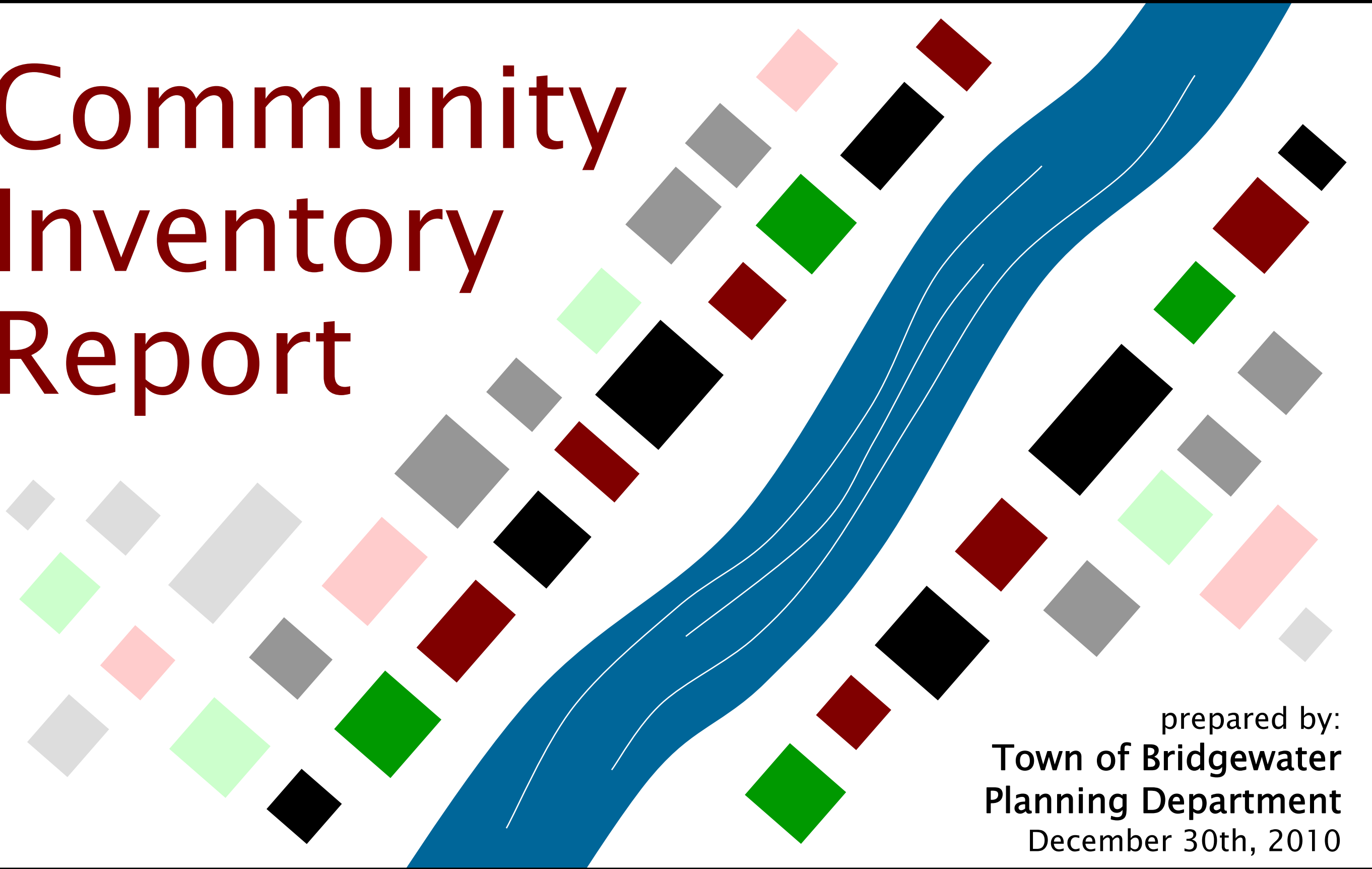


# Community Inventory Report



prepared by:  
**Town of Bridgewater**  
**Planning Department**  
December 30th, 2010





The **Community Inventory Report** is a product of the Town of Bridgewater’s ongoing Planning Review Process. The intent of this report is to provide an overview of some key topic areas that will be further examined by the Planning Advisory Review Committee (PRAC), the Planning Department, various stakeholders, and Town Council prior to the development of new planning documents. For more information on the Planning Review, please visit our website: [www.bridgewater.ca/planningreview](http://www.bridgewater.ca/planningreview)

This report was prepared by the following individuals:

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# Introduction

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# Introduction

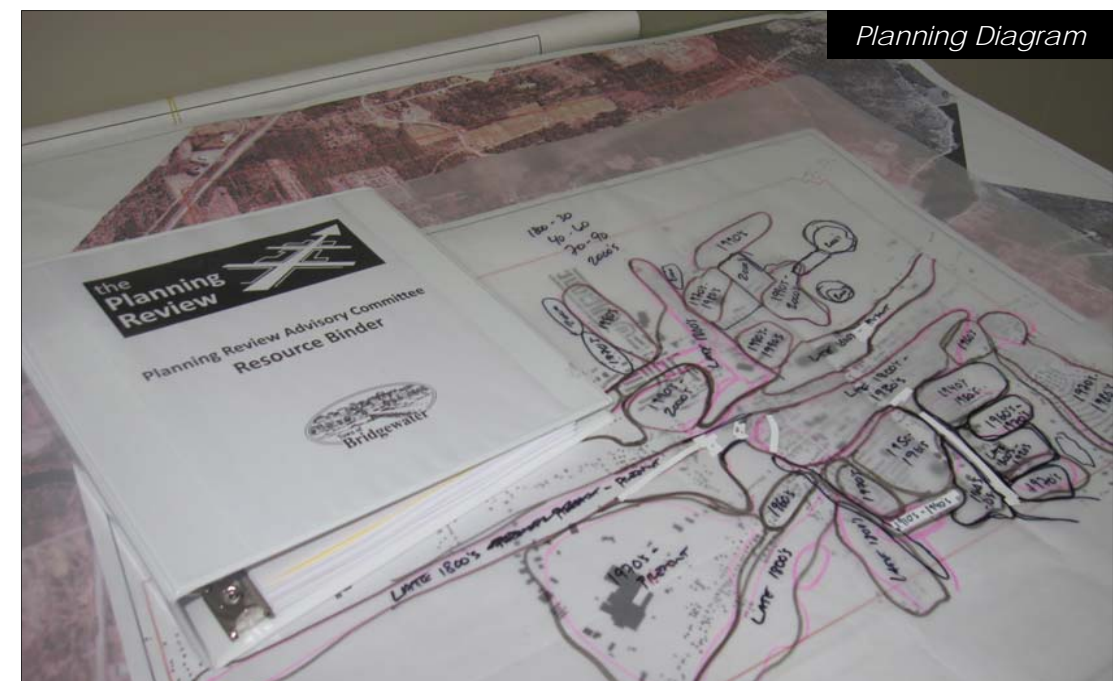
## Bridgewater's Planning Review

Bridgewater - a regional town settled on the historic LaHave River - has been a place where people have come to live, work, shop, and play for more than 150 years. Over this time, the community has experienced its share of challenges, but has ultimately grown and evolved into a vibrant centre and destination in southwestern Nova Scotia.

