more 'humorous' approach to the exercise, the majority of responses were indicative of the strong connections residents have to the Downtown. In fact, most of the postcards built upon the graphic theme of the card itself, 'love', and showcased the amount of love that exists for Bridgewater.

Online Survey & Study Website

Starting in October, a study website was launched and maintained by Town staff, populated with content on a frequent basis. The intent of the website was to provide the public with an alternative forum for learning about and participating in the master planning process. To compliment the website and solicit additional feedback, an online survey was developed to provide additional information to the study team. To date over 230 people have responded. Early emerging themes and ideas suggested specific interest on different / better restaurants, social gathering spaces in the Downtown, and the desire to improve the green space and ecology of the river.



Downtown Walkabout

The formal 'Consultation Week' kicked off with the Downtown Walkabout. To jump start the public events, residents and other interested parties joined Development Officer Nick Brown and local Historian Peter Oickle on an hour long walkabout through the study area. Organized by Town staff, this event saw about forty participants visiting five stops where both historical details and modern planning issues were discussed. The walkabout was a great launch point for consultation week, and encouraged vibrant discussion of the issues in their existing context. Of particular significance emerged the condition and role of the King Street parkades, and how they influence the streetscape and traffic circulation. The beautiful and sunny day only enhanced the success of this event.

Public Visioning Session

The first public workshop was held at the Days Inn on Monday, November 19th. The intent of this workshop was to outline five key themes to explore for their relevance to and influence on the Downtown, and encourage participants to refine them to be more reflective of the unique Bridgewater context. Following a world-cafe style format, participants were asked to join one of five tables, each with a specific theme, and brainstormed applicable opportunities and weaknesses for the Downtown. Interestingly, despite the broad range of topics each table was asked to consider, common issues emerged. For instance, each table identified the importance that the LaHave River plays in the community. Many groups identified the parkades as a visual distraction and a physical block to the river, but it was noted that many business value their continued existence. At the end of the workshop, the consulting team began to develop a clear picture of the opportunities and challenges facing the Downtown.

1.1 Images from Consultation Week

Focus Group Workshop

Building upon the outcomes of the public visioning workshop, the focus group workshop sought to further refine the issues and opportunities for the Downtown. The workshop was attended by representatives of key interest groups, including some of the King Street merchants. Participants joined one of two tables, where they spent an hour focusing on specific opportunities and constraints facing the Downtown area. The parkades emerged as one of the primary topics at this session, with merchants stressing their importance to their overall business vitality. Other emerging issues included green space, visibility, signage, and the recognition that Bridgewater effectively has two Downtowns. It was noted that the idea of two Downtowns is both a strength and a weakness - there is synergy to be derived from the proximity of King Street to the Mall. However, this synergy does not translate to connectivity; unless there is a special event like a parade, shoppers will not typically walk from the Mall to shop on King Street.

Youth Visioning Workshop

A project such as the Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan is all about the future, and therefore it is essential to engage with those who have the greatest stake. The youth visioning workshop, held with a group of 32 Bridgewater High School students, took them through a similar exercise to the public visioning session. As was the case with Generations Active Park, the students took a keen interest in the workshop; providing interesting and valuable input. They reviewed the key broad themes, offering up the youth perspective on opportunities and constraints that the Downtown is facing. Interestingly, the students expressed a strong connection to the Downtown, and the desire to have a youth-friendly gathering space there. As non-drivers, they advocated for better connections to Downtown, including the possibility of public transit. They also echoed the community's connection to the river, agreeing that it was an important part of the identity of Bridgewater. However, the students were much more blunt in their assessment of the Downtown area, suggesting it could use visual improvements. Despite these criticisms of the current condition, there was an overwhelming sense of optimism and a general reflection of the positive vibes for the community.

1.2 Images from Consultation Week

Design Drop-in

Design drop-in was one of the more interesting and flexible options for the community to participate in the public consultation. Held at the Bridgewater Mall, the design team spent three hours mingling with shoppers, answering questions, and soliciting input on the project. Many people who had not been previously aware of the study were able to provide ideas and suggestions, and all who visited this session were encouraged to visit the website and complete the online survey. Throughout this session, over 40 people dropped in, met the design team, and provided feedback on their vision for Downtown Bridgewater.

1.3 Design Drop In

Framework Plan Presentation

A public open house was held at the Bridgewater Fire Hall on Thursday, November 22nd, 2012. Approximately 40 people attended this session to hear a summary of consultation week, and provide input on the emerging design principles. These refined principles influenced the development of the framework plan in the next phase of the study, and the community feedback received was an important checkpoint at this stage of the study process. Questions and comments during the presentation and afterward were generally positive. It was noted that there is a perception that the community is wary of change, but the overarching theme of optimism continues to persist in the community.

Major Public Themes

The consulting team started consultation week with five overarching themes that the community was asked to consider as part of the visioning process. Those were:

- Identity / Signage / Tourism
- Circulation / Traffic / Parking
- Ecology & Environment
- Recreation and Open Space
- Programming and Activity

Throughout the various engagement events, opportunities, weaknesses, and considerations for each of these themes were explored, and broad themes began to emerge. Those issues and considerations are summarized below.

	Identity/Signage/Tourism	Importance	Circulation/Traffic/Parking	Importance	Recreation/Open Space	Importance	Programming/Activities	Importance	Ecology & Environment	Importance
Issues	**no clear identity**	**18**	**parking (parkades)**	**17**	**no central gathering space**	**19**	**inefficient use of space (e.g. parkades)**	**14**	**maintaining access to riverfront**	**16**
	no 'centre' or gathering place	17	moving people across the river	15	empty + rundown buildings	14	lack of walking trails across town/into downtown	13	**too much asphalt, not enough trees**	**16**
	legibility and frequency of signs	12	two main streets (King & LaHave)	15	acquiring land for greenspace	10	lack of public washrooms	9	lack of active transportation	14
	competing with Mahone Bay and Lunenburg	4	Bridgewater Mall	11	perception of river as unclean	9	access	9	educating property owners	5
	not comfortable with 'just' being a commercial centre	3	condition of the bridges	10	parking	4	capacity of old bridge	2	traffic congestion	2
		54		68						
Solutions	**mall has big opportunity to create access to the river**	**18**	**the river**	**13**	**utilization of the river**	**20**	**remove parkades & open space for river access**	**19**	**remove parkades**	**17**
	beautiful natural assets (river)	16	alternate parking (Bridgewater Mall)	12	connectivity for walking & cycling	19	extend & utilize waterfront green space beyond downto	18	plant trees along riverbank & LaHave St.	12
	consistent downtown features (signs & decorations)	13	the bridges	7	event planning, arts	10	opportunity site at Mall back alley on river	14	create a walkway to stabilize the riverbank	11
	directory of businesses/features (billboards & pamphlets)	4	integrate river	4	promotion of King St. Court	7	floating docks to encourage boaters	12	land acquisition	7
	less fickle residents = loyal patronage (not tourism dependent)	4	balanced development (comm. & res.)	3	parkades as opportunity sites	7	(natural) water park	0	stabilize the riverbank	2
Other Suggestions	Food court patio		Water Taxi		Swimming		Public art		Green roof/community garden on mall	
	Signs & decorations		Pedway		Paddling					
	Billboards & pamphlets				Boating					

1.4 Summary of Key Themes

From these tables, key words and phases were used to create a 'wordle', a visual depiction of the emerging themes. Larger words emerged more prominently in the engagement, and clearly reflect the importance of the river to the Bridgewater community. These themes will be used to guide the development of the Downtown and waterfront master plan.

Phase Three: Conceptual Planning

The conceptual planning phase built upon the outcomes of the best practices review, site inventory and analysis, and public consultation to articulate an overall vision and guiding principles for the future of Downtown Bridgewater. Using the community's vision as the focal point, the proposed program consists of physical improvements and projects, policy updates and amendments, and programming recommendations, with the ultimate goal of balancing fiscal responsibility with economic development and public benefit.

1.5 Consultation Themes 'Wordle'

Presentation of the Draft Plan

A draft of the master plan was presented to the steering committee, Town Council, and the public on Wednesday, January 30th, 2013. The draft document was also available on the Town's website following the presentation, and comments were encouraged and invited until March 1, 2013.

Town staff compiled the comments on the draft plan and provided the team with a detailed summary. At the plan presentations and in the subsequent review period that followed, the overwhelming majority of comments received were positive and supporting of the plan content and ideas. Overall the comments could be broken down into the following categories:

- General editorial comments;
- Requests for clarification or further detail;
- Comments on content or ideas.

With respect to comments on report content or ideas, the majority of comments received related to the proposed removal of the south parkade. Many downtown merchants expressed strong concern or disagreement with the proposed removal of the parkade. To address these concerns, Town staff met with several of the major King Street tenants. Additional content on parking mitigation strategies was also included in the document. All editorial or clarification comments were addressed for the final document.

1.6 Consultation Week Presentation

1.2 Renaissance of Downtowns

Prior to 1945, manufacturing and industrialization were two of the major sources of employment in Canada, and shipbuilding and rail transportation drove the wealth of many Atlantic Canada towns. Shipping and rail provided one of the only reliable means of transportation and as a result, busy rail and port towns grew quickly. Restricted personal mobility clustered people and businesses together to create a tight urban texture and strong central civic core. Agriculture populated the lands on the periphery of the town, providing farmers with close proximity to their Downtown markets. People lived and worked in Downtowns and there was a diversity of land uses in relatively small geographic area.

With the post war baby-boom of 1945, cheap, accessible land surrounding Downtowns, coupled with federal infrastructure investment programs which encouraged road and highway development, led to suburbanization and decentralization. In the 1950s and 1960s, the concept of the 'shopping mall' took hold, and many enclosed facilities were constructed on inexpensive suburban land with good proximity to new highways. The prospect of indoor, convenient and accessible retailing competed heavily with traditional Downtowns, resulting in many businesses opting for indoor space. The growth of chain stores, which often preferred to lease space rather than own buildings, also favoured the shopping centre model over the Downtown model.

By the end of the 1970s, regional and super-regional malls had saturated the market and covered the Canadian landscape in patterns that mirrored an area's buying power. The Urban Renewal program of the 1960s attempted to remedy the Downtown situation by encouraging the demolition of derelict buildings (many of them heritage buildings) and building roads, interchanges and highway between the central business district and the suburbs. By all accounts, the program did more harm to the traditional Downtown than the improvements it was designed to foster.

By the 1970s, many of Canada's Downtowns, large and small, had become run-down and derelict. In 1979 the Heritage Canada Foundation (HCF) embarked on "The Main Street Canada Program"; a comprehensive effort to halt the decay and destruction of traditional main streets in Canadian towns and cities. Despite the program's many successes, the federal government's contribution to Main Street Canada ran out in the early 1990s. For a brief while, Downtowns seemed like they were on the path to recovery.

The emergence of the Big Box and Power Centre retailing concept during the recession of the early 1990s created a new round of development that further depleted downtowns of economic activity. Over time, many of these box stores (e.g., Staples, Future Shop, Home Depot, Kent) became indistinguishable from one another. The term "Generica" describes the trend towards homogenized big box development, where the stores are so similar that visitors are hard pressed to tell where they are, as the buildings and landscape all look the same (i.e., they are generic). Large companies prefer this approach to conformity, as it simplifies the planning and design process, and maximizes the economic return of their stores. Towns like New Minas (NS) and Sackville (NS) have built their economy on accepting generica. While Big Box retailing fills a need for mobile local residents (as long as they don't have to live near it or in it), its niche is in generic products and it does very little to contribute to the sense of place for communities.

As a response to the ongoing box-style retail trend, a grassroots movement has begun to push back against this model. Initiatives such as the local food movement, buy local, and artisans and crafts movement offer consumers alternatives to the generic retail model. These initiatives, in concert with an expanding understanding of the value of a diverse retail and land use environment, have supported and enhanced an ongoing renaissance for Canadian downtowns. Other factors that continue to support the downtown movement include:

- Downtown's emergence as a 'cool' place to live. Many downtown cores, even in small communities, provide a range of boutique retailers, restaurants, and cultural amenities. As a result, downtown living has become fashionable to many segments of the population.
- Town Councils are now recognizing the cost associated with providing municipal services to suburban sprawl, and as a result, many have implemented growth management strategies to restrict further expansion. In addition, much of the inexpensive land on the periphery of downtown has already been developed.
- The history and authenticity of a downtown, especially in a small community, is hard to replicate in traditional suburban development. This character and quality of life attracts many diverse groups of people to live in the downtown.
- The shift towards the creative economy has produced a mobile workforce that no longer needs to live where they work. E-commuting options mean that young families and professionals are choosing quality of life over convenience, and small communities like Bridgewater are experiencing growth because of this shift.
- Retiring baby-boomers are downsizing their houses and upsizing their lifestyles. This often leads to a desire to be close to the 'action' of a downtown.
- As the cost of oil and gas continue to rise, the cost of driving and living increases. In communities of all sizes, this is encouraging people to live and shop back downtown.
- An increased awareness of obesity and the impacts of public health are encouraging people to walk. This translates into more residential demand in close proximity to the central business district, and more investment in the pedestrian urban environment.
- New planning policies encourage mixed use development downtown, which is bringing people back to the central business district to live and work. Similarly, planning policies which discourage suburbanization and unsustainable development forms are also being put in place to further restrict sprawl.
- Downtowns are being recognized as centres of commerce, culture, education, and art. Their strength continues to be seen in their diversity.
- Cultural tourism continues to be a driver of the tourism sector (In most Atlantic Canadian cities, over 70% of cultural tourists visit Downtowns during their trip). These tourists are looking for unique environments and activities, and are not interested in generic box development.
- Federal and Provincial funding programs are targeting downtowns and other sustainable initiatives like facade programs, downtown infrastructure, arts centres, and active transportation plans.