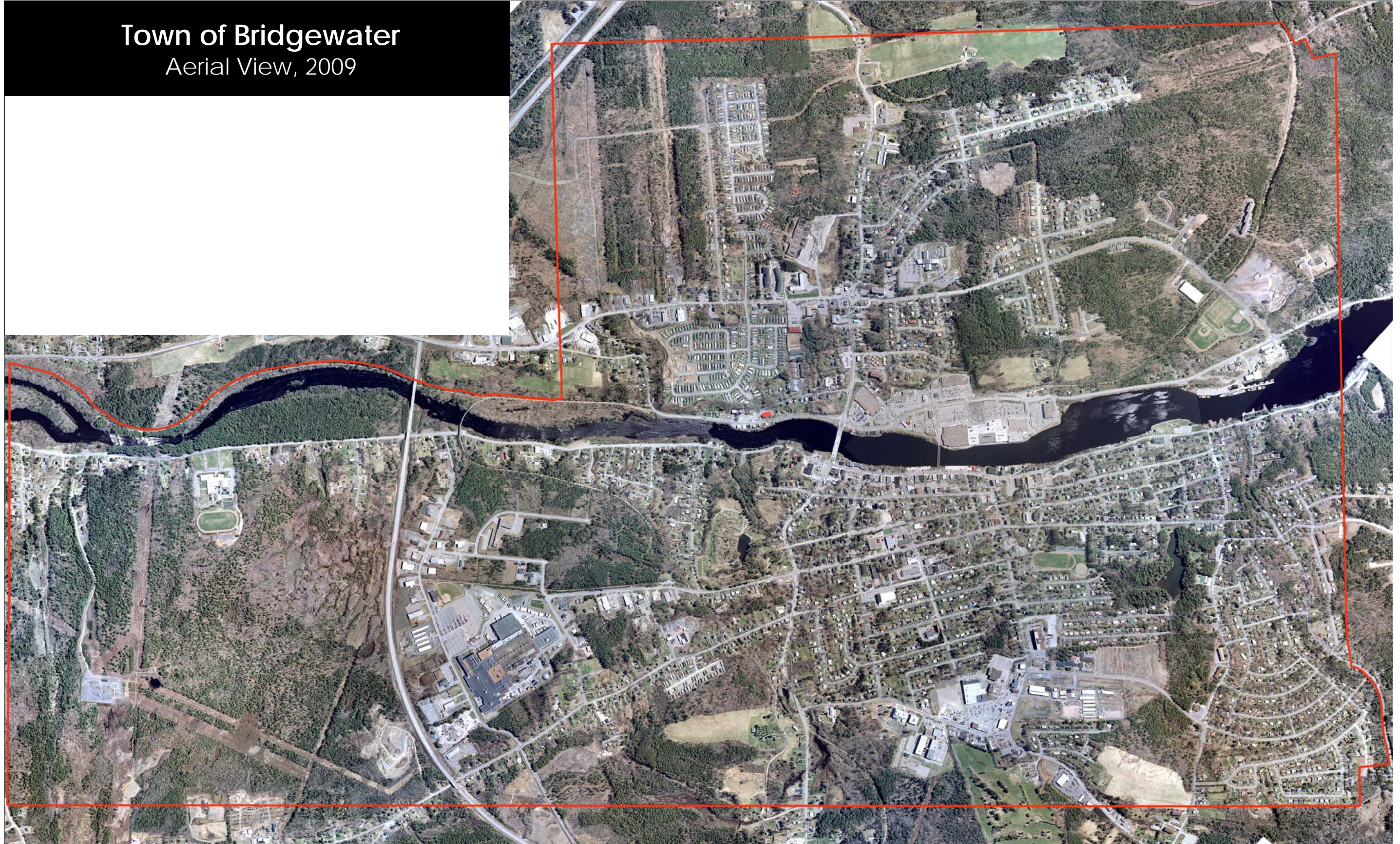
As we move into the 21st century, Bridgewater's long-term well-being and sustainability will depend on good, proactive planning. This requires a thorough examination of various municipal planning issues, including challenges and opportunities regarding housing, commerce, employment, recreation, transportation, and our environment – all of which are the building blocks of our community. The Planning Review provides us with an opportunity to update our local planning policies and regulations while carefully considering current and emerging global, regional and local challenges. This process is an opportunity for us to be more proactive in understanding, and ultimately shaping, our community so that it thrives and adapts to people's needs for shelter, livelihood, commerce, recreation and social order for years to come.

This Community Inventory Report is intended to serve as an information resource for citizens, planners, elected leaders and other stakeholders participating in the Town's Planning Review process. Specifically, the Report helps to raise awareness and understanding of Bridgewater's socio-demographic status, development trends, housing information, environmental issues, transportation matters, climate change, and more. This important background information will be referred to throughout the Review in an effort to inform discussion and assist with short and long term planning decisions.

Over the course of the Planning Review process, many of the issues discussed in this Report will be examined in greater detail by staff, the Planning Review Advisory Committee (PRAC), and Town Council, as policies and regulations in Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS), Land Use By-Law (LUB) and Subdivision By-Law are carefully updated.



**Town of Bridgewater**  
Aerial View, 2009

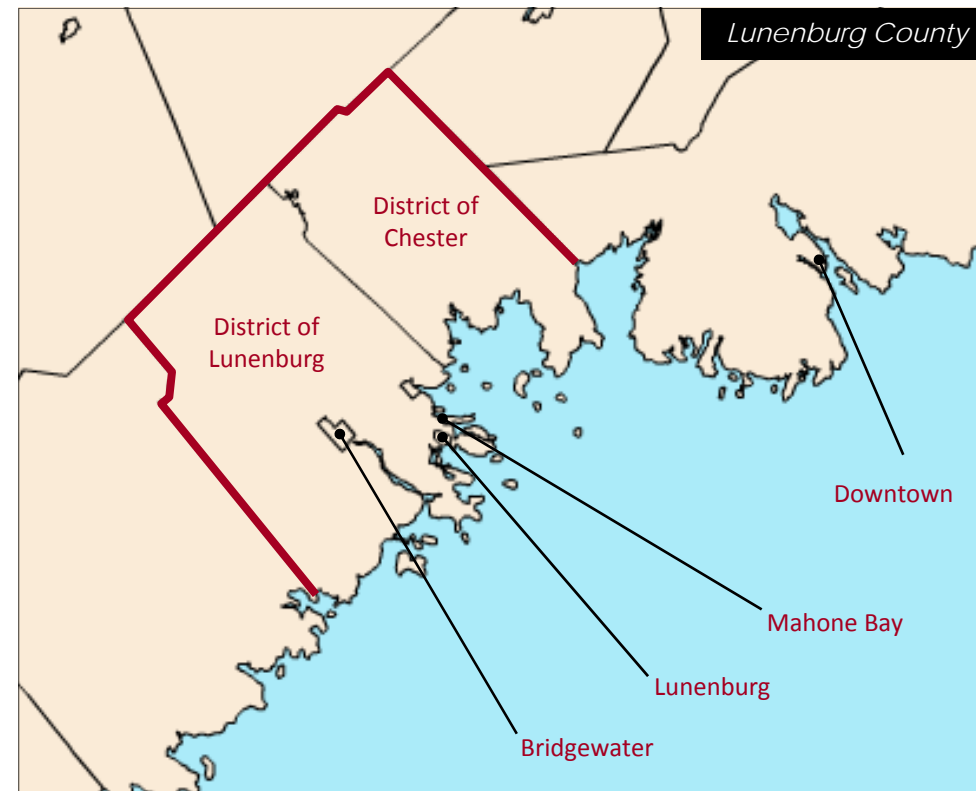


# Regional Context

## History

Lunenburg County was established in 1759 when Nova Scotia was officially divided into five counties. The County was later subdivided when Queens County was created in 1762. Lunenburg County includes the towns of Bridgewater, Lunenburg, and Mahone Bay, along with the municipal districts of Chester and Lunenburg.

The region we now know as Lunenburg County started to develop in 1753. It was this year that the British began settling along the South Shore of Nova Scotia, on land that was once occupied by First Nations groups and the Acadians. The historic Town of Lunenburg was the first developed community in the County. The town was established by foreign Protestants of German, French, and Swiss descent, who were recruited by the British to settle the area. Several early residents, who relied heavily on agriculture, relocated to Mahone Bay, and the east bank of the LaHave River to secure rich farm land (Chambers et al, 2004).



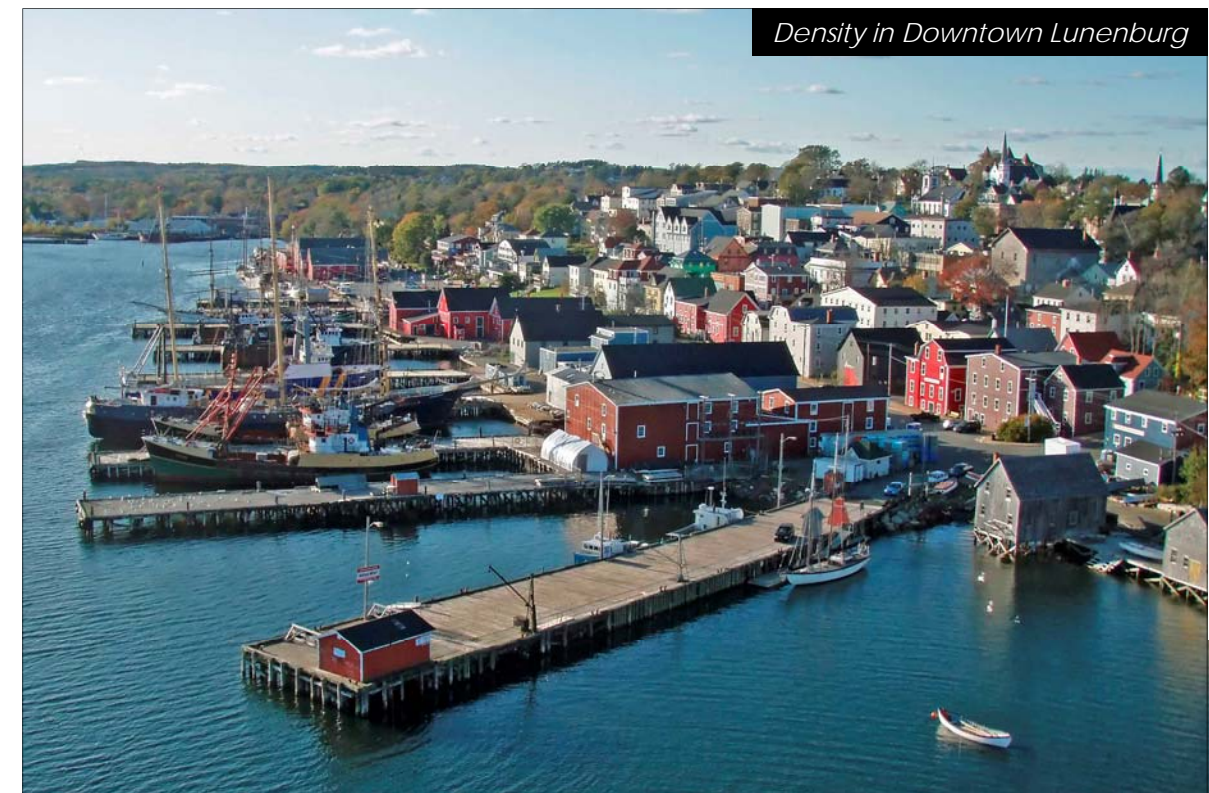
Gradually, residents turned to ship building and fishing, instead of agriculture, to secure their livelihood. This diversification of local industry became an important factor in attracting and retaining residents. New immigrants flocked to the County to capitalize on its supply of lumber and fish, resulting in a steady growth

throughout the following decades. Most established areas grew, including Bridgewater, which was the largest growth centre during the 19th and 20th centuries. These new industries also had an effect on overall development patterns, as more people chose to live in new communities along the coast or further north (Chambers et al, 2004).

The success of ship building and fishing has decreased since the mid 20th century due to many factors. The advent of rail altered traditional shipping routes and reduced the reliance on boats. In more recent years, the global fishing industry has experienced diminishing returns. Still, more than 200 years later, this connection to the water is a defining feature of Lunenburg County and its new economic producer, tourism.

## Development Trends

Lunenburg County is characterized by rural development patterns. Most areas of the county are sparsely populated and unplanned outside of the major town centres. This has resulted in a “ribbon” development pattern where buildings are situated along winding roads and major highways.



Lunenburg County has a very low population density of only 12.1 people per km<sup>2</sup> (Statistics Canada, 2010). Overall population density would plummet without the presence of the Town of Bridgewater (584 per km<sup>2</sup>) and the Town of Lunenburg (578 people per km<sup>2</sup>) who have two of the highest population densities in the province outside of Halifax. Old Town Lunenburg - characterized by its traditional grid street pattern and compact development - is a good example of efficient land use and form. While Bridgewater's grid is less formal, its historic centre is very compact.

Both Chester and Mahone Bay rely heavily on the tourism industry, and as a result, have become popular vacation and recreation destinations. A large percent of residential uses in these areas are used as seasonal homes by Canadian and foreign born families. Lunenburg, due to the presence of many seasonal and year-round mansions, has become one of the wealthiest communities in Nova Scotia.

### Population Profile

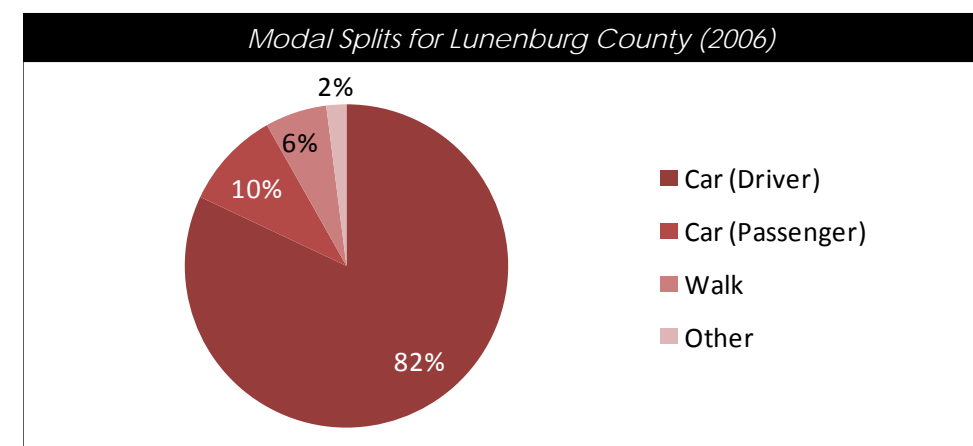
During the past 10 years, the population of Lunenburg County has decreased marginally. In 1996, the County's population was 47,561 compared to 47,150 in 2006. At the same time, however, the population of seniors increased significantly, while the number of youth decreased. Three municipalities in the County - Town of Lunenburg, Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, and the Town of Mahone Bay - experienced declining populations within this same period. While the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg had a constant rate of decline, Towns of Lunenburg and Mahone Bay experienced significant changes between 2001 and 2005, with population declines of 9.8% and 8.8% respectively (Statistics Canada 2010).

Despite overall population decline, growth in the seniors population is expected to continue in the coming years. This trend could have serious implications for Lunenburg County. The presence of a large elderly community and aging baby boomers, coupled with potential in-migration of similar cohorts, may place strain

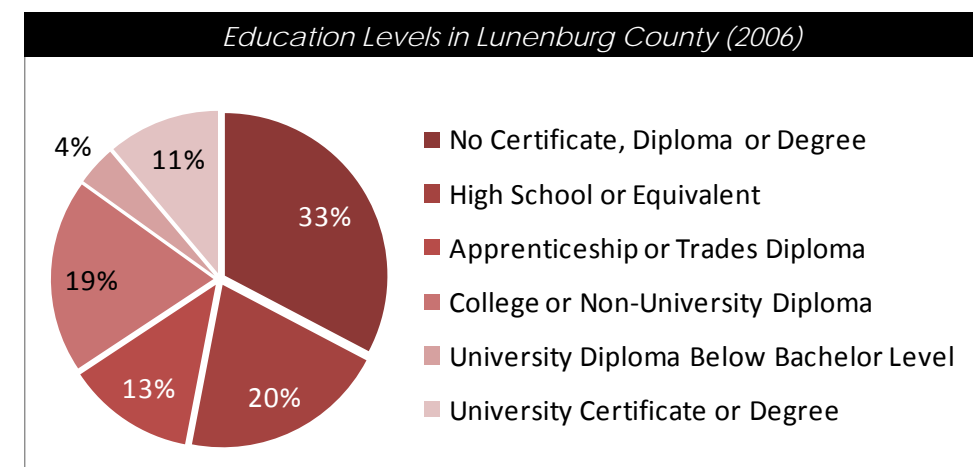
Age	Lunenburg County		Nova Scotia	
	Change	% Change	Change	% Change
Under 5	-475	- 28.5%	-13,820	-24.7%
5 -19 Years	-1,395	- 15.3%	-20,440	- 11.0%
20 - 34 Years	-2,445	- 27.3%	-37,550	- 18.8%
35 - 54 Years	+495	+ 3.4%	+16,615	+ 6.2%
55 - 64 Years	+2485	+ 52.1%	+40,265	+ 50.6%
65+ Years	+1165	+ 15.0%	+19,095	+ 16.0%

on existing seniors services in some areas. Eventually, new seniors services will be needed to meet rising demands, particularly in the areas with stable or growing populations. Conversely, declining youth populations means there may be less reliance on youth programming and support services.