In Nova Scotia, all the factors point toward the tipping point for urban renewal, and Bridgewater is well positioned to take advantage of the change and emerge as one of the Province's most vital and attractive communities.

1.3 Healthy Downtowns

The health of a downtown is a reflection on the health of a community. Healthy downtowns often represent a healthy community. In the same way active planning is required to ensure the health of a community, proactive planning is needed to ensure the vitality and growth of Bridgewater's downtown. There are many important reasons why downtown development is important. It:

- Fosters Community Identity. Because downtowns are the traditional heart of most communities, they are often the first way residents identify or distinguish themselves from other communities. In an increasingly homogenized world, communities that preserve their unique culture and distinctive character have an economic advantage.
- Supports Job and Wages. Locally owned businesses often create more local jobs and often provide better wages and benefits than chain stores do.
- Expands the Tax Base. Successful Downtowns generate revenues to pay for local community services. Public investment in Downtown redevelopment usually pays dividends in the long term to the entire region.
- Creates a First Impression. A downtown's appearance is typically the first impression a community offers to visitors. First impressions stay with people.
- Promotes Environmental Sustainability. Downtowns help to sustain vibrant, compact, walkable town centres—which in turn are essential to reducing sprawl, automobile use, habitat loss, and air and water pollution.
- Preserves Cultural History. Because of their enduring history, downtowns are the custodians of our collective cultural history. They provide a glimpse of our past accomplishments and sometimes failures. Cultural tourism, the fastest growing sector of our economy in Nova Scotia, depends on preserving and showcasing our history.
- Provides Residents with Retail and Services. In many rural places, downtown offers a diversity of retail stores, financial institutions, historic areas, cultural and educational institutions and public agencies and local government offices. Diversity is the formula for the long-term strength of downtown.

- Keeps Dollars in the Community. With services and goods available locally, residents will not need to shop outside the community as often.
- Is Self Policing. A vibrant residential downtown population is much more secure than a 'work only' downtown. The many 'eyes on the street' reduce vandalism and crime.
- Prevents Blight and Abandonment. A strong downtown will have lower health and safety costs and concerns.
- Promotes Community Well-Being. Locally owned businesses build strong communities by sustaining vibrant town centres, linking neighbours in a web of economic and social relationships, and contributing to local causes.
- Enhances Product Diversity. A multitude of small businesses, each selecting goods based on the interests and needs of local customers, guarantees a much wider range of product choices.
- Is Supported by available Federal and Provincial programs. Both the Federal and Provincial Governments offer a number of programs and a variety of assistance to help downtown revitalization efforts.

In moving forward, it will be important to integrate principles of healthy downtowns into each project or policy that is put forward.

BUILDING BLOCKS

The Bridgewater Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan outlines the function, form, and character of future development within the downtown core and along the LaHave River waterfront over the next twenty years. It will clearly direct and define the downtown as the civic and social core of the community, generating economic and cultural wealth for the Town. This plan recognizes that in order to support the revitalization of the downtown as a vital and attractive nucleus for activity, many competing interests and factors must be addressed and work collectively towards the same objective. Considerations such as the physical study area, current real estate and tourism market, physical transportation network, ecology of the riverfront, civic open space aspirations, and existing planning policy context provide an important framework and foundation for the proposed plan direction.

PEOPLE PLACES MEAN PUBLIC PLACES WERE PEOPLE ARE WELCOME. WATERFRONTS, BY DEFINITION, ARE PEOPLE PLACES. - STANTON ECKSTUT, AIA

2.1 Historic King Street

2.2 Ships on the LaHave River

2.1 Study Area Overview

The Town of Bridgewater is located on the LaHave River, approximately 25 kilometers inland from the Atlantic Ocean. Inhabited by Mi'kmaq for nearly 60 centuries, the area's tree covered slopes and fertile drumlin hills made it an ideal location for settlement. The area's first European settlers arrived from nearby communities and included British colonists, French decedents from down river at LaHave, and Protestants from Lunenburg. The first house constructed within present town boundaries was built in 1812, at the corner of King and Phoenix Streets, and the first bridge to span the river was constructed in approximately 1825.

For over a century, Bridgewater's economy was based almost entirely on natural resources. Lumber was the town's primary industry, and the local lumber mills prospered due to the presence of the river and its adjacent tributaries. This proximity to the naturally occurring transportation corridor of the LaHave River helped the Town of Bridgewater evolve into a regional distribution centre. The arrival of the railroad in the later half of the 19th Century firmly established Bridgewater as the hub of the south shore.

For most of its history, Bridgewater's growth was centered around King Street and the LaHave River and was defined by compact development. As early as the 1870s, residents could access public, commercial, industrial, institutional, and entertainment amenities along both sides of King Street. In January 1899 a fire engulfed the Downtown and destroyed most of the buildings on King Street. Nevertheless, this paved the way for new construction on the western side of the street, while much of the east side of the street was left open to provide visual and physical access to the water.

On February 13, 1899, Bridgewater was officially incorporated as a town. In the ensuing years, even as fewer businesses relocated to the area the economy continued to be sustained by the railway. A period of growth occurred during the First World War and the town rapidly expanded. This was followed by economic decline during the depression years, and another positive surge during and after the Second World War. King Street continued to prosper as the major retail destination throughout these periods, and development increased in the western part of the Town.

Similar to many Nova Scotian communities, in the last fifty years most growth and development has occurred outside of the historic town core. With the decline of the railroad and lumber industry, the town has become increasingly reliant on an emerging manufacturing sector. The opening of the Michelin Tire Plant in the 1970s led to subsequent commercial development and residential subdivisions on the east side of the river, and King Street began to lose its prominence as the Town's main commercial destination. This further exacerbated the decline of the downtown as a whole , which continued to lose its role as a central residential neighbourhood for families.

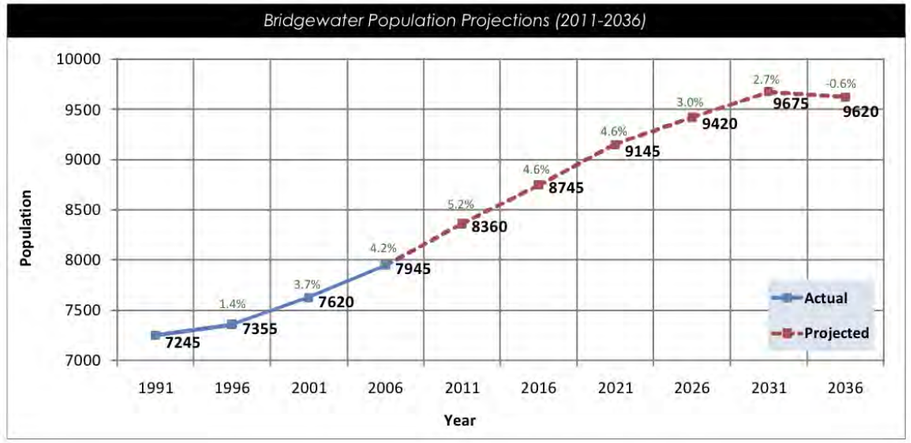
Demographics

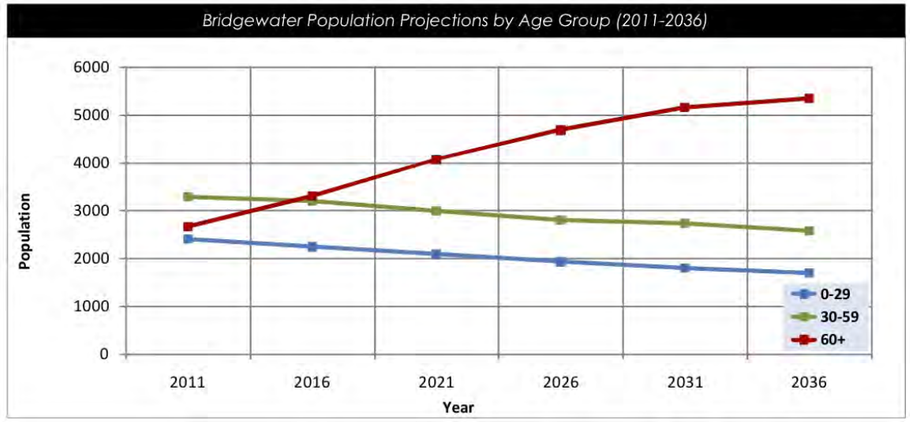
Unlike many other smaller communities In Nova Scotia, Bridgewater's population has continued to grow over the last decade. According to the 2011 Census, the population was 8,241, increasing 3.7% from 7944 in 2006. This follows a population increase of 8.1% from 1996. The most recent increase places Bridgewater fourth on the list of highest population growth census subdivisions in the province with a population of over 5,000.

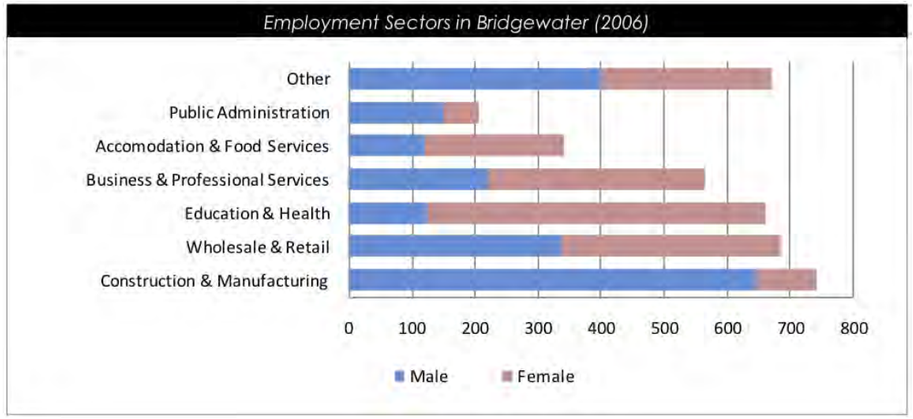
Despite the optimistic growth trend, projections indicate that Bridgewater's population will reach an all-time high of approximately 9,675 in 2031, followed by a period of decline (Community Inventory Report, 2010). This is due to several factors including a presently small youth population, very small percentage of newborns and toddlers, a median age of 47, and a senior population (60+) that is also well above the provincial average (Statistics Canada, 2011). The population increases that have occurred in recent years can therefore be attributed to the growing senior population, both as baby boomers age, and the fact that past migration rates show that Bridgewater is a popular destination for retirees and seniors. According to the Town of Bridgewater Community Inventory Report, if migration rates continue to increase by an additional 10%, as assumed, the Town will need significant investment in senior services, such as specialized housing and amenities. The Community Inventory Report also suggests that in order to sustain growth, Bridgewater will need to attract more and more migrants from other areas over time.

Average household size in Bridgewater has also been decreasing due to the aging population, and according to the 2011 was down to 2.1 persons. Household formation (headship rate) is the main determinant of housing demand – not population growth per se: for example, a community with a stable population may have new housing formation due to increased divorce rates, lower marriage rates and increased longevity. The consequence of declining household size and an aging population for Bridgewater is that a larger number of dwelling units are required for the same population, while at the same time the dwelling unit mix must change to serve an older market.

Part of the reason for the population growth has been the diverse and steady nature of the local economy. 2006 data illustrate the distribution of jobs in the Town of Bridgewater is quite diverse, with 500 to 700 jobs in the construction & manufacturing, retail, education & health and professional services sectors. Bridgewater is a regional shopping centre as well as a regional centre for municipal, provincial and federal government in the South Shore. According to the Lunenburg Queens Regional Development Agency (RDA), the unemployment rate for the Town was 7.8% for males and 6.2% for females in 2011; lower than any other community on the South Shore, and lower than the Provincial average.







2.3 Bridgewater Demographics

2.2 Best Practices Review

Downtown revitalization has been on of the most prominent elements of strategic urban renewal in recent decades. Visionary communities have embraced the opportunity to forge a new image by strategically investing in highly visible and desirable urban design and downtown development projects. Current planning literature would suggest that the downtown is THE most significant public asset in the urban design environment. Accordingly, downtown revitalization should first and foremost focus on the creation of high quality public spaces. A balanced approach to downtown planning should focus on sustainable place development, unifying environmental and social benefit with the economic benefit of an active, attractive, and appealing commercial district.

The Brookings Institute's Twelve Steps to Downtown Revitalization

The Brookings Institute is a non-profit, public policy organization based in Washington, D.C. As one of Washington's oldest think tanks, Brookings conducts research and education in the social sciences, metropolitan policy, governance, foreign policy, global economics, and development. In 2005, Brookings released a 12 step process to revitalize downtown (March 2005, "Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization", The Brookings Institute).

The report outlines the chronology of steps required to turn a downtown around, and a more detailed summary can be found in the appendix. While some of the content applies to larger city centres, the twelve key principles provide a strong foundation for the Bridgewater Downtown & Waterfront Master Plan.

Step 1: Capture the Vision

The starting point to any revitalization plan is to engage in a "visioning" process. This iterative step sets the tone and direction for the Community to move towards. The public sector can and should participate, both to have a stake in and to give legitimacy to the process. This will eventually give way to a private/public partnership, an integral relationship for sustainable economic community development.