Lunenburg County is not an ethnically diverse portion of the province. **In fact, only 0.9% of the population were visible minorities in 2005.** The number of visual minorities decreased from 435 to 410 between 2000 and 2005 (Stats Canada, 2010).



**Education rates in Lunenburg County are below the provincial average.** One third of residents in the County lack an educational degree or diploma, compared to the provincial average of 27%. Additionally, 11% of the County's population has a university degree compared to 16% province wide (Statistics Canada, 2010).



# Regional Context

## Population Profile (cont'd)

While Statistics Canada collects population data for towns and counties, other sources use different geographical boundaries to sort information. The Nova Scotia Department of Health produces population projections for all nine district health authorities in the province.

Projections show that all health authorities, excluding Halifax, will have an overall population decline during the next 25 years. **Between 2005 and 2030 it is estimated that the population represented by South Shore Regional Health District (SSHRD) – which includes both Lunenburg and Queens Counties - will decrease by approximately 8.5%.** During the same time frame, the percentage of the population over the age of 65 is expected to increase from 19% to 37% (South Shore Regional Health 2009). This would have many serious implications for Lunenburg County and the Town of Bridgewater, such as an increased demand for seniors housing and continuing care professionals, the need to reorient services to suit the elderly, and the need to attract younger demographics to the region.

**In that same time frame, the number of youth between the ages of 0 to 14 is expected to decline by 31.5% and those between the ages of 15 and 44 will decline 31%** (South Shore Regional Health, 2009). Following 2030, SSHRD is expected to experience substantial population decline unless many new families relocate to the region.

## Economic Profile

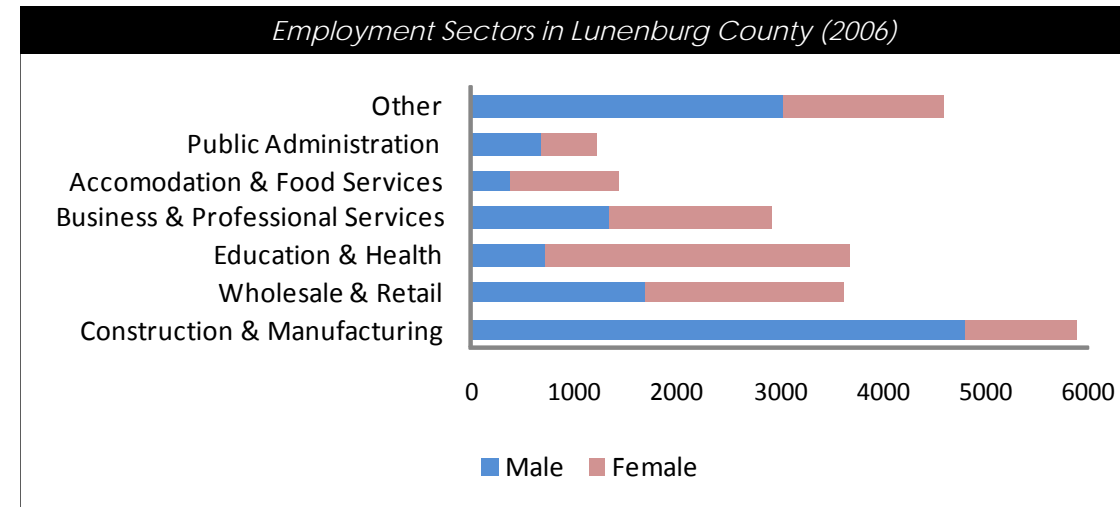
There is great disparity in Lunenburg County when it comes to comparing employment sectors. Construction and manufacturing is easily the largest employment sector in Lunenburg County. Education & health and wholesale & retail are the next largest sectors in the County. Overall, males dominate the construction and manufacturing employment sector in Lunenburg County, whereas females comprise the majority of the accommodation, business, education and retail sector workforce (Community Counts, 2010).

The employment rate for County residents above the age of 15 was 53.7% in 2005. This employment rate was less than that of the Municipality of the District on Lunenburg, the Town of Bridgewater, and the province. **The County's unemployment rate was 9.0% in 2005 compared to 7.8 % in 2000** (Statistics Canada, 2010).

**The median income for Lunenburg County residents was \$20,386 in 2006, which is 10.6% less than the Nova Scotia average of \$22,815.** Working males in the County earn \$27,309 compared to \$15,755 for females. The median private household earns \$43,257 per year in the County compared to the provincial average of \$46,605 (Statistics Canada, 2010).

## Poverty

Statistics Canada identifies low income cut offs (LICO) as the level where individuals spend disproportionate amounts of money on food, clothing, and shelter. **7.2% of people within Lunenburg County are considered**



**to be below LICO levels. Lunenburg's value was 25% lower than the provincial rate of 9.6%, suggesting that county should be concerned about topics related to low socioeconomic status** (South Shore Health 2009).

A common benchmark for affordable housing is when households spend less than 30% of their total income on housing costs. If a significant portion of the population exceeds 30% expenditure then it suggests that more affordable housing options are needed. In 2005, 18.9% of Lunenburg County Households spend more than 30% of their income on rent or major house payments, which is 16.4% below the provincial average of 22.6%. Additionally, 43% of renting households in Lunenburg County spend a disproportionate amount of income on shelter; however, this figure is only 4.7% less than the provincial average (Statistics Canada, 2008).

**While Lunenburg County scores better than the province as a whole, there is enough evidence to indicate that more affordable housing, particularly affordable renting units, are needed in the county.**

County	Spend more than 30% of Household Income on Housing			
	All Households	Percent	Renting Households	Percent
Lunenburg	3,755	18.9%	1,455	43.0%
Queens	700	14.1%	240	37.2%
Shelburne	1,235	19.1%	445	43.4%
Kings	5,075	21.3%	2,730	40.5%
Halifax	39,960	25.8%	24,880	44.7%

## Health Indicators

Health indicators provide a snap shot of the health and activity levels of a given population. This information is beneficial to a variety of professionals, including health practitioners and planners. **There is a strong correlation between community design and the physical health of a population.** By improving this relationship, municipal leaders can encourage residents to maintain their long-term health, and improve their overall quality of life.

In 2005, Statistics Canada conducted a comprehensive survey to gather health-related data on Canada's geographic regions. The results were released for each Canadian province, along with a more detailed breakdown of Nova Scotia's nine district health authorities. As previously mentioned, the South Shore District Health Authority (SSDHA) includes both Lunenburg and Queens Counties.

49.2% of Nova Scotia residents claimed to be physically active or moderately active. This measure was below the Canadian average of perceived physical fitness (52.3%). At 45.6%, the SSDHA ranks sixth out of nine district health authorities.

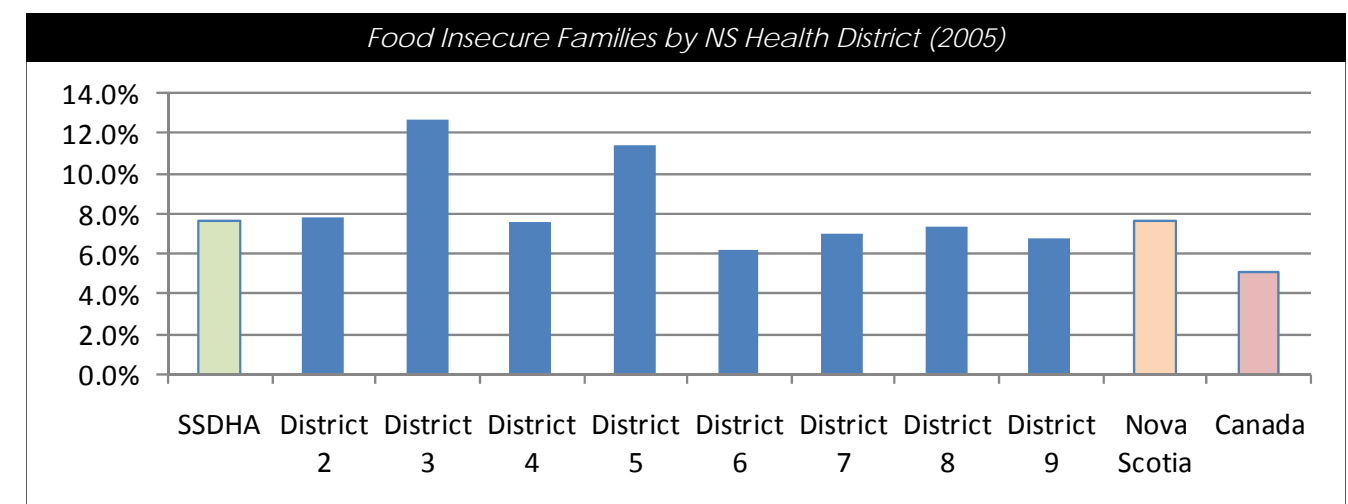
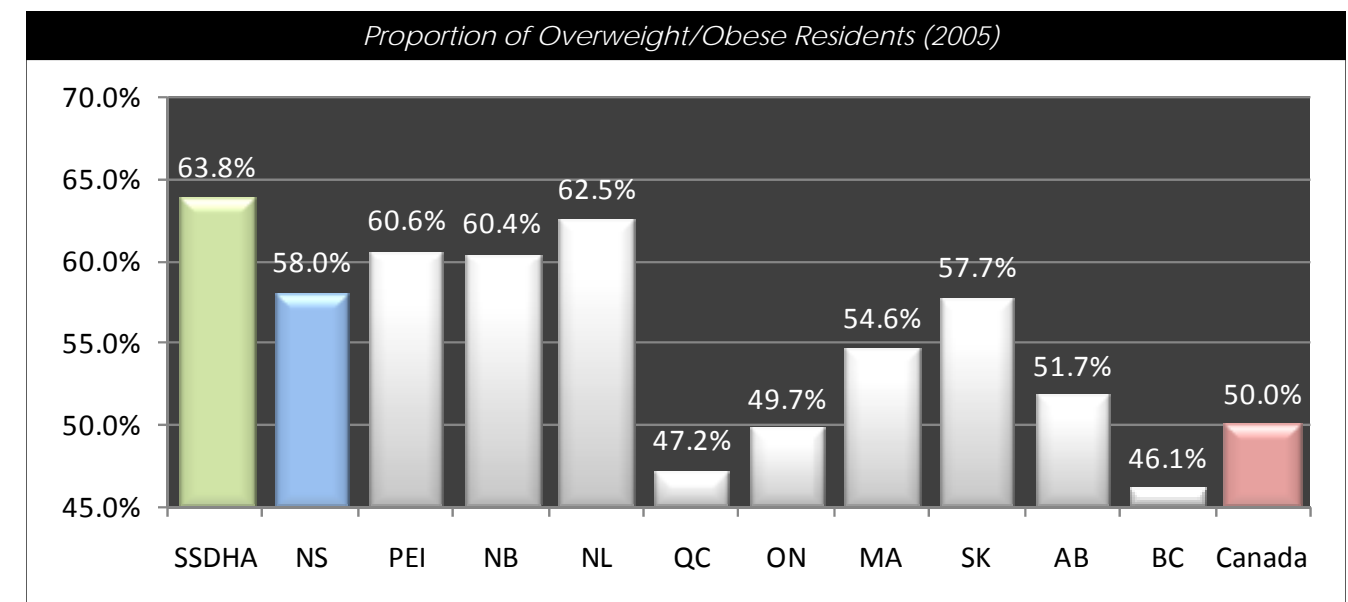
Nova Scotian youth were much more active than the adult population. 77.7% of female youth and 72.3% of male youth in the SSDHA report being physically active. Female youth rank second and male youth rank seventh out of the nine districts in Nova Scotia (Statistics Canada, 2007).

When asked how they perceive their health, fewer residents in the SSDHA believe they have *excellent* health than the Nova Scotia average (33% versus 41%). Residents in both Nova Scotia and the SSRHD reported higher incidences of heart disease, diabetes and respiratory disease than the Canadian average (Statistics Canada, 2007).

According to the Body Mass Index (BMI), Nova Scotians over the age of 18 are more overweight than the majority of Canadian citizens. **About 50.1% of Canadians are considered to be overweight/obese compared to 58% of Nova Scotia residents. Alarming, 68.3% of residents within the SSDHA are overweight/obese as measured by the BMI<sup>1</sup>** (Statistics Canada, 2007). These obesity rates for the Lunenburg County area are disturbing and call for comprehensive cooperation and action by all levels of government. Municipalities can assist in combating obesity by updating local planning policies to promote compact community design, active transportation, and recreation programming.

Food security refers to a population's ability to gain access to a sufficient amount of nutritious food on a day-to-day basis. **Statistics Canada's Canadian Community Health Survey identified that 7.7% of households in Nova Scotia were not able to afford the food they needed in the past 12 months, compared to 5.1% in Canada as a whole.** Approximately 7.6% of households in the South Shore District Health Authority lack appropriate food security (Statistics Canada, 2007).

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada's most recent health survey shows that the percentage of overweight Canadians and Nova Scotians increased to 51.6% and 60.3% respectively in 2009; however, no new data for the SSRHD has been released since the original 2007 report.





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# Bridgewater

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# Demographics

## History

In 1815, there were no more than five homes in what is now the Town of Bridgewater. The population growth of the town was very slow up until the 1860s. By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Bridgewater's population was just over 300 people, many of whom were of German decent. Growth rates increased remarkably and the population rose to 1,000 by 1870 as migration rates increased. At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the population reached 2,200, and 4,000 by 1950s, partially due to increased development during war years (Sheppard, 2008).

## Population & Growth

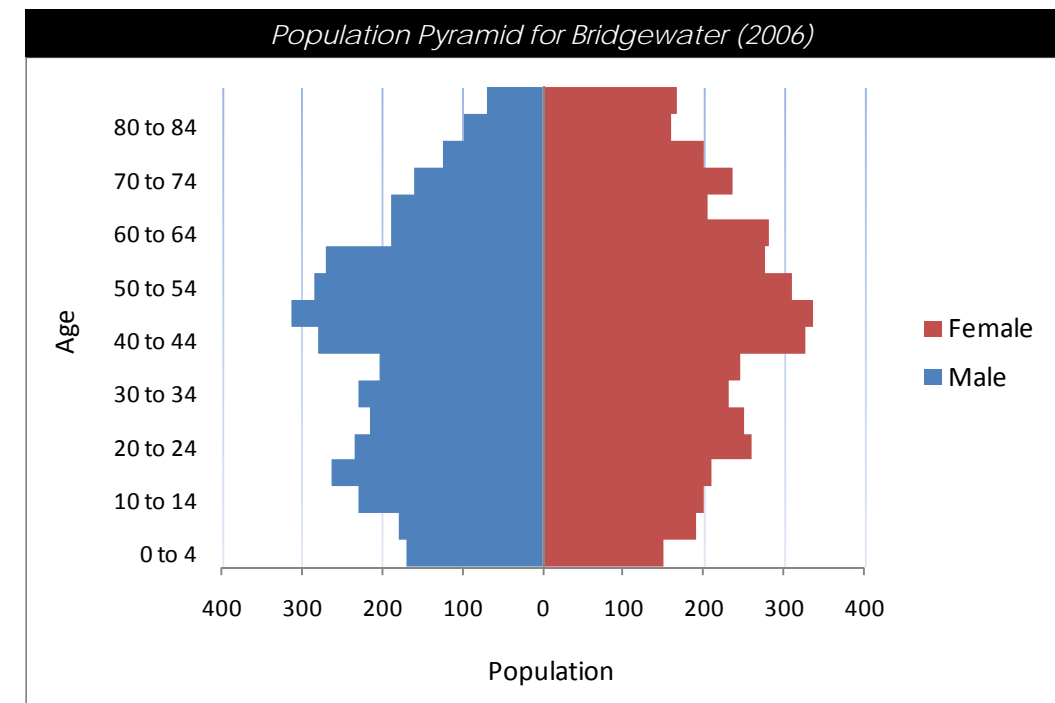
According to Statistics Canada, the Town of Bridgewater had a population of 7,944 in 2006. While the vast majority of communities in the South Shore experienced population declines in the last two census periods, Bridgewater grew. Bridgewater experienced a 4.2% increase in population between 2001 and 2006, along with an overall increase of 8.1% since 1996 (Statistics Canada, 2010). The current population of the town is over 8,000.