Step 2: Develop a Strategic Plan

The visioning process should engage neighbourhood group representatives, retailers, investors, developers, property owners, churches, the mayor and key municipal councillors, senior staff, non-profit organizations, artists, homeless advocates, and others. Through bringing diverse voices together, it is possible to develop a holistic strategic plan for civic revitalization.

Step 3: Forge a Healthy Private/Public Partnership

Successful downtown revitalization is generally a private/public partnership, not the other way around. The key to the public sector's successful involvement in downtown redevelopment is to avoid making it overly political. Civic leaders must be absolutely committed to the process both in word and in deed, and be willing and able to do what it takes to help create the right environment for private sector development and investment.


Step 4: Make the Right Thing Easy

Often traditional zoning and building codes actually discourage the necessary elements of walkable urbanism. In many communities for example, often well-intended setback and floor-area ratio rules mean that new construction cannot maintain consistency with older historic structures. Also, excessive parking requirements can create large surface lots fronting once-lively streets, eroding the vitality of otherwise coherent places. Coupled with an emphasis on separation of land uses and limited densities, downtown revitalization becomes nearly impossible from a legal perspective.

Step 5: Establish Business Improvement Districts (BID) and Other Non-Profit Groups

A Business Improvement District's (BID) main leadership role may be in supporting the implementation of the revitalization strategy, a living document which must be constantly updated. The BID could be responsible, for example, for implementing certain aspects of the strategy, or supporting individual business owners and citizens in the completion of specific tasks.

The BID's operational role is usually (1) increasing the perceived and actual safety of downtown; (2) making the place cleaner; (3) creating festivals and events to encourage suburbanites to come downtown, and; (4) improving downtown's image. The BID and other non-profits are a downtown's management team—ensuring its many complex elements work together to create a safe, attractive, unique, and well-functioning place.

Step 6: Create a Catalytic Development Company

Revitalizing downtowns have overcome the problem of attracting developers by establishing a "catalytic developer." This organization, often created by the Town itself, is formed to develop the initial projects that the market and consumer research shows have potential demand but above market risk. The catalytic development firm demonstrates to the rest of the development community and their investors that downtown development can make economic sense.

A catalytic development company can engage in varying activities in the development process. Among the possibilities are: undertaking land assemblage and land development to prepare lots for new construction; financing the gap between conventional financing and the amount of money required to make the project happen; or developing a complete building from start to finish.

Step 7: Create an Urban Entertainment District

It all starts, as in any real estate development, with market demand. Understanding which of the many urban entertainment options have the greatest potential for success is a crucial first step. This complexity gives all sorts of people a reason to come downtown, which is particularly important in the early years when the downtown's image may not be positive. The most important benefit of entertainment is to get "feet on the street," especially at night. And just as a crowded restaurant is the best recommendation that it is a good place, crowded sidewalks recommend downtown, a safe environment, and provide an excitement and spectacle that draws people to the area.

Step 8: Develop a Rental Housing Market

The initial urban pioneers looking to live within walking distance of the urban entertainment district growing in downtown will tend to be young, often students and those in their 20s. This age group was probably raised in the suburbs, and probably doesn't have as negative an impression of downtown as their elders. The young also tend to rent, as they don't have the assets, income, or location stability required to buy a home. They are more flexible, tied only to the lease they have signed, probably for a year or less. Once an urban entertainment concentration begins to emerge, this group generally has both the propensity to move downtown, and the ability to make the move quickly.

Rental housing projects can be conversions of existing office, industrial, or institutional buildings or new construction. The renovation of existing buildings offers some of the most exciting new housing options, as they are unlike other rental products in the regional market.

Step 9: Pioneer an Affordability Strategy

Like most things in life, turning around a downtown means good news and bad news. The good news is that if a critical mass of walkable urbanism is created, the rents, sales values, and land values will probably be the highest in the metropolitan area, rewarding those willing to take the risk, build high quality construction, and wait patiently for returns. The bad news is that the values will be some of the highest in the metropolitan area, meaning only the well-to-do can live downtown. To address this issue, an affordability strategy must be developed early-on in the revitalization process.

Step 10: Focus on For-Sale Housing

Following the establishment of urban entertainment and the initial "colonization" of downtown by urban pioneers who rent, for-sale housing can return to downtown. For sale housing appeals to a very different set of households than renters. They are generally older, not as adventuresome, and are prepared and able to invest in the largest asset of their personal net worth, their home.

Having an established for-sale housing market is the ultimate test of whether the downtown has achieved critical mass. Given the size of the for-sale housing market, it is crucial to the success of a downtown turnaround. Bringing middle and upper-middle income housing to downtown will provide the tax base so sorely needed by most cities, and members of these households will demand a level of service that will continue the upward spiral.

Step 11: Develop a Local-Serving Retail Strategy

Once the downtown begins to be repopulated, the demand for local-serving retail will grow. Local-serving retail is a "follower" real estate product, i.e., the housing must be in place before a grocery store will arrive. Fortunately, Bridgewater already has some of this retail in place in the downtown area. While some of these stores will continue to thrive, as a group they are probably only part of the solution to the downtowns' growing local-serving retail demands. The other part of the solution is finding ways to entice national "big box" retailers to integrate into a walkable landscape.

Step 12: Recreate a Strong Office Market

As entertainment, housing, and retail are established downtown, the office market will begin to follow. As upper-middle income for-sale housing is built in downtown, there will gradually be a return of a healthy office market and the employment it houses. Once the bosses, who make the ultimate decision about office location, begin to live downtown, they will decide to bring their office there as well.

This step in the redevelopment process will probably only fill existing, vacant office space in most cities, due to the past overbuilding and the weak demand for office employment in the economy in general. However, it will be a tremendous benefit for city revenues and the employment prospects of other downtown and city residents.

The Canadian Urban Institute: Quick Wins for Canadian Downtowns

In 2012, the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) released a report titled "The value of Investing in Canadian Downtowns." The report examines ten Canadian urban downtowns to assess changes in attitudes, perceptions, functionality and performance over time. The results of this study included the development of a set of "best ideas" or "quick wins" for downtown revitalization based on successful execution observed in Canadian cities and in other cities around the world that have also been highly successful at contributing to downtown revitalization. According to the CUI, "these ideas are all about making better use of what is on the ground and achieve increased vitality without spending a lot of money." The points summarized below are not a set of guidelines or best practice principles, rather they are intended to provide inspiration and spark ideas that could be tailored and applied to meet the needs of any downtown across Canada, including Bridgewater.

Making Use of Underutilized Sites and Spaces. Almost all downtowns have vacant sites and/or surface parking lots. In the long term, these sites offer immense opportunity for redevelopment. Yet in the short term, these vacant sites can be detrimental to downtown density, the pedestrian experience, and the overall impression of the core. Around the world towns and cities are beginning to temporarily transform vacant lots into more humanized spaces that can both revitalize and differentiate the downtown until the market conditions are in place to achieve a major redevelopment. Parking lots can be used for programmed events, such as farmers markets, outdoor cinemas, or for urban farming/community gardens.

Maximizing Use of Downtown Facilities. A mix of uses increases downtown vitality. Yet this concentration of activity can be even further strengthened by encouraging downtown facilities to have multiple uses at all times of the day and night. An example of this is The Atrium in Victoria. This office development includes a large atrium that hosts performances and has late night restaurants around its edges bringing people to the building well beyond traditional working hours. These types of opportunities and partnerships could be more commonly considered to make better use of infrastructure, as well as add colour, interest and activity to the downtown area.

Connecting the Downtown with Natural Features. Vibrant waterfronts, view planes to mountain ranges or natural features and natural corridors are just some of the ways that downtowns are trying to ensure that their communities feel a connection with the natural world. Some downtowns have been highly successful with this. For example Ottawa, Fredericton and London have extensive trail systems radiating outward from the downtown core along their waterfronts, while other downtowns such as Edmonton, Toronto, and Saskatoon have gone to significant effort to connect city dwellers with the waterfront through the creation of new parks and public amenities.

Embracing the Winter. Many downtowns in North America and Europe have embraced winter and are busy, interesting places year-round. Perhaps the most famous example is Copenhagen, where sidewalk cafes remain open throughout the winter due to efficient heating, partial enclosure, free blankets provided by cafe owners, and vibrant street life that is worth sitting out in the cold to watch.

Skating is an accessible and popular winter activity that brings people outdoors. Downtown skating rinks are often iconic landmarks in their cities, like the oval in Halifax, Rockefeller Center in New York City, or Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto. Programming public spaces is also a critical element of any downtown's efforts to draw people out of their homes and cars in the winter. As at all times of the year, having good seating, interesting activities like musicians or buskers, lots of (warm) food and drink, welcoming lighting, and clear sidewalks are essential to making the downtown hospitable.

Building Strong Partnerships. Building great relationships and strong partnerships is easier said than done, but collaboration is critical to achieving an exciting, diverse, and prosperous downtown. Several interesting partnership models have been identified in the downtown case studies, which have helped generate increased investment and vitality. In Downtown Halifax the Strategic Urban Partnership provides a forum for stakeholders to meet and discuss new developments and partnerships opportunities. This forum has been successful at connecting key stakeholders from different sectors and company backgrounds. Partnerships are also important for realizing the full potential of individual redevelopments, and the Woodward's Building in Downtown Vancouver demonstrates a successful partnership between Simon Fraser University, the Goldcorp Centre for the Arts, the City of Vancouver and the wider community. Business improvement organizations (BIDs) can offer municipalities with a strong partner with a high level of commitment to downtown revitalization efforts.

Quality Planning Processes and Community Engagement. Zoning and regulatory tools can also offer municipalities with a strong tool to realize their plans. For example Downtown Edmonton addressed its large supply of parking by creating an innovative bylaw package that limits additional downtown parking from being built. Similar moves have been made by other cities in North America and Australia. These tools also influence the type of use that can be developed on site. The City of Vancouver undertook its Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan and implemented a series of policies to help protect land for commercial uses into the future.

Planning processes can also deal with issues of contention in a community. By following a comprehensive process where everyone can voice their opinion it can help bring together the community. A visionary and engaging process also communicates to both the public and the private sector the community's values, ensuring that future projects reflect the public's will.

Creating Complete Communities. There is a trend in North America for young people, professionals, and older couples to move to the downtown to experience an urban lifestyle, and this holds true even in smaller communities. Municipalities are generally trying to capitalize on this trend and going to great lengths to attract the lucrative young professional demographic. Yet sometimes downtowns may be "getting too much of a good thing". If the downtown does succeed at attracting more residents it is also important that it can attract a wide range of household types from a wide range of backgrounds, age groups and income brackets. The City of Vancouver has made some strides here, pioneering designs that provide 2-3 bedroom units in the lower floors of residential buildings that look out over communal space where children can play. Additionally, high levels of safety and good schools are important to attracting families to life in a downtown core

Reaching the Balance with Heritage. Balancing heritage preservation and new development is a major challenge for many communities. Moreover, a Town or City can quite quickly become polarized around these issues and discussion can rapidly degrade to either "development equals destruction of heritage"; or "protecting heritage equals economic decline". Yet cities can have the best of both worlds and simultaneously achieve heritage protection and economic growth. When Halifax found itself locked in a stalemate over heritage and development, it reversed the situation through an inclusive planning process that aimed to achieve a more positive dialogue with a focus on good design outcomes. This process has delivered design guidelines that have built trust, certainty, contributed to new development and encouraged significant reinvestment in the Downtown's treasured heritage buildings.

Encouraging Alternative Modes of Transportation. Automobiles are inefficient users of land and incompatible, in great numbers, with vibrant, prosperous downtowns. While transit undoubtedly plays a key role in North American culture, there are other less costly options that could be considered to help move people away from private vehicles. The availability of car parking significantly influences car usage. If there is an ample and cheap supply of parking in a downtown, it will be incredibly difficult to encourage people to consider other modes of transportation to access the Downtown. Similarly, the access to active transportation facilities such as trails and bike lanes, and the availability of public transportation will also directly influence the propensity to use alternative forms of transit.

2.4 Existing Land Use

2.3 Planning Context

Several background studies informed the results of the Bridgewater Downtown & Waterfront Master Plan. The topical studies and their relevant issues and recommendations are summarized below:

Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS)

The Town of Bridgewater Municipal Planning Strategy (approved 1997), provides the policy framework by which Bridgewater's Town Council guides and controls development, land use, and other matters of interest to the Council within the terms of the Municipal Government Act. The Municipal Government Act provides Council with the power to make statements of policy with respect to a broad range of activities including future development, land use, public lands, transportation, municipal services, municipal development, coordination of public programs, and any other matter related to the physical, social or economic development of the town.

Most pertinent to this study is the designation of two new zones on the Future Land Use Map of the MPS. The first is the LaHave River Development Agreement Area which was established to recognize the importance of the LaHave River as a natural asset. The second zone identified by the MPS is an Architectural Control Area located on the western border of the Plan Area. The architectural control provides basic requirements that the façade fronting a street must follow pre-1920s style in terms of roof shape, exterior cladding, height and other restrictions. The MPS also states the exclusion of King Street from this Control Area presents a concern. Some of the Town's important commercial heritage buildings are located on King Street and are not held to any form of façade control.

Bridgewater Downtown Revitalization Plan (2012)

In 2012, a group of graduate students from Dalhousie University undertook an in-depth examination of some of the key issues and challenges facing the revitalization of Downtown Bridgewater. The resulting report outlined a plan which attempts to address the interests of the Town garnered from consultation feedback and document review. The Plan includes policy amendments that support access to the River, strengthen the relationship between both sides of the downtown, and create conditions for the downtown as a destination. The authors of the plan propose several designs which include suggestions for streetscape enhancement and focus on key areas for redevelopment, specifically the Bridgewater Mall site and the North and South Parkades located along King Street. A section on economic restructuring is also included, examining opportunities to change the types of uses in the downtown through partnership with organizations and businesses. It should be noted that this plan was an academic exercise, as opposed to a professional plan.

Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (2010)

The Town of Bridgewater's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) was developed to guide future policy planning, municipal operations and community programming while fulfilling the Town's commitment to becoming a more sustainable community. Through a consultation process with residents and local businesses and organizations, several "solution areas" were identified including the following five priorities which will be focused on in the near future:

- The move to efficient renewable energy
- Support healthy affordable local food
- Create transportation alternatives
- Build a green self-supportive local economy
- Educate for sustainability

A downtown master plan was one of the key recommendations of the plan, as an effort to create a more sustainable community. Municipal infrastructure has also been identified as essential to the success of this ICSP and a key area of investment. Particularly important to success of the Downtown & Waterfront Master Plan is the Town's commitment to improving road and storm water infrastructure as outlined in the ICSP.

Council's Community Plan (2010)

The foundation of the Council's Community Plan (CCP) is the "imagine Bridgewater" public visioning process and its resulting Community Action Document. The CCP is a response to the visions of citizens, formalized into strategic priorities, and validated through the input of Town staff. Several priority objectives are listed followed by council's proposed actions. These objectives relate to factors such as infrastructure, public transit, active transportation, accessibility, youth engagement, riverfront revitalization, civic beautification, public engagement, civic events, marketing strategies, economic development, recreation, and safety.

Community Inventory Report (2010)

The Community Inventory Report was produced by the Town of Bridgewater's Planning Department as part of the town's ongoing Planning Review process. The report is intended to serve as a resource for citizens, planners, elected leaders and other stakeholders participating in the Town's Planning Review process. The report identifies a number of issues facing Bridgewater including the following:

Growing population; growing obesity rates; suburban commercial growth and its contribution to the decline of the downtown core; fragmented sprawling development and its contribution to high municipal, social and environmental costs; out-of-date zoning regulations specifically related to industrial lands; housing affordability; poorly sited and disconnected open space; the need to protect mature vegetation and important hydrological features; the impact of climate change, particularly increased erosion along the LaHave River.

The consideration of these issues is essential to the development of the Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan and serves as a baseline for the planning process.

Riverfront Renaissance Concept & Cost Plan (2010)

Bridgewater Development Association (BDA) and its Riverfront Renaissance Action Team developed the Riverfront Renaissance Concept & Cost Plan as a vision and plan for the Riverfront. According to the BDA, the overall project goal is the creation of a destination to attract people, both citizens and visitors, to downtown Bridgewater by utilizing the natural heritage resource of the LaHave River as the catalyst to stimulate economic, recreational and community development opportunities.

The plan outlined a series of projects and action steps designed to reinvigorate the riverfront area. The removal of the south parkade was one of the signature projects, with the associated reallocation of parking in behind Town Hall. Additional projects included the development of a connected Marina, the expansion of the waterfront trail and interpretive system, and the expansion of community green spaces such as King Street Court and Shipyard Landing.

Active Transportation and Connectivity Plan (2008)

The Active Transportation and Connectivity (ATC) Plan is an initiative of the Bridgewater Active Transportation Committee, a partnership between the Town, the Bridgewater Development Association, Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation, South Shore Health, and Public Health Services. Designed to strategically align with and support other Town initiatives, such as the Riverfront Renaissance project, the ATC plan is focused on guiding the long term expansion of the Town's active transportation assets. The plan seeks to achieve this through the promotion and development of physical AT assets, supportive policies, and educational & outreach programs. The ATC also comprises a series of design guidelines that outline the physical standards for various AT facilities, such as on-street bike lanes, multi-use trail, and sidewalk design.

Downtown Parking Study (2008)

The Downtown Parking Study, completed by CBCL Consulting Engineers, was commissioned by the Bridgewater Development Association to assess the current parking situation in downtown Bridgewater by measuring current supply and demand. The study measured the parking supply and demand (at the time of study), analyzed current trends in traffic flow through the downtown core, and identified potential areas for improvement. One key component of the study was an assessment of the feasibility of removing either one or both of the existing waterfront parkades. The study concluded that based on the occupancy rates, the North parkade could accommodate the majority of vehicles from the South parkade, while other existing parking lots in within the downtown could provide space for the remaining vehicles.

One major consideration of this study is that the proposed accommodation of parking need leaves little room for expanded demand. Additionally, much of the parking capacity would be relocated to Pleasant Street or other adjacent streets in the downtown, which might not be an appropriate solution, given the grade changes in the downtown, and the demand of the King Street merchants. The study proposes a number of specific measures to accommodate parking demand in the future with estimates on associated costs. Another important aspect of this study was the examination of the pros and cons of converting two-way streets to one-way streets in the Downtown. The study concludes that the implementation of one-way streets is not recommended and that such a transition would be counterproductive to the area's revitalization.

Heritage Property Act (1990)

The Heritage Property Act, passed in 1980, and amended in 1990, identifies and protects Bridgewater's built heritage. Buildings, structures, and districts of historic, architectural cultural value are registered by authority of the Town Council, on the recommendation of the Heritage Advisory Committee. To substantially alter or demolish a municipally registered property, owners must obtain the approval of the Municipal Council.

The Bridgewater Downtown Development Strategy (1989)

The 1989 Bridgewater Downtown Development Strategy was conceived as a guide to downtown investment and initiative. The Strategy suggests that the Central Business District of Bridgewater become a unique retail and commercial environment whose distinctive identity and image should be focused upon the LaHave River. The purpose of the BDDS is to provide guidance and direction to ongoing investments in the downtown with the following objectives:

i. Establish the essence of a unique and distinctive physical and promotional identity and image.

ii. Stabilize the traditional downtown in response to Mall expansion and make adjustments and corrections for change in market circumstances.

iii. Integrate and reconcile the east and west bank commercial communities into a larger economic and physical order.

iv. Establish an organizational setting wherein skills, resources, attitudes, techniques, and relationships are efficiently directed to shared goals on an ongoing basis.

v. Create the environment and climate which invites private initiative, entrepreneurship, and innovation, then gives it direction and focus.

Within the Strategy, several key recommendations were made for physical improvements. These include the following initiatives which were to be realized in conjunction with a comprehensive visual identity program and retail market strategy:

- Bridge Improvements - New pedestrian orientation to encourage direct foot-traffic between the Mall and The West Bank community, aesthetic enhancements, orientation/information display features
- Improvements to the West Bank Riverfront Park
- Development of a continuous walkway system along both banks of the river from the new bridge to the South parkade, with provision for ongoing extensions
- Retrofitting the South parkade to include a Riverfront Marketplace
- Recognizing interior block courtyards as a highly underutilized resource
- Introducing hospitality centres at appropriate intervals throughout the West Bank business district
- Block improvements focused on canopies and awnings, festive lighting, and signage, as well as street improvements, façade adjustments
- Improvements to the East Bank: improve the pedestrian link between the mall and King Street commercial area; improve shoreline access and views to King St., mall improvements including a riverside entrance, improved riverside façade, planting

Downtown Development Plan (1981)

The Bridgewater Downtown Development Plan resulted from a joint initiative by the Bridgewater Business Community, the Town of Bridgewater and the Province of Nova Scotia. Under the direction of the Town Centre Development Corporation and the Business Improvement District Committee, the study was part of the Federal Government's Department of Development Main Street Program to integrate immediate streetscape improvements with longer term development goals.

The Development Plan illustrates the potential of the downtown in both the short and long term. It formulates goals for the downtown area; presents an overall strategy of how to attain these goals; identifies major opportunities; establishes design guidelines for organizing future growth; establishes appropriate images for the area; and resolves traffic/parking and pedestrian questions.

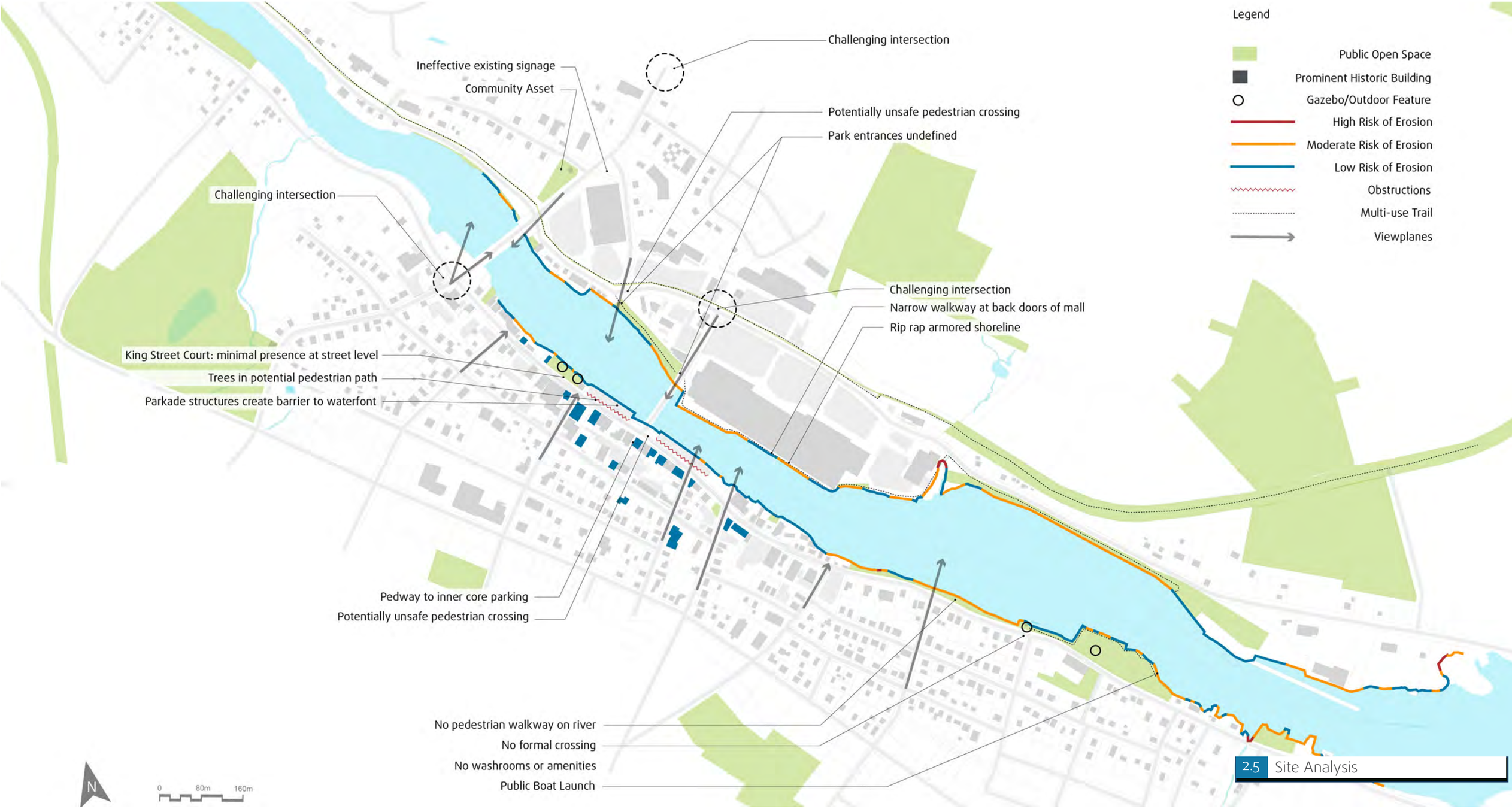
Following an assessment of existing conditions, detailed recommendations and design guidelines are made with regards to streetscape enhancement, signage, riverfront improvements, and infill development. A series of core developments are also proposed and include a farmer's market, marina, waterfront amphitheater, and town centre square.

The Planning Review (Ongoing)

Land use planning within the Town of Bridgewater is guided by three key documents, the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS), the Land Use Bylaw (LUB), and the Subdivision Bylaw (SUB). Each of these policy documents outlines various principles, standards, and guidelines for the use and development of land within the Town. As the town grows and changes, priorities for development also change and evolve. As such, reviewing the planning documents is an important step that must occur on a regular basis, to ensure that the Town's guiding policies are reflective of the vision of its citizens.

The Planning Review was officially launched in October 2010, and is following an iterative, six-step process overseen by the Planning Review Committee (PRAC), with frequent public consultation. It is anticipated the Planning Review will wrap up in 2013, and will produce a refined set of planning policies and documents. The Planning Review is an opportune time to revisit specific policies and principles regarding the downtown and waterfront area, setting a new direction for development within the core area of Bridgewater.

the Planning Review



2.5 Site Analysis

2.4 Site Assessment

Natural and Cultural History of the LaHave River

The LaHave River is a near 90 kilometre long river running from its source in Annapolis County through Bridgewater to the South Shore and the Atlantic Ocean. Its watershed encompasses 1,700 square kilometers of area and drops roughly 150m from its source to its outfall. Much of the watershed is forested, about 98% naturalized, with only about 2% of the watershed being urbanized. The LaHave River provides wonderful habitation for trout, salmon, perch, and numerous smaller fish species. Mergansers, kingfishers, river otters, beavers, moles, and shrews are also common along the river and its tributaries.