Bridgewater's population distribution generally reflects that of the province as a whole, however, there are some noticeable differences. Bridgewater has a small youth population compared to the provincial standard. There is a very small percentage of newborns and toddlers (Ages 0 to 4), as well as teenagers (Ages 10 to 19) in the community. Conversely, the town's senior population (Ages 60+) is well above the provincial average (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Bridgewater's Population Growth between 1996 and 2006						
	1996		2001		2006	
	Population	Growth Rate*	Population	Growth Rate*	Population	Growth Rate*
<b>Bridgewater</b>	7,351	<b>1.4%</b>	7,621	<b>3.7%</b>	7,944	<b>4.2%</b>
<b>Lunenburg</b>	2,599	<b>-6.5%</b>	2,568	<b>-1.2%</b>	2,317	<b>-9.8%</b>
<b>Shelburne</b>	2,132	<b>-5.0%</b>	2,013	<b>-5.6%</b>	1,879	<b>-6.7%</b>
<b>Yarmouth</b>	7,568	<b>-2.7%</b>	7,561	<b>-0.1%</b>	7,162	<b>-5.3%</b>
<b>Amherst</b>	9,669	<b>-0.7%</b>	9,470	<b>-2.1%</b>	9,505	<b>0.4%</b>
<b>Truro</b>	11,938	<b>2.2%</b>	11,457	<b>-4.0%</b>	11,765	<b>2.7%</b>
<b>Windsor</b>	3,726	<b>2.8%</b>	3,778	<b>1.4%</b>	3,709	<b>-1.8%</b>
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	909,282	<b>1.0%</b>	908,007	<b>-0.1%</b>	913,462	<b>0.6%</b>

\* Represents Growth Since the Previous Census Period

Bridgewater's population pyramid resembles those of other rural communities that have a large percentage of seniors or a declining population/reduced birth rates. This, along with an increasing population, suggests Bridgewater's growth is mainly occurring in the senior cohorts. As the baby boomers age, the percentage of seniors will increase noticeably in the coming years, along with the demand for healthcare services and seniors housing.



## Population Projections

The Bridgewater Planning Department used the Cohort Survival Method as a forecasting tool to predict Bridgewater's population over the next 25 years. The Cohort Survival Method forecasts future populations over time based upon the survival of the existing population, the births that will occur, plus estimated net migration.

2006 census data was used as the base population. To create the projections, each individual cohort is multiplied by its respective survival and fertility rates to determine the population's natural increase, which is then multiplied again by migration rates to determine the total projection over a five year period. This process is then repeated for each additional five year period. It is understood that the accuracy level of any population projection decreases the further you project into the future.

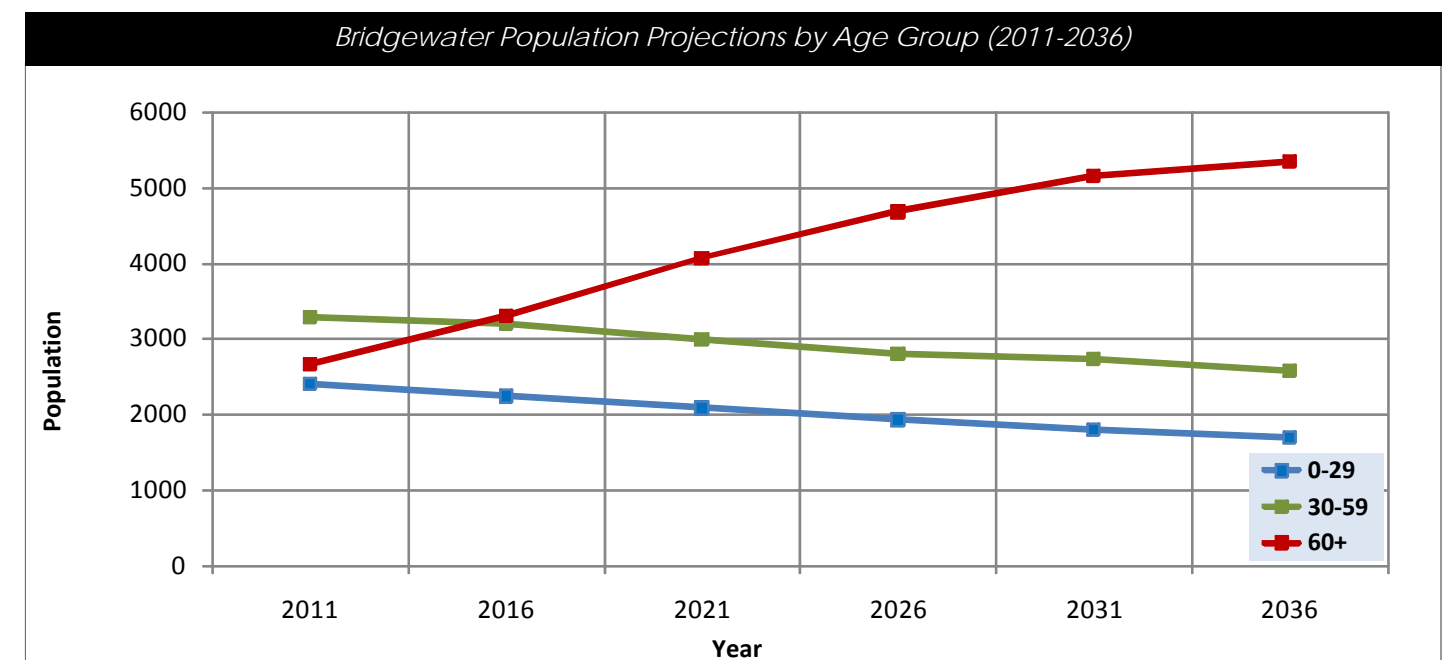
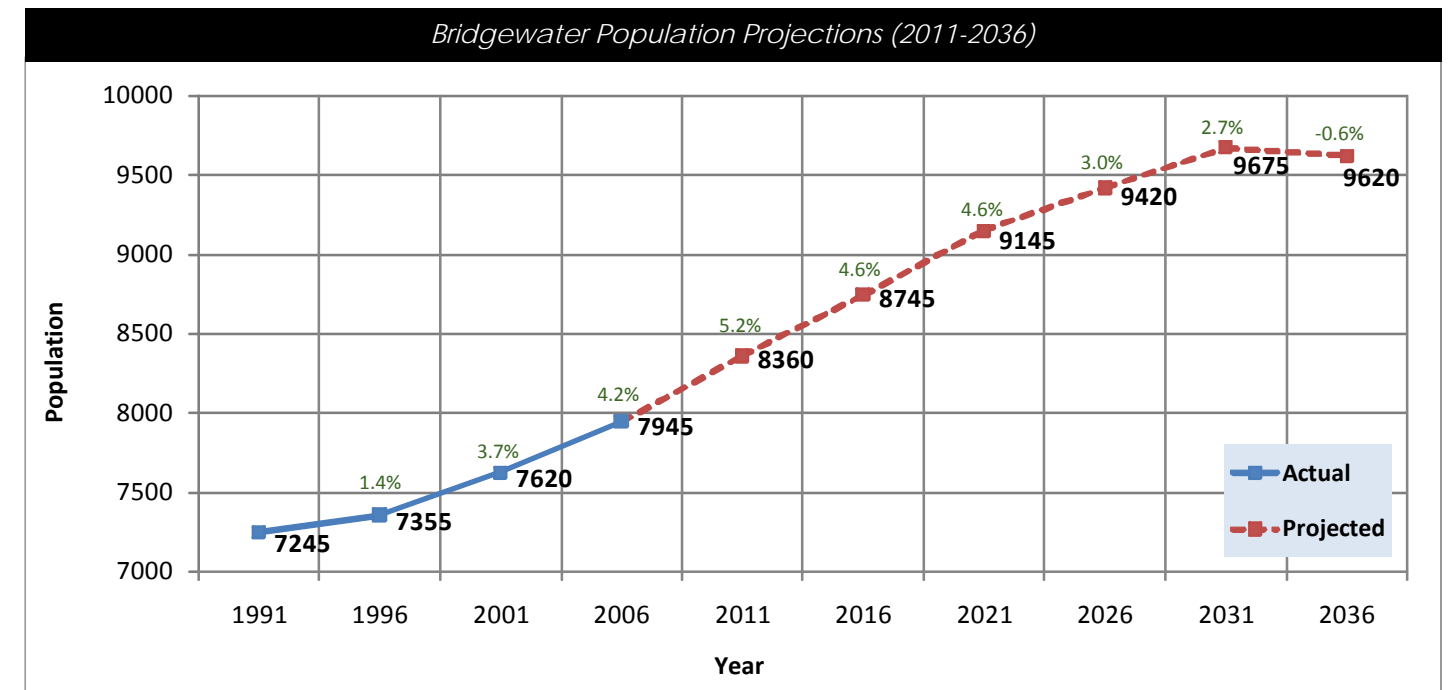
For the purposes of our projections, the following assumptions were made:

- Survival rates for Bridgewater today and in the future will be similar to those in Nova Scotia in 2002 (According to Statistics Canada, NS Life Tables, 2002);
- Fertility rates for Bridgewater today and in the future will be similar to those in Nova Scotia in 2007 (According to Statistics Canada, 2007);
- Migration rates today and in the future will generally reflect Bridgewater’s average net migration rates between 2001-2006; however, migration rates for cohorts 65 years and older are 10% higher today and in the future. This 10% adjustment is based on the assumption that more seniors (i.e., aging “baby-boomers”) will be moving to Bridgewater over the next 20 years for specialized housing, services, amenities, etc., than in previous years.

As illustrated in the following graphs, projections show that Bridgewater’s population will continue to grow in the immediate future. 2011 will likely mark the largest growth rate the town has had in the past five census periods. This can partially be attributed to a development boom in 2006 and 2007. It appears that population growth rates will remain reasonably steady for the next three census periods, although they will decrease over time. **Bridgewater’s population is projected to reach an all time high of approximately 9,675 in 2031, however, it will be followed by a period of decline.**

Since Bridgewater has been growing for many years, local residents naturally assume that the town’s population will continue to grow in the future. If growth is to be maintained, Bridgewater will need to attract more and more migrants from other areas over time. Bridgewater’s rate of natural increase, meaning local births minus deaths, is very low. In the coming years, Bridgewater’s rate of natural increase will actually start decreasing at mounting rates. A natural population decline will take place because fewer young families and youth in town results in fewer births. Conversely, the aging baby boomer population means more and more deaths. **Anticipated growth in these population projections are highly dependent on migration. If the assumed migration rates are too high, these numbers will overestimate future growth and total population decline may occur much sooner than predicted.**

However, these projections suggest that the Town should take steps to make Bridgewater an age-friendly community. While all Nova Scotian communities face challenges posed by aging baby boomers, Bridgewater’s challenges will be even more significant if previous trends continue. **Past migration rates show that Bridgewater is a popular destination for baby-boomers and seniors. If these migration rates continue to increase by an additional 10%, as assumed, the Town will need significant investments in senior services, such as specialized housing and amenities.**



# Demographics

## Education

In 2006, 45.9% of Bridgewater residents over the age of 15 had a post secondary certificate, diploma or degree. This compares to the 50.4% of Nova Scotians who have completed a post secondary program. The comparison of education levels between Bridgewater and Nova Scotia are similar, however, the percentage of Bridgewater residents with a university degree or certificate are less than the provincial average (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Percentage of Residents who Completed a Post Secondary Program (2006)						
Bridgewater	Lunenburg	Yarmouth	Amherst	Truro	Windsor	Nova Scotia
45.9%	55%	42.6%	43.0%	49.0%	43.2%	50.4%

## Diversity

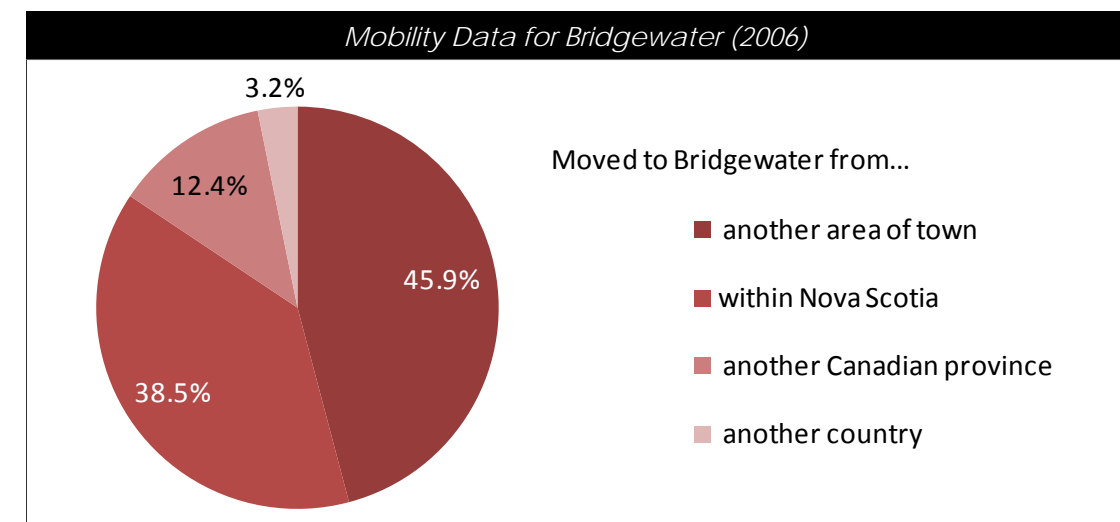
The Town of Bridgewater’s population is not particularly diverse. In 2006, only 3.9% of residents were immigrants and only 2.1% were visible minorities, whereas 4.2% of Nova Scotia’s residents are visible minorities. There has, however, been a modest increase in visible minorities in Bridgewater since 2001 (13.5%), as population counts increased from 140 to 165. Interestingly, Bridgewater is home to 40% of Lunenburg County’s visible minority population (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Bridgewater residents also tend to be monolingual - 96.2% of town residents can speak only English.

Percentage of Visible Minority Residents (2006)					
Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	PEI	Newfoundland & Labrador	Quebec	Ontario
4.2%	1.9%	1.4%	1.1%	8.8%	22.8%

## Mobility

In 2006, 45.9% of Bridgewater’s population had moved within the past five years. Of the 3,455 town residents who had moved, 45.9% moved within the town, 38.5% moved to Bridgewater from other areas of the province, 12.4% moved to Bridgewater from other areas of Canada, and 3.2% came to Bridgewater from another country (Statistics Canada, 2010). Bridgewater attracts significantly more interprovincial movers (17.7%) than the Nova Scotia average (6.4%). These figures, coupled with growing senior cohorts, suggests that Bridgewater has become a destination for older individuals.





# Local Economy

## History

In Bridgewater’s early days the strength of the local economy was linked to its natural resources. Lumber, in particular, was the town’s primary industry and economic producer. The first of many lumber mills was built in 1765. Local lumber mills continued to prosper during the next century while the stock of other industries diversified. In 1872, Bridgewater’s reputation grew when it was described as “enterprising village” by the *Halifax Citizen*. At this time Bridgewater had about 29 merchants in total, including shoemakers, shipbuilders, blacksmiths, foundaries, doctors, lawyers, and teachers. The presence of the LaHave River made Bridgewater an ideal distribution and shipping centre for the greater region (Sheppard, 2008).

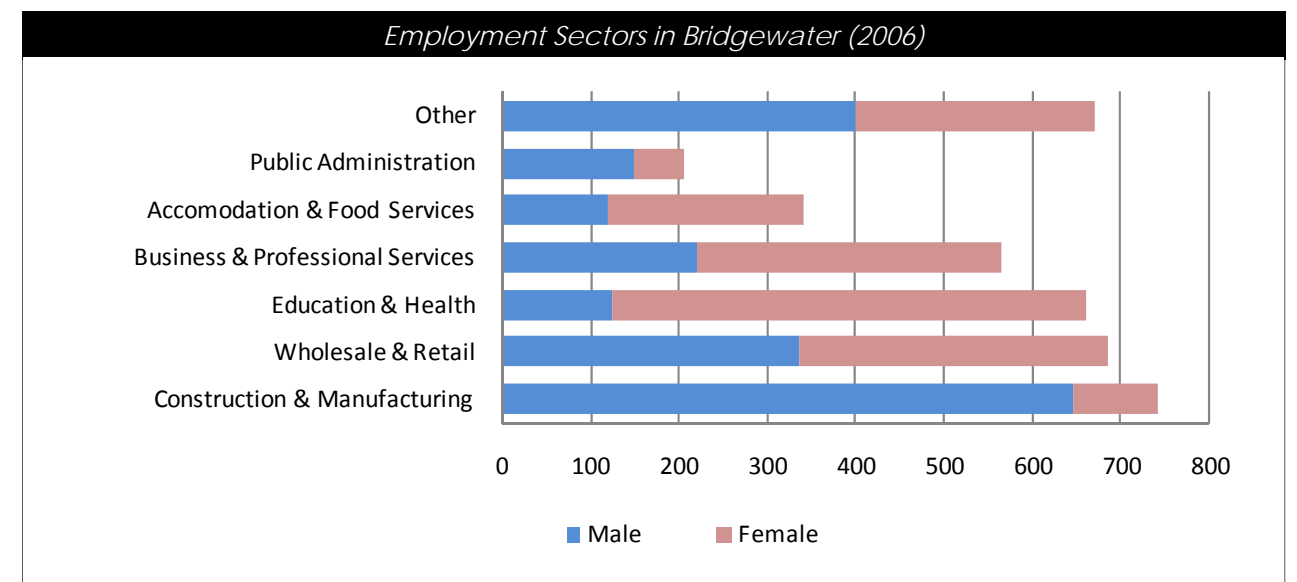
Following the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Town’s economic fortunes began to slow as fewer businesses relocated to the area, however, Bridgewater remained a key service centre due to the railway. During the war years (1916 to 1922) Bridgewater experienced a boom period as the number of new buildings and industries expanded. The town was hit hard by the depression but experienced resurgence during, and after, WWII (DesBrisay Museum Trustees, 1967). King Street continued to prosper as the major retail destination through the 1940s and 1950s with the addition of Canadian Tire and other department stores (Friends of the Desbrisay Museum, 1999)



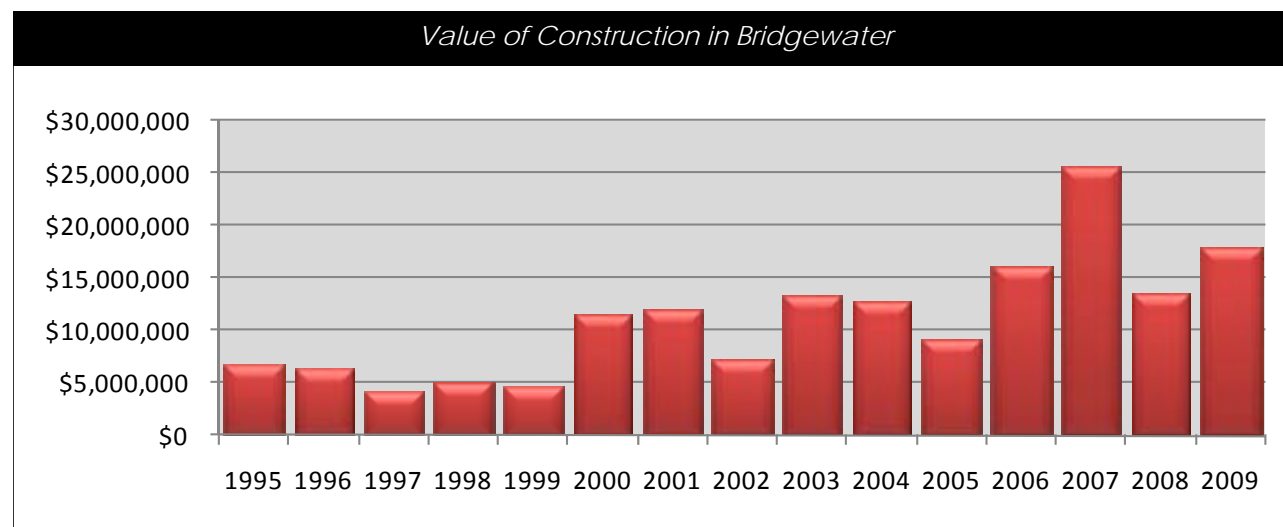
Bridgewater’s reliance on natural resources faded with time; instead the town became dependent on an emerging manufacturing industry when the Michelin Tire Plant came to town in 1970. Michelin’s presence helped stimulate industrial development in town and the region. With the decline of the rail lines and new commercial stores opening outside of the downtown in the 1970s, King Street began to lose its prominence as the Town’s sole commercial destination. Still, Bridgewater’s retail sector continues to thrive due to a broad range of shopping choices.

## Current Industries

Today, manufacturing & construction is the largest employment sector in Bridgewater, mainly due to the Michelin tire plant, which is the town’s largest employer (employs approximately 1,500 people). Other large manufacturers, including AbitibiBowater, are also located close to the town. The lumber industry has a very small impact on the area’s Gross Domestic Product. Bridgewater is still the major service centre for the region, and so the retail sector comprises a large component of the town’s employment base. Over the past three decades there has been an increase in the presence of government services in the town, particularly in health and education.



The construction industry employs a number of local residents, supported by healthy development rates in recent years. This variable industry has considerable impacts on the town's employment rates and income estimates. Additionally, new construction projects impact the town's existing land uses and the public amenities that improve the quality of life of local residents. The following chart shows that the value of construction has increased significantly during the past four years.



### Employment

The employment rate for Bridgewater residents over the age of 15 was 54.6% in 2006. While this represents a 0.8% increase over the town's employment rate in 2001, it was less than the provincial average (57.2%). Unemployment rates in Bridgewater remained constant at 12.2% between 1996 and 2001. In 2006, the unemployment rate actually decreased to 7.9%, which was less than the provincial unemployment rate (9.1%).

Location	2001		2006	
	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
Bridgewater	53.8%	12.2%	54.6%	7.9%
Amherst	54.5%	10.8%	54.6%	10.0%
Windsor	54.7%	6.0%	47.8%	8.0%
Truro	51.4%	9.9%	53.6%	8.8%
Nova Scotia	54.9%	13.3%	57.2%	9.1%

### Income

The median income per Bridgewater resident was \$20,386 in 2006, which is somewhat lower than the Nova Scotia average of \$22,815. Males working in Bridgewater earn \$28,679 on average compared to \$16,319 for females. The median private household earns \$40,123 per year in Bridgewater compared to the provincial average of \$46,605 (Statistics Canada, 2010). Interestingly, Bridgewater's household income is greater than similar towns in Nova Scotia.

	Lunenburg	Yarmouth	Amherst	Truro	Windsor	Nova Scotia
Household Income	\$37,822	\$31,584	\$36,539	\$37,056	\$34,414	\$46,605
Difference Compared to Bridgewater	-5.7%	-21.3%	-8.9%	-7.6%	-14.2%	+16.2%