The river has been historically populated for thousands of years, from early Mi'kmaq populations, through the Colonial Era, and up to the present. The French were early settlers of the area, clearing land, building houses, and importing livestock as early as the 1640s. Subsequent British settlements helped to influence the architecture and land use patterns as well. During the 1800s the river became a major lumbering and shipbuilding centre, giving rise to numerous communities up and down its length.

Bridgewater thrived and grew around the LaHave, using it to power lumber mills, process the vast stands of hemlock and pine, and transport goods between the coast and the interior. Upstream, fertile farmlands relied upon the river, and downstream numerous sea faring industries sprang up. As technology changed and the service industry grew, manufacturing seeped further out of the downtown core and the industries which had at one time brought such vitality to the downtown area vanished leaving gaps in the infrastructure and refuse pollutants.

Over the course of time the river banks which played such a significant role in the historical economy of Bridgewater were hidden and obscured from view by utilitarian land use planning and structures. The fact that the majority of downtown's waterfront is dominated by parking lots or back-of-buildings is a missed opportunity. Riverfronts can be far better used as public space, restaurants, retail, or residential developments with higher waterfront property values.

The LaHave River ecology is determined primarily by the velocity of the current, which can vary along its length. Velocity is dependent upon elevation changes, depth, subsurface elements, distance from banks, water levels, and a multitude of other factors. Generally, water ecologies can be classified as either slow-moving or fast-moving. In slow-moving sections of the river ecological communities have a high percentage of micro-organisms and plants, and are large contributors to organic compounds and base food chain elements. The productivity of these zones varies with light and temperature and is therefore subject to seasonal changes. In fast-moving sections, there is very little primary production from plants or micro-organisms due to turbulence. Consumer organisms dominate, feeding off of disturbed detritus from slow-moving areas, or feeding off of other consumers organisms.

However, as mentioned earlier, the historic alterations of the shoreline have disrupted the interdependent food production cycle of the slow-moving and fast-moving areas. The channelization of the river to reduce flooding, and create hard engineered walls for easy manufacturing access, has led to a disrupted ecosystem. This gives credence to the idea of creating a wetland park near the Empire movie theatres. Not only will wetlands improve the quality of storm water run-off before entering the LaHave, they will also provide habitat for the plants and simple organisms which contribute to the success of larger fish species.

It must also be noted that the LaHave River has suffered from water quality issues. Upstream runoff pollutants from farmlands, pollutants from motorized craft, and localized point source pollution have all given the river some negative press in recent years. A long term water quality monitoring program completed in 2010 found above acceptable levels of phosphorus, suspended solids, and fecal coliform in the Bridgewater area. Anything that can be done to address the actual issue of water quality, as well as the perceived issue of water quality, will help foster a river oriented culture necessary to reinvigorating the downtown.

Flood Risk & Control

The location and nature of the LaHave River means it is subject to both upstream and downstream flooding pressure. As the impacts of climate change become more and more pronounced, it will be important to consider how projected flood modelling will impact the evolution of Bridgewater's downtown. A major study undertaken by the Applied Geomatics Research Group (2012) developed a predictive model and associated mapping for the downtown & waterfront area. The results of this map are depicted in figure 2.6. As indicated, there are three properties of significance:

- **Bridgewater mall property.** Even without a storm surge, parts of the mall are predicted to be flooded in major precipitation events. In the event of major precipitation with two meter storm surge, portions of the parking lot up to LaHave Street could be under water.
- **LaHave Street before Davison Drive**. Predictions indicate that during minor precipitation events with a two meter storm surge most of the properties will be greatly affected.
- **West side of the river bound by King, Dufferin, and Maple Streets**. Again, in minor precipitation events with a two meter storm surge, large portions of these properties could be under water.

Flood risk mitigation is an exercise in individual community values. Some communities prefer to dedicate large tracts of flood-potential lands to parks or open spaces. Other communities, especially major metropolitan areas, adopt varies strategies to mitigate risk. Examples of such approaches include limiting or restricting residential development on the ground floor, requiring future buildings to have raised finished floor elevations, prohibiting sleeping quarters in lower elevations, and mandating the construction of flood control facilities or seawalls.

For Bridgewater, a balanced approach that permits responsible development may be the best approach. Working with private landowners to reduce or eliminate residential development below forecast high water marks, acquiring land for parks and open space, and integrating flood risk consideration into planning policy are all strategies that support the responsible continued evolution of Bridgewater's waterfront and downtown areas.

2.6 Flood Projections

Transportation and Circulation

The 2008 Parking study completed for the downtown core included a traffic analysis of key intersections for the years 2008 and a future estimate for 2017. The figure on page 30 provides a summary of daily traffic volumes throughout the study area based on NSTIR counts (including approximate truck percentages). The figure also shows key intersections and movements that were identified as having level of service challenges both in the 2008 existing scenario and the 2017 future scenario.

Traffic volumes within the study area are not considered to be particularly high and can generally be accommodated within the existing road and intersection network with a few minor exceptions at the locations identified. It should be noted that this does not suggest that all intersections are operating efficiently and necessarily with a high level safety performance. Many movements through the key commercial areas and through areas such as the Old Bridge Street crossing can be relatively inefficient with slow vehicle speeds and busy driver environments. Given the nature of the Town and the close proximity of trips, such inefficiencies are not of significant concern. That said, areas that exhibit concern with respect to safety performance for vehicles or vulnerable road users (cyclists, pedestrians, etc.) should be reviewed in greater detail and specific projects identified.

Should a new bridge be constructed, traffic circulation patterns in many areas of the downtown will remain similar though a couple of key improvements are expected. The most significant improvements would be realized on Old Bridge Street and the associated intersections at LaHave Street and King Street. The LaHave Street intersection has previously been identified as having a number of operational challenges primarily related to the highly commercial nature of the area combined with higher volumes on LaHave Street and the connection to the Old Bridge Street crossing. The King Street intersection has traditionally been a challenging intersection due to the limited space and sight distances available at the intersection, combined with pedestrian volume, significant turn volume, narrow cross sections and the general downtown core environment. Much of the congestion frequently associated with this area would be mitigated should traffic be redistributed to a new bridge location with new infrastructure and modern intersections design.

The transfer of some traffic to a new bridge location would serve to distribute traffic more evenly through the commercial areas of the downtown core, particularly for business currently located between the existing Old Bridge Street and Maple Street. Presently, volumes drop significantly to the east of Dufferin Street and it would be expected that such a traffic decrease would continue to occur east of a new bridge.

2.7 Current Parking Distribution

2.8 Current Traffic Counts

Retail & Tourism

As the Regional Service Centre for the South Shore, the catchment for Bridgewater's retail includes a general area that spans from Tantallon to the east and Shelburne to the South, and the Valley to the North. Its central location means the Bridgewater area is a centre for education, health services, retail trade, and other services. Specifically, Bridgewater's market includes:

- Region of the Municipality of Queens County;
- Most of Lunenburg (some of this is lost/shared by Tantallon, routinely drawing customers from the head of Saint Margaret's Bay, Hubbards, Bayswater, etc.);
- The traffic captured form Shelburne and Yarmouth (i.e., drawing from the 2-way volume between Yarmouth and Halifax); and
- Visitor flows - Nova Scotian resident travellers (in-province travelers) and non-Nova Scotian travellers (non-resident travelers).

Market Population

The adjacent table summarizes the Census of population by municipality within the Counties of Lunenburg and Queens; the areas that are expected to be most important to the development planned for the Historic Downtown from the perspective of local market.

2.9 Population, Selected Municipalities South Shore Region

Municipality	2001 MU Pop.	2006 MU Pop.	2011 MU Pop.	01 to 06 % Change	01 to 11 % Change
Lunenburg County					
Municipality of Chester (eastern section of county)	10,781	10,741	10,599	-0.4%	-1.7%
Municipality of Lunenburg (western section of county)	25,570	25,164	25,118	-1.6%	-1.8%
Town of Bridgewater	7,621	7,944	8,241	4.2%	8.1%
Town of Lunenburg	2,568	2,317	2,313	-9.8%	-9.9%
Town of Mahone Bay	991	904	943	-8.8%	-4.8%
Total Lunenburg County	47,531	47,150	47,313	-0.8%	-0.5%
Queens County					
Region of Queens Municipality	11,694	11,177	10,917	-4.4%	-6.6%
Total Queens County	11,694	11,177	10,917	-4.4%	-6.6%
Shelburne County					
Municipality of Barrington (western section of county)	7,648	7,331	6,994	-4.1%	-8.6%
Municipality of Shelburne (eastern section of county)	4,925	4,828	4,408	-2.0%	-10.5%
Town of Lockeport	701	646	588	-7.8%	-16.1%
Town of Shelburne	2,013	1,879	1,686	-6.7%	-16.2%
Total Shelburne County	15,287	15,544	14,496	1.7%	-5.2%
Yarmouth County					
Municipality of Argyle (southern section of county)	8,688	8,656	8,252	-0.4%	-5.0%
Municipality of Yarmouth (northern section of county)	10,476	10,304	10,105	-1.6%	-3.5%
Town of Yarmouth	7,561	7,162	6,761	-5.3%	-10.6%
Total Yarmouth County	26,725	26,277	25,275	-1.7%	-5.4%
TOTAL	101,237	100,148	98,001	-1.1%	-3.2%

Source: http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

It is noteworthy that from among all of these municipalities, the Town of Bridgewater is the only region that saw population growth between 2001 and 2006 (4.2% growth) and again between 2001 and 2011 (8.1% growth). Over the past 10 or more years a trend has emerged where a rural population is migrating toward centres of greater populations/economic activity/opportunity/more services. This has included the economic centre of one's particular region/county (e.g., people who lived in a rural area of their county choose to move to the town) but more often in Nova Scotia the trend is from less urban areas toward the Halifax Regional Municipality or out of province.

The total core market population from which Bridgewater could expect to draw is approximately 60,000. As well, there are roughly 40,000 residents are within the Halifax Regional Municipality (pop 390,090, 2011 Census) near to what could be considered HRM's 103 corridor to the South Shore.1 The Lunenburg/Queens Regional Development Authority (LQRDA) notes that Bridgewater has access to a market population of over 300,000. The LQRDA indicates this is comprised of Halifax, Lunenburg County, and Queens County. This estimate would increase further if one included portions of Annapolis, Kings, and Hants Counties, all of which are within 50 km of the Town of Bridgewater. Given the core market population in Lunenburg and Queens (59,000 – 2011 Census), these two counties represent less than 1/5th of the potential market population that has been referenced, suggesting that a significant portion of the market comes from deep within HRM.

Household Formation

Given the type of developments that are possible along King Street, it is important to consider trends in household formation, particularly as these relate to and influence the type of housing that may be required over time. In past census periods the category 'couples with children' would have appeared as the largest category of household formation in the municipalities along the South Shore. In some cases this category would have been the majority category (see the selected regions shown in the adjacent table). However, as a result of aging populations, declining birth rates, little in-migration, trends in family arrangements, and the current affordability/historically lower cost of homes and the influence of higher real incomes, there has been a trend toward more 'living alone' and 'living without children' household formations.

1 Lucasville Road; Peggy's Cove/Sambro; Timberlea/Lakeside/Beechville; Head of St. Margarets/Hubbards; Tantallon/French Village (the sum of 2011 Census Tracks: 0132.02, 0141.00, 0142.00, 0143.00, 0143.01, and 0143.02).

2.10 Household Formations, Selected Municipalities, South Shore Region

	Bridgewater - Town	Lunenburg - Town	Mahone Bay - Town	Chester - Municipal district	Lunenburg - Municipal district	Lunenburg	Queens	Nova Scotia - Province
Private Household Formation	2,350	640	265	3,425	8,255	14,960	3,495	270,065
% of Married couples Without children at home	39%	44%	49%	45%	45%	44%	45%	36%
% of Married couples With children at home	26%	26%	30%	25%	29%	28%	27%	32%
% of Common-law couples Without children at home	9%	9%	8%	10%	9%	9%	8%	9%
% of Common-law couples With children at home	6%	5%	4%	7%	6%	6%	7%	6%
% of lone-parent families	19%	15%	11%	14%	12%	13%	13%	17%
Average number of children at home per census family	0.80	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.90
Average number of persons per census family	2.60	2.60	2.50	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.70

Source: http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

As shown, the 32% of private household formation in the Town of Bridgewater includes children (married couples and common-law couples), as does the Municipal District of Chester. Only the Town of Lunenburg has a lower share (31%) and all regions in the study area are off the provincial average (38%) It is likely that this trend in household formation will continue for the foreseeable future and that there will be increasing demand housing options for 'couples without children' and 'living alone' housing options. Combined with the aging population, this is expected to drive demand for lower maintenance housing options (such as condominium development or apartment units) as well as push home renovations in so far as barrier free design options can increase the length of time that the aging population can remain in their homes. This trend needs to be included within the context of the vision for King Street.

Non-Resident Market

As noted the Town Bridgewater is a service centre for the area's population. Likewise, it is a service centre for visitors and seasonal residents that visit the areas each year. The 2010 Visitor Exit Survey provides a basis for a general profile of visitor characteristics and preferences. In general:

- The average travel party to Nova Scotia consisted of 2.1 people,
- Close to one-half of visitor parties included a member aged 55 years or older with a further one-third including someone between 45 and 54 years of age,
- The most common trip purpose was to visit friends or relatives,
- For the vast majority of visitors in 2010, this was not the first time they had been to Nova Scotia,
- 40% of visitors participated in outdoor activities while in Nova Scotia, the most common including coastal sightseeing, hiking, and beach exploring.

In terms of the South Shore:

- Just over 25% of visitors to Nova Scotia stopped along South Shore (for at least 30 minutes or stayed overnight),
- South Shore visitors were more likely to be from Ontario or Western Canada relative to other regions,
- More than 40% of South Shore visitors travelled as a couple, while 25% travelled as a family and 20% travelled solo,
- The average length of stay among visitors who visited South Shore during their trip was 7.8 nights,
- Average total trip expenditure was $1,671, higher than the provincial average of 1,052
- Approximately 50% of visitors to South Shore indicated the main reason for travel was travel for pleasure, and
- Just over 40% South Shore visitors reported they stayed at a hotel,

As well:

- 7% of all travellers to NS stopped or stayed in Bridgewater,
- 5% stopped, but did not stay overnight,
- 2% stayed at least one night, and
- The average number of nights stayed was 6.3

Bridgewater's average capture rate was 24% in 2010 and the town stands out as a hotspot for same-day trips, a popular overnight destination, and the gateway for travellers to the Halifax area though this region of Nova Scotia. Increasingly, travellers to Nova Scotia have higher than average income, are interested in participatory and experiential based activities, seek to learn something about the area and its culture, and at the conclusion of an active day of their vacation which may include up to 5 major activities, they want to enjoy a good quality and value meal and retire to high-quality accommodations. The potential of King Street to become a culturally-focused visitor destination fits well with the current and trending demands of visitors to Nova Scotia.

Market Linkages

The area is linked to the western region of Nova Scotia through:

- Highway 14 (Chester to Windsor via the Windsor Road),
- Highway 12 (Chester Basin to Kentville)
- Highway 10 (Bridgewater to Middleton),
- Highway 8 (Liverpool to Clementsport/Annapolis Royal),

Highway 103 and #3 are the main routes linking the coastal communities along the South Shore, from Yarmouth to HRM.

High-Level Assessment of Major Retail Areas

According to the Lunenburg Queens Regional Development Agency, there is a concentration of retail trade activity in the Town of Bridgewater, which has per capita retail sales level of over three times the provincial average ($44,447 per capita for Bridgewater in 2011, compared to $13,732 for Nova Scotia). Projected retail sales for the Town are in the vicinity of $400 million for 2013, and $962 million for the entire county). Within the market area remain pockets of distinctive retail activity that is unique in appeal to travelers to the area. In particular, the boutique-style gift, craft, and artisan shops throughout Mahone Bay, Lunenburg, and Chester continue to attract clientele from outside the local market, albeit on a seasonal basis.

The Town of Bridgewater has three major retail trade areas within the town limits.

- Bridgewater Plaza (Dominion Street)
- Bridgewater Mall and Eastside Plaza (LaHave Street)
- The Historic Downtown (King Street)

Bridgewater's Industrial park also includes consumer retailers as well as industrial retailers/ suppliers (Logan Road). North Street (from approximately Victoria Road to Exit 12) is also an area of consumer retail: an area dominated by automobile dealerships, but also including food, accommodations, clothing, and other goods and service providers.

In close proximity to the Town is the retail and commercial development at Exit 12. This 'big-box' format development is within the Municipal District of Lunenburg and features high-way visibility from the 103 as well as relatively lower tax rates in comparison with the Town of Bridgewater.

Characteristics of Bridgewater's Retail Areas

The retail development at Exit 12 and the robustness of activity along LaHave Street solidify the area's position as the economic centre of the South Shore. Since its launch in 2005, the Bridgewater Smart Centre had been expected to adversely impact retail within the Town. While the Bridgewater Mall/Eastside Plaza and the High Street Mall/Plaza appear to be 'healthy' and have maintained tenant levels, the Historic Downtown appear to be less active.

Still, in contrast to other retail hubs in the area, the site at Exit 12 has captured the lion's share of retail development and expansion since about 2008, attracting large tenants to site. The concept for Exit 12 was developed by the Municipal District of Lunenburg with the land eventually sold and developed by SmartCentres Bridgewater. The site includes a 348,000 square foot shopping centre on 31.8 acres at. Commercial retail tenants include Canadian Tire, Boston Pizza, EasyHome, EB Games, Swiss Chalet, Wal-Mart, and Staples, among others, with a future phase two planned (no timelines have been confirmed).

The development near Exit 12 has enhanced the area's appeal to residents of Queens and Lunenburg counties as well as bolstering the region's competitive position relative to retail trade alternatives in Yarmouth and in Halifax. The pilgrimage to 'metro' has been curtailed by the diversity of retail options that are now within the local area and did not exist five or ten years ago. The target market for Exit 12 is larger-format retail, with complimentary amenities such as food services. The target market for the High Street Mall/Plaza includes discount markets, anchored with No Frills and Giant Tiger, and Pharmasave, as well as complimentary food services. The LaHave Street area represents the largest concentration of retail in the region, including the Atlantic Superstore, Sobeys, Studio 7 Theatres, the Home Hardware, Shoppers Drugmart, as well as a number of restaurants, banks, and other retailers and service providers.

While the development of this one kilometre stretch of consumer retail has probably been the most significant contributor to the demise of the historic downtown, the fact that it is also within walking distance (within 600 m of the start of Old Bridge Road) of the historic downtown creates a unique point of leverage for the historic downtown's revival. Effectively, the Town's new commercial district is adjacent the Town's historic business district which creates some interesting potential to leverage the old with the new.

Role of the Historic Downtown

Many of those consulted with for this study spoke about the Town of Bridgewater as a 'blue-collar' town. Certainly the area is well known for large industrial employers like Michelin within the Town, and in close proximity, employers such as National Sea, Composites Atlantic, Louisiana-Pacific Canada Ltd, G N Plastics Company Limited, etc. The forestry sector and fishing sectors (harvesting as well as processing) are also major employers in Lunenburg County.

County-wide, Lunenburg does indeed have a higher percentage of establishments focused on primary industries, as well as construction and manufacturing relative to provincial averages. However, Lunenburg County also has significantly more business establishments in the arts, entertainment and recreation, accommodation and food services, and other services industry groups when compared to provincial averages. While the 'blue-collar' label may apply, the region could also legitimately distinguish itself through arts and culture related sectors.

The makeup of the commercial / retail zones within the market area also offers opportunity for the Historic Downtown to both distinguish itself from the large footprint retail zones and as well as compliment the retail mall-style offerings along LaHave Street. Allowing LaHave Street its place as the region's mall, King Street could become more focused on developing an up-scale, boutique-style, lively, walkable downtown, featuring providers of niche goods and services. It should include features that allow people the opportunity to work, live, and recreate in the downtown core. In that context, the Historic Downtown could be developed as the cultural centre of the Town.

Specific efforts at tenant attraction and development projects throughout the historic downtown should be targeted based on the results of a retail/commercial matching strategy, but the elements could include the following:

- A condo development for more downtown residential options – this would have appeal to segments of the residential real estate market who are interested in retirement living, as well as younger urbanites who are seeking their own home but without the associated burdens of owning a detached property. The draw and appeal of the historic downtown would include the lively street-level shops and entertainment options, upper level offices and places to work, and condominium or townhouse dwelling options.
- New development would be limited to heights that are in keeping with the town's history, but also in recognition of the economics of development and the need to have a critical mass of mixed uses. Buildings could be two to three levels at the street front, and terraced to higher levels moving away from the street, taking advantage of the natural change in elevation.
- Up-scale/boutique-style shops – this does not necessarily mean 'high-cost' shops as much as it means focusing on the proliferation of street-level cafes and restaurants that are appealing to both visitors and local residents alike. The type of food services would aim at services not currently available – Parrsboro provides a good analogue: visitors and residents have the option of a night of theatre at Ships Company Theatre followed by a 5 star chef-prepared meal at very reasonable costs, and the option of a night or more stay at a good quality B&B.
- Establish a Theatre /Performance Venue – this would host touring music and live performances, as well as provide the venue for the development of locally based performing arts sector participants.
- Accommodations – created on King Street or within the immediate vicinity, and offering small "inn" or "B&B" spa-style accommodations.
- Themed Artisan's and Crafter's Gallery – this would feature local artists as well as offer exhibits representing artists throughout NS on regional basis – rotate weekly, for example, so that visitors to the area can purchase local crafts as well as crafts and works of art through Nova Scotia. The gallery would be augmented with an online presence that would be linked to the entire BIA in the study area.

2.11 Osprey Village Retail

2.12 Historic King Street

2.13 Bridgewater's Historic Architecture

Built Form & Architecture

Complimentary to its age, the architectural examples which can be found in Bridgewater are quite diverse. The town has a long and storied history and since its founding, a number of architectural styles have been constructed. However, in 1899 a great fire destroyed most of downtown and much of that early architecture was lost. This effectively reset the architectural clock back to 1900. The downtown was quickly rebuilt in a style contemporary with the era. As such, much of King Street's architecture today falls into a few simple styles.

Bridgewater's downtown has a pleasant, compact, historical character with an attractive mix of parks, parking, and pedestrian areas, along with retail, residential, and civic uses. While the architecture runs the gamut from colonial revival to more modern facades, it generally leans towards early 20th Century merchant architecture. With a few notable exceptions, on both ends of the aesthetic scale, the downtown is generally pleasing, harmonious, and displays an architectural continuity arising from the town's 19th Century beginnings. Street lamps, on-street parking, and renovated building facades have done much to conserve the human-scale of the downtown.

In general, the rhythm and scale of the buildings along King Street is nicely articulated. Changes in façade treatment, a diversity of heights, changes in roof pitch, and the space between buildings, all contribute to a downtown with character and interest. With few exceptions, the downtown provides, or could provide with minor alterations, the intimate appeal of traditional historic Nova Scotia town. Unsurprisingly given it's traditional history, the downtown architecture has an eclectic nature resulting from countless tear-downs, rebuilds, restorations, and upgrades both successful and less so, from an aesthetic standpoint.

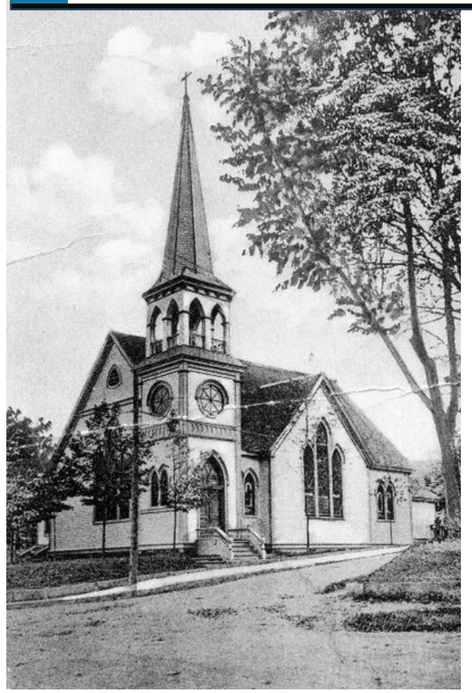
Bridgewater's historic architecture consists of a number of traditional styles, with an abundance of natural materials such as wood and brick. A great number of historic buildings still stand in Bridgewater though, sadly, an even larger number have already been lost, torn down, or destroyed by fire. Over thirty historically recognized buildings in the Bridgewater area no longer stand, and in the downtown area there are only a dozen heritage homes and civic buildings recognized by the Bridgewater Historical Society. Many of these buildings are in decline, while others are still active participants in the downtown experience.

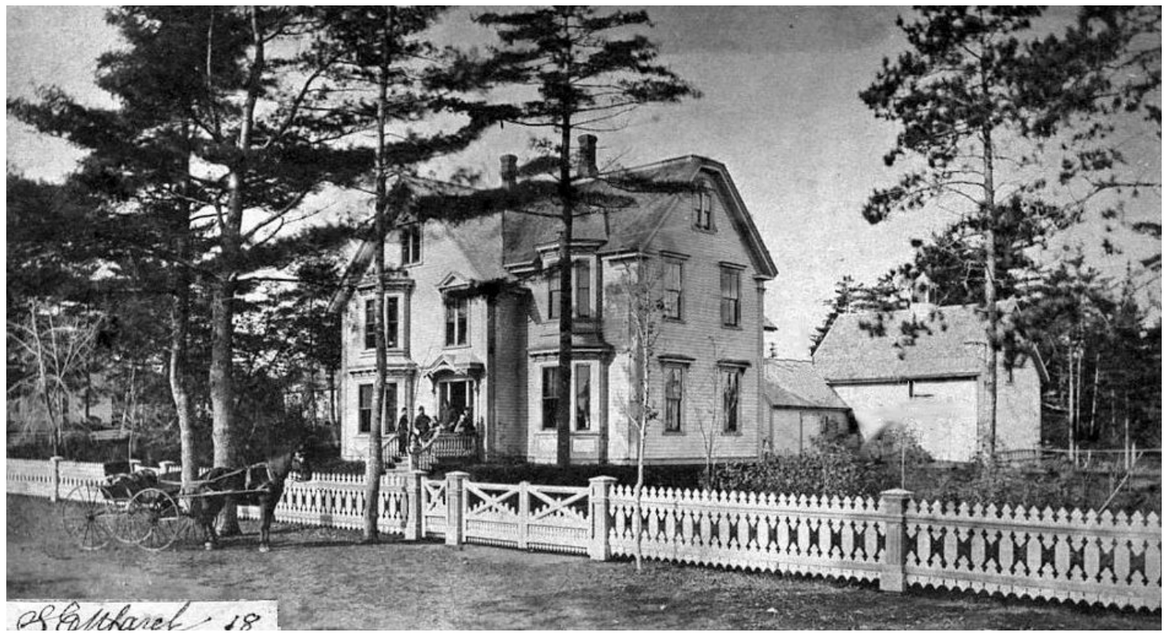
While the downtown is dominated by what can be described as "Maritime Vernacular," the residential areas also host interesting examples of Colonial, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, Romanesque, and Second Empire, as well as a few buildings constructed in the Greek Revival, and Neo-Classical styles which came in and out of fashion over the last hundred years. These styles each have their own set of geometries, proportions, and fenestrations, and add a unique charm to the Town.

- Maritime Vernacular (1830s – 1900) has precedents in the Colonial Style era and relies heavily upon natural stone or brick for base structure, and local woods for interior timbers, walls, interiors, and exteriors. The exterior is unadorned with minimal trim, sports a shingle or clapboard siding, and is usually 1 ½ stories in height, with a modest number of plain dormer windows.
- Colonial Style (1700-1900) is a richer, more detailed, version of the Maritime Vernacular. Construction materials and patterns are very similar, but feature more refined details such as casement style windows, steeper roofs, richer ornamentation, and often large central hearths and tall chimneys.
- Gothic Revival (1850 – 1870) emphasizes the steeply pitched roof and the vertical line. Asymmetry is common, with most structures being 2 ½ stories in height, the roofline dominated by gabled dormer windows. Points and arches over windows and doors are highly emphasized, as are steeply pitched rooflines. The exteriors are shake, clapboard, or shingle, with an often ornate exterior of 'gingerbread' style fenestration.
- Queen Anne Revival (1885 – 1900) are asymmetrical houses often including an off-centered tower structure with a high pitched roof, and wrap around verandas. Steeply pitched roofs with gabled dormers, prominent chimneys, and a heavy use of oriel windows are all hallmarks of the style.
- Romanesque Revival (1880 – 1900) This style of building is mostly reserved for public and civic structures as the initial construction costs are much higher due to a heavy use of masonry and brick. The geometries are heavy, with wide arched windows and doorways, ornate brick and stone detailing, asymmetry of floor plan, and the liberal use of towers, circular windows, peaked gables, arches, and other old-world detailing.
- Second Empire (1865 – 1880) draws heavily from French influences and sports the iconic mansard roofline. Asymmetry is not uncommon, but most buildings constructed in this style are symmetrical with a central tower, and heavily gabled wings with jutting bays on either end. Copper or iron decorations are common.
- Greek Revival (1830 – 1860) revives the forms of Greek antiquity with an emphasis on balance and proportion, symmetry, straight lines, central doors, and overall simple geometries. Antiquity is further represented through the use of classically detailed pediments, columns, pilasters, transoms, etc.
- Neo-Classical (1810 – 1830) is best summed up as Greek Revival with Baroque touches. Proportions are balanced, symmetry is the norm, roof pitches are low, all in accord with Greek Revival. However, additional articulation of ornate filigree or statuary is glazed over the classical base.

These styles are all listed as examples and inspirations to draw upon when seeking to design and build new structures in the downtown area that are in harmony with Bridgewater's current aesthetic direction. The downtown's current style is a modernist montage, arrived at over countless decades of construction, infill, and restorations, all done with modern materials and construction methods. This style dominates the downtown and can appear as either harmonious or incongruous, depending upon context.

2.14 Bridgewater's Historic Architecture





While it is tempting to insist that the architectural style of future developments to be dominated by a select few prestigious buildings or historical styles, this is not the best approach to developing an architecturally rich downtown. Future buildings should be well designed, in a modern architectural style with design elements that compliment and enhance existing heritage structures. Attempting to replicate desired heritage styles does not lend well to creating a sense of authenticity that is essential in a vibrant downtown.

It is recommended that a new façade program be in harmony with the existing historic structures, and that new construction draw heavily from existing buildings. Thoughtful signage, window dressings, façade articulation, and street design, can restore the historic character of King Street and provide the catalyst for future economic growth. It can be expensive to maintain existing historic structures. There are definite financial difficulties associated with older buildings, upkeep and retrofitting. But in the long term, the benefit to the community is paid off in character and interest, and this in turn generates visitation and vitality.

2.5 Real Estate & Market Assessment

This section provides an overview of the dynamics associated with the real estate market in Bridgewater. The intent is not to provide an exhaustive market analysis, but rather to gain some insight into the specific market dynamics of Bridgewater, to identify steps that can be taken to encourage and support downtown and waterfront development.

The following paragraphs provide a summary of the development potential of the residential, office, tourism, and retail sectors.

Residential Housing

Housing is the predominant form of building construction in the Bridgewater area. New construction permit information indicates that new housing construction is trending towards more multi-family (apartment) buildings and detached and semi-detached bungalows; both housing types that appeal to an older clientele. During the past decade there have been a number of newer apartment buildings constructed, mostly on the east side of the River. These newer apartments have larger floor plans and more modern conveniences than the older apartment buildings they are supplanting on the western side of town. Due to their new construction, they command a rent premium over the older units, many of which are in need of upgrades and repairs.

In many parts of Bridgewater it is still possible to purchase quality older housing stock in the $130,000 to $160,000 price range, close to downtown with a nice yard. Manufactured housing in the LaHave Heights development are available for sale in the $85,000 to $110,000 price range, and even though this also requires a monthly homeowner payment, is still very affordable given today's low interest rates.

In short, there is a large amount of modestly priced housing in the Bridgewater area that can be purchased at rates below its replacement cost. Most demand for new housing can likely be attributable to residents either moving into a unit that more closely fits their changing lifestyle (e.g., single level living) or leaving a unit that has a fair amount of functional obsolescence (e.g., room sizes are too small, etc.).

In terms of developing a strategy to revitalize downtown (and the Bridgewater Waterfront), the single most important thing the Town can do is promote the creation of medium to high density housing within walking distance of downtown. This goal fits the demographic trends being seen in Bridgewater (e.g., an aging population that is looking for low maintenance forms of housing) and should be a cornerstone of the proposed waterfront revitalization strategy.

Retail Development

For most of the 20th Century, King Street was the location for major retailers in the Bridgewater area; this is similar to most communities in Canada. The advent of the modern shopping mall in the 1960's and 1970's radically changed the retailing dynamics in most communities, and while the construction of the Bridgewater Mall was a blow to King Street, it could have been much worse. Most communities saw these new malls built out by a major highway so that the new facility could draw customers from the wider region. However, this didn't occur in Bridgewater and because the Bridgewater Mall (and East Side Plaza) were built downtown, the flow of traffic continued to flow downtown.

The development of Osprey Village at Exit 12 in 2005 did create the type of change that other communities witnessed in the 1960's and 70's. With the opening of Wal-Mart and the relocation of Canadian Tire, this location is now an established retail destination, and as the edges around this development are filled in, mid-tier retailers on the downtown will be under to pressure to move.

Even the old shopping mall isn't safe. The South Shore Mall was closed and the Bridgewater Plaza has lost several key tenants and will likely be redeveloped at some point in the future. With the closure of Zellers the Bridgewater Mall is in the process of reinventing itself and the preliminary indication is that the long term development vision includes infill with a combination of new tenants, possible residential housing and an expanded food court facing the LaHave River.

As with all retail, the only thing that is consistent is change. Retail trends are constantly changing, and there are now signs that even the big box stores will come under pressure as more and more people order goods and services on-line.

Over the near term, demand for King Street retail space is likely to continue to be weak in Bridgewater as more shopping moves to large format and on-line retailers. The issue is not the lack of purchasing power within the Bridgewater economy to support retail in this area, but rather the need to re-organize how King Street works so that it is best able to support new and existing shops. This includes the need for more residential housing (i.e., more customers), better organized parking (i.e., keep parking lots in close proximity set aside for shoppers, not employees), the creation of events and promotions to draw customers to the area, and the coordination of shopping hours so that the whole district is open for business when customers want to shop.

Office Space

As the data presented earlier show, the Bridgewater economy is not dominated by employers that need large amounts of office space. As such, there is a fairly limited selection of office space in town. The three largest and most modern office buildings in town include: the Aberdeen Commercial Centre (15,000 SF), the South Shore Medical Arts Centre (29,000 SF) or the Dawson Centre (30,000 SF redeveloped from the former hospital building). There have also been a number of new "single purpose" office buildings constructed in the Industrial Park, typically for government tenants who have stringent parking and building specifications. Other than that, most small businesses tend to occupy houses or small buildings in commercial zones on major streets such as Dufferin, King, Aberdeen or North Street. These small scale options provide the business owner with a way to build equity in the property during his/her working years, which can be liquidated at retirement.

Given the relatively small demand for office space and the modest rental rates being asked for existing office space in the King Street area, we don't see much demand for new multi-tenant office buildings, although we do think that it will be viable to lease and convert existing spaces downtown into office space as demand warrants it. There may be the potential for a small new multi-tenant office building in the near future, but this would be predicated on the developer being able to bring together several larger tenants with long term lease commitments.

Hotel Development

Bridgewater is a natural location for the hospitality industry, as the community is the service centre for a strong regional economy, and is also located near several exits to Highway 103 (the main travel route between Yarmouth and Halifax). Established hotels in the Bridgewater area include two facilities on North Street: the Comfort Inn (62 rooms built in the 1980's); and the Days Inn (70 rooms with swimming pool, restaurant and meeting facilities). There are several other older facilities in town (Bridgewater Hotel, Argyll Inn, etc.); however these hotels do not compete for the mainstream markets that would affect the viability of a hotel in downtown.

Until the recent construction of the Best Western Hotel at Exit 12, there hadn't been a new hotel built in Bridgewater in close to 20 years. Given the growth of the local economy and the pent up demand for a new hotel, the construction of a new Best Western at Highway 103 made sense. This new hotel was built as a 63 unit facility with enough meeting room space to accommodate 300 people. According to the developer, there is sufficient land to build an additional 20 to 40 rooms, and based on our observations, it is only a matter of time before this hotel is expanded.

Prior to the construction of the Best Western hotel, several other brands had explored the feasibility of building in Bridgewater at the Exit 12 location, including PacRim Hospitality (Super8 Motels) and Carlson (Country Inn and Suites). Of particular interest to Carlson was the proposed construction of a new recreational facility, which they thought would stimulate additional room night demand. Unfortunately, the site selected in the Bridgewater Industrial Park will not be seen as a desirable location for any major hotelier as it is fairly isolated from major roads and other amenities (e.g., restaurants, etc.).

On balance, we see little potential for a hotel on the Bridgewater Waterfront, as this location doesn't provide enough focus for any one market segment. Business hotels like highway exposure, while the recreation and tourism market will prefer locations with more ambience (e.g., Mahone Bay, Lunenburg, etc.). This dynamic can change over time, but for the interim planning period we are not projecting a hotel as being viable for this study area.

Summary of Development Options

Based on the market analysis presented earlier in this section, and the review of best practices research, the following preliminary conclusions are offered:

Focus on Multi-family Housing. We would expect that most of the new development pressure in the downtown and along the waterfront will be driven by residential housing. The Town should review its planning documents to ensure that the right incentives are in place to ensure that King and LaHave Street get more than their fair share of this type of development.

Main Street Zoning Should Be Flexible to Allow a Wide Range of Uses. Given the limited demand for space in the main street area, the Town should ensure that zoning for these buildings is as flexible as possible. While it would be desirable to see residential housing on the ground floor, it would be possible to allow it at the rear of the building if the sidewalk façade has at least a veneer (20 feet of depth) of commercial space. Upper floors should allow any use possible (e.g., residential, office, hospitality, etc.) with the exception of the usual obnoxious uses (e.g., adult book stores, etc.).

Waterfront Land is Expensive to Develop; Only Select Uses Can Pay the Premium Needed to Develop This Land. One of the challenges associated with waterfront development is that uneducated landowners often feel that their waterfront land deserves a premium price relative to property on the landward side of the street. While in some cases this may be true, more often than not, waterfront land is worth less due to the additional costs associated with its development. For example, most land along the waterfront has been filled in over time, thus requiring expensive foundation piling or retaining walls. Coastal erosion causes additional expense during the construction process, and many times underground parking is not feasible due to concerns over flooding.

Keep as Many Demand Generators Downtown as Possible. Downtown and the waterfront needs to be active throughout the day and during the weekend. This means the district should have a balance of daytime traffic generators, and residential housing – which creates traffic in the evening and on weekends. Daytime generators include: the banks (Bank of Montreal and RBC), Town Hall, etc. Downtown lost the post office to North Street and will soon lose the library as it moves to the new recreational facility. The Town should work hard to keep as many of these demand generators downtown as possible, and should be encouraged to get other employment centres (e.g., LQRDA, etc.) downtown whenever possible.

Re-orient the Bridgewater Mall Towards the Waterfront. The closure of Zellers and the impending closure of Nothin' Fancy Furniture will create change at the Bridgewater Mall. The Town should encourage the owner of this mall to re-orient as much space back towards the waterfront as possible (specifically the Zellers space adjacent to the bridge) and build as much new residential housing as possible. This might be accomplished through density bonusing provisions that favour residential housing over other forms of development, and by relaxing parking standards for the proposed development.

Parking is Power. While the parkades are certainly not an asset to the waterfront, they do provide a large amount of parking that helps to support retailers on King Street. While we would encourage the Town to remove the south parkade, before this is done a strategy is needed to provide parking for existing monthly users, who should not be allowed to park in the remaining north parkade.

The parking plan might include some combination of the following:

- Rationalizing the parking area between Town Hall and King Street as another source of parking for visiting shoppers. Key to this strategy would be a physical redevelopment of this area (e.g., better utilization of the space, new signage, converting Phoenix street into a two way street to make access easier, etc.), and identifying alternative parking for many town employees
- Finding alternative long term parking for employees who work downtown. This would include main street retailers and town staff who do not need their cars throughout the day (i.e., some parking would be retained for town employees that use their vehicles frequently).

Consider Limited Infill of the Waterfront to Create Strategic Development Sites. In speaking with developers, one of the challenges associated with the redevelopment of the waterfront is the general lack of land. It also noted that many development sites within the town are underlain by acid generating slate. Given the right circumstances, one strategy for the town might be to create a water lot that has the appropriate environmental permits that allow limited placement of acid slate to create land for new waterfront amenities. As developers would pay to place the acid slate in this water lot, the resulting land would have a relatively low cost (e.g., dumping fees would pay for the placement of a clean rock cap that prevents oxygen from getting to the acid slate, thus eliminating the potential for environmental damage to the ecosystem). This approach has been used in Halifax Harbour with great success. They key to using this method is to ensure that the public benefits created by enhanced access to the waterfront overwhelm any concern about limited infilling of the river (e.g., that the new lands provide broad public access to the waterfront, not just private lands for new condominiums).

Develop a Marina Adjacent to the Existing South Parkade. Bridgewater should work with federal and provincial funding agencies to create a riverfront marina that mimics the success of the one developed in New Glasgow, NS. This is linear marina that provides key services to the boating community and allows boaters to visit the town and tie up while they patronize restaurants and other local amenities.

Greatly Reduce or Eliminate Parking Requirements Downtown. Town planning policy relevant to the downtown need to recognize that this is a unique development environment. Most buildings were built almost a century ago when the car was not as dominate as it is today. Given the existing settlement pattern, it can be challenging for building owners to meet traditional parking requirements.

Make Sure The Town Building Inspector is Conversant in Alternative Building Code Compliance. From the rain forests of British Columbia to the permafrost of the Iqaluit, building construction varies dramatically throughout Canada. What makes perfect sense in one climate may not be the best solution in another. The challenge in the Maritimes is our large concentration of heritage buildings, which are sometimes hard, if not impossible to bring up to the National Building Code. This becomes particularly apparent when a building goes through a "change of use" (i.e., it is converted from office to residential), which triggers the need for the building to become fully compliant with the NBC. Although recent changes provide some exceptions for older buildings, the challenges remain, and in cost sensitive markets such as Bridgewater, the requirements can make the difference between project viability and failure.

In order to minimize the impact of building code compliance on the redevelopment potential of older buildings in downtown, the Town building inspector should become conversant in alternative building code compliance. This might include attendance at a national seminar on this topic, and identifying local engineers that specialize in this type of work (e.g., Lawrence White, P.Eng. in Halifax).

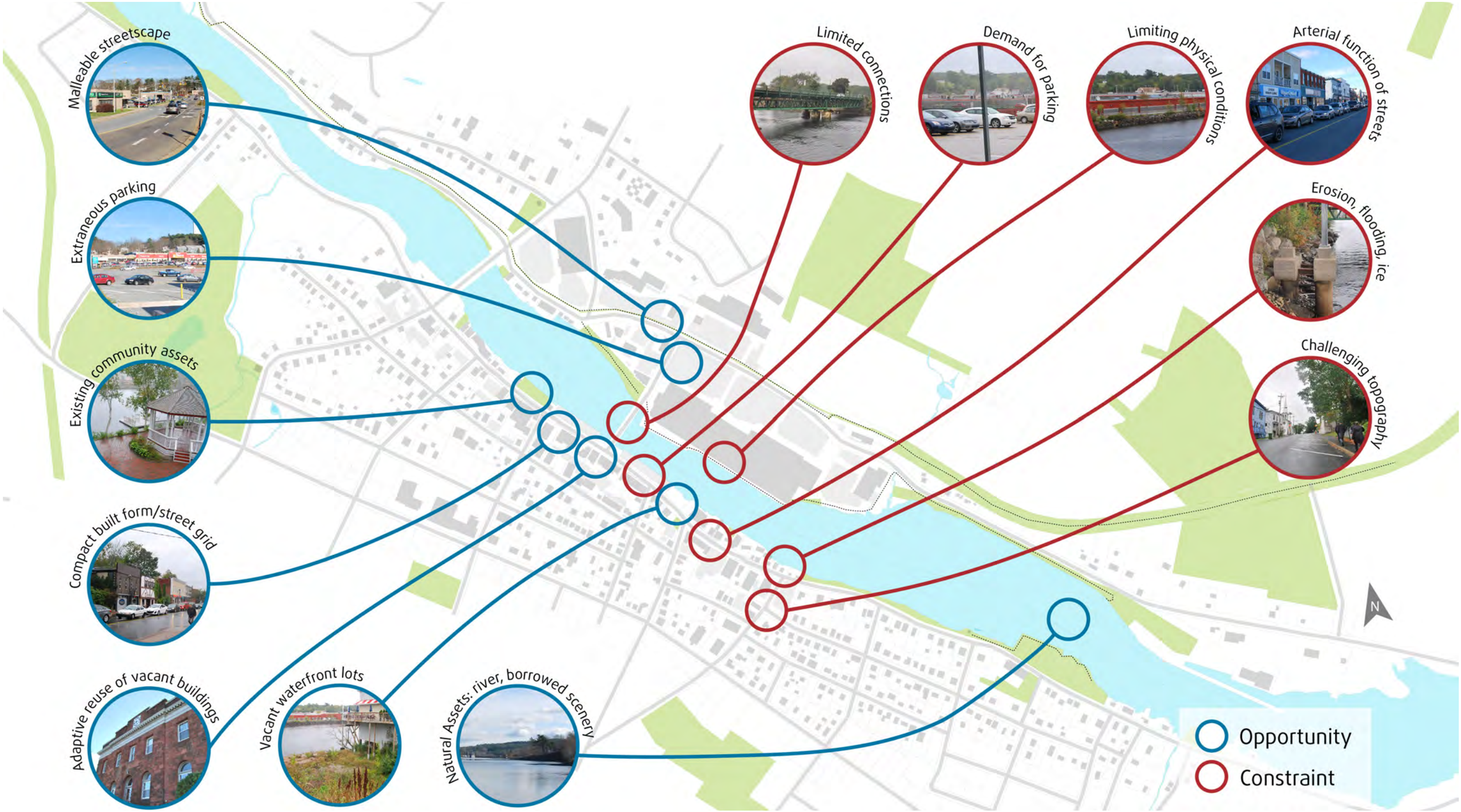
Create a Business Improvement District with a focus and mandate as a Promotional Group. The BID's operational role should include:

- » increasing the perceived and actual safety of downtown;
- » making the place cleaner;
- » creating festivals and events to encourage suburbanites to come downtown, and;
- » improving downtown's image.

The Bridgewater Development Association should focus on downtown, not Glen Allan Heights. The suburbs will always take care of themselves, as this is the type of lower risk development that investors prefer. While there may have been a need at one time to assemble land an entice developers to the area around the Allan Heights residential neighbourhood, that area is now established and doesn't require the same level of support by the Bridgewater Development Association.

Research for this study indicates that most developers stay away from downtown due to the lack of available land. This is the same argument that the Federal Government made when it relocated the new post office to North Street in the early 1990s. Future opportunities should not be missed. One way to do this would be to have the BDA (or a similar entity) identify development parcels downtown that can be assembled, rezoned, and sold off to the private sector for development. We understand that the Town has previously made offers to acquire existing buildings or parcels of land along the waterfront. These plans should be re-visited with a focus on acquiring land, removing the buildings, up-zoning the density to make it attractive to developers, and then tendering the property for redevelopment. This is the approach that the Waterfront Development Corporation uses on the Halifax Waterfront and it has been a self financing proposition for almost 20 years.

2.15 Opportunities & Constraints Map



2.6 Opportunities & Constraints

The opportunities and constraints analysis is a broad look at some of the considerations that will influence the potential growth and direction of the downtown. The study outlines potential obstacles to growth and the positive attributes that can contribute to the successful implementation of the master plan and its components.

Constraints:

Walkability: Although distances are minimal (the study area is approximately one square kilometer), an overwhelming number of residents drive to the downtown and park directly at their destination. Changing the established mindset on the walkability of the Bridgewater core will be an important step in moving this plan forward.

Parking and Parkades: The King Street parkades are generally considered unattractive and their function an inefficient use of prime downtown and waterfront land. Nonetheless, there is concern about the impact of their removal. For many King Street merchants, the parkades are seen as essential to the survival of their businesses. The removal of one or both parking structures comes with the challenge of meeting existing parking demand in other locations and satisfying downtown business owners.

The Old Bridge. Pedestrian safety on the bridge is a fundamental concern for many Bridgewater citizens, as is the bridge's role within a future active transportation network. Although the bridge has technically surpassed its projected lifespan there is still much uncertainty about the future of this crossing.

Downtown Arterial Streets. The arterial function of King and LaHave Streets presents a challenge in creating a pedestrian friendly environment in the downtown. Transport truck traffic produces excessive noise and vibration while pedestrian safety can be compromised by high speeds of drivers attempting to pass through town in quick time. High traffic volumes coupled with the weight of transport vehicles have a significant impact on road infrastructure and result in the need for frequent and costly maintenance.

Topography. The steep slopes on the west side of the river present a constraint to parking and accessibility. Designating parking to the upper streets is much less viable with an aging population while icy slopes can be an issue for all demographics in the winter months. Topography is also a challenge in the effective management of stormwater and preventing pollutants from entering the river system.

Regional Competition. With popular destinations such as Mahone Bay and Lunenburg so close by, Bridgewater is often viewed as merely a service centre and a place in which one passes through on the way to more interesting locations. The Town is sustained by its role as a commercial destination; however this has rendered an image of strip malls, chain retailers, and fast food, and an experience that is extremely ubiquitous.

The River: Climate Change, Flooding, Erosion, and Ice. The LaHave River presents a number of challenges to the development of public open space on the waterfront and the integrity of downtown assets. At present, there is no comprehensive erosion control program and shoreline protection to date has been largely piecemeal. Bridgewater is faced with recurrent flooding which will only worsen with projected rising sea levels and other effects of climate change such as increased frequency of major storm events. The prospect of reintroducing natural shoreline and employing environmentally sustainable and ecologically-sensitive methods for erosion control is challenged by the need for robust interventions to combat flooding and damaging ice floes. Any development on the shoreline must find an appropriate balance between respect for the ecology of the river, protecting existing human-made assets, and providing waterfront access for public enjoyment.

Connectivity and Continuity of Open Space. The biggest constraint to open space development and creating a contiguous open space network is the presence of private property along the river and in other strategic areas of the downtown.

Opportunities

West Side Framework. There is enormous potential for Downtown Bridgewater to be a pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood. A walkable framework already exists on the West side of the river comprised of a compact street grid and lot framework, a high density of buildings, small building footprints, uniform setbacks from the road and a diversity of uses that are well distributed along its length. Downtown also benefits from a high population density (605.8 people per square kilometer) with many of its residents living within the core or in very close proximity.

River activity and Recreation. The LaHave River is Bridgewater's greatest asset. There is tremendous potential for increased activity on the water and on the shores which could bring vibrancy and sense of community back to the downtown.

Extensive Parking Lots. An abundance of parking exists on the East side of the river with many lots regularly underutilized. Strategies to encourage downtown shoppers to cross the river would help meet the parking demand on King Street, as well as promoting public health and other environmental benefits.

Parkades. The removal of either one or both of the parkades affords an interesting opportunity for shoreline restoration and streetscape renewal, as well as restoring the visual connection of the community to the waterfront.

The Old Bridge. Regardless of whether the bridge will maintained or replaced, significant improvements can be made to its performance and aesthetics. In addition to providing an essential connection between the two sides of the downtown, the old bridge has the opportunity to become a showcase piece and a destination in itself with interesting and exciting experiences. Adjacent under-utilized spaces at the bridge approaches can be redesigned with greater amenity for pedestrians and more effective wayfinding devices for drivers.

Vacant Land and Buildings. The presence of vacant sites and buildings offers a number of opportunities, including infill development, retrofit of existing structures to serve new functions, and the provision of much desired open space on existing waterfront lots. The library building is one example of an opportunity site which is well located in the centre of downtown and capable of adapting to new functions.

Sustainability and Healthy Lifestyles. Environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and community health have emerged as priorities for many Bridgewater residents. The Town has a vision for a sustainable future that includes affordable energy, transportation, housing, food, and the responsible use of natural resources. The downtown can provide the framework to support a number of sustainable initiatives including active transportation and affordable housing.

Programming. Building upon the success of existing community events, there is opportunity to expand the programming of spaces and festivals in the downtown core. The revitalization of Bridgewater's downtown will benefit from fact that citizens would like to see the addition of cultural venues and activities within the Town's core.

Momentum for Change. Throughout the public consultation process, hundreds of Bridgewater residents voiced their opinions of the downtown and the overwhelming majority expressed their commitment and desire for change, and their love and support of the Community.

Heritage. Bridgewater has a rich industrial and European cultural heritage. There is opportunity to celebrate this history and interpret it in innovative ways throughout the downtown. There is also a chance for the stories of early settlers and the original Mi'kmaq inhabitants to play a larger role in defining the Town's identity.

Natural Landscape. The LaHave River has tremendous opportunity for recreational activity and passive enjoyment. The river provides downtown visitors with spectacular views, vistas of the surrounding natural landscape and physical connections to the local ecosystem. There is opportunity to strengthen these connections and create new options for experiencing the area's plant species and wildlife.