



MIDDLETOWN
Heart of the Valley

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2028



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Message from the Mayor

It is an exciting time for our community. We are experiencing real, visible growth that brings both opportunity and responsibility. Our population is increasing, due to major projects such as the development of the Northlands, and new housing like the apartment complex on Main Street. These additions are more than just buildings - they are homes for families, individuals, and businesses that have chosen our community as their place to live, work, and thrive.

To support this momentum, we've made critical infrastructure investments, including the construction of a new water reservoir. This project meets current needs and ensures we are ready for the continued development and growth we see on the horizon. It's about proactive planning for the future, strategically, and with care.

As our community grows, so does our responsibility to communicate clearly, transparently, and accessibly. We are committed to sharing information in ways that reach and respect all residents regardless of age, ability, or background. Whether it's online, in print, or in person, we want every resident to feel informed, heard, and included in the decisions that shape our future.

This strategic plan reflects our commitment to building a strong, inclusive, and resilient community. It outlines our shared vision for a vibrant town where services, infrastructure, and community support evolve alongside our population. From communication and housing to recreation and sustainability, this plan is shaped by the residents' voices and focuses on their quality of life.

We know that with growth comes the need for thoughtful leadership. Our Council remains focused on collaboration with residents, local businesses, and regional partners to ensure we are making smart, cost-effective decisions with long-term impact. Together, let's embrace this growth, invest wisely, and shape a future that reflects the values, spirit, and potential of our town.

Yours truly,

Gail Smith

Gail Smith
Mayor



Introduction

According to the 2021 national census, the Town of Middleton is home to just over 1,800 residents. While the population has remained

relatively stable in recent years, trends across Nova Scotia suggest that rural communities like Middleton are positioned to experience growth, driven by in-migration from within the province, across Canada, and internationally. As the Heart of the Valley, Middleton can serve as a regional hub for services, commerce, education, and recreation, making it a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

With this potential for growth comes the need for responsible planning. Without proactive investment, the Town could face mounting challenges such as aging infrastructure, gaps in housing and public safety services, limited recreational and social programming, and strain on essential systems such as water, roads, and sidewalks. To avoid these outcomes and support healthy, sustainable development, Middleton must make thoughtful decisions today to ensure a strong tomorrow.

Over the next four years, the Town will focus on eight key strategic initiatives aimed at addressing current needs and setting a foundation for long-term success. These include assessing policing services, exploring the construction of a new municipal facility, developing comprehensive plans for road, sidewalk, and water infrastructure upgrades, completing the construction of a new reservoir, and creating a growth plan that supports housing, population, and economic development. Additionally, the Town will enhance communication with residents through a new communications strategy and increase recreational programming and social events that strengthen community connections.

These initiatives reflect a balanced approach—addressing both critical infrastructure needs and the social, economic, and civic elements that contribute to quality of life. The council and staff are committed to ensuring that all decisions and investments are guided by transparency, accountability, and public input.

This Strategic Plan outlines a clear path forward, with realistic and achievable priorities that respond directly to the needs of our residents. It represents our commitment to careful stewardship of public resources and a belief in Middleton’s potential for growth and revitalization.



Together, we will continue to build a community that is welcoming, well-served, and future-ready—a place where residents are proud to call their neighborhood “The Heart of the Valley.”

Strategic Planning Process

Middleton Town Council and the Management Team underwent a comprehensive strategic planning process that led to the development of this document. The process started in January 2025 and Council met three times over February and March to work on the Strategic Plan.

- 1) **Input**: the strategic planning process included feedback and input from three key areas:
 - a. **Community** – a Community Engagement Survey was released in January and closed on February 6, 2025. **86** responses were received from residents.
 - b. **Staff** – a strategic planning session with all Town staff was held in January where employees provided feedback on the Town SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis and Strategic Initiatives.
 - c. **Council** – a questionnaire was distributed to Council members prior to any sessions being held, to get individualized feedback.
- 2) **Organization Review**: an overview of the Town was presented by staff as a reminder of what resources (staff) the Town has, in addition to the services it provides to the community. The Town’s financial situation was also reviewed, which guided the affordability of projects and goals.
- 3) **Previous Strategic Plan**: the previous strategic plan from 2020-2024 was reviewed in depth to ensure Council considered carrying forward any key projects that had not yet been completed.
- 4) **Vision Statement**: Council reviewed the Town’s vision statement and made minor updates.
- 5) **Guiding Principles**: Council reviewed the previous guiding principles and made no changes.
- 6) **Strategic Priority Areas**: Council reviewed the previous priority areas and made no changes.
- 7) **Environmental Scan**: Council performed a SWOT that assessed internal and external factors, as well as current and future potential. The SWOT analysis included internal sources (strengths or weaknesses of the Town) and external forces that may have uncontrollable impacts on decisions (opportunities and threats). Council considered the SWOT analysis completed by staff.
- 8) **Strategic Initiatives/Goals**: From the work done above, Council set eight (8) strategic initiatives. These initiatives took into consideration the response from the Community Engagement Survey, as well as staff input.

NEXT STEPS:

Community Feedback: the Strategic Plan will be posted on the Town’s website and social media for one month, giving residents an opportunity to provide feedback.

Operating Plan: staff will prepare a plan that identifies how the strategic plan will be achieved.

Budget Preparation: staff will finalize the 2025-2026 budgets, using the strategic plan as a guide.

Vision Statement

A vision is a clear and concise statement that states what the Town hopes to accomplish in the future and the impact the Town wants to have on the community one day.

“Middleton is the Heart of the Valley, a welcoming community valuing diversity, opportunity, and partnership.”



Guiding Principles for Decision Making

Strategic planning guiding principles are a set of broad, overarching statements that direct the Town’s decision-making process during strategic planning, ensuring alignment with its vision. Guiding principles typically focus on key aspects like customer focus, innovation, ethical conduct, and continuous improvement; they act as a compass to guide the Town’s strategic direction.

Council created the below guiding principles for the previous strategic plan. These guiding principles were reviewed and determined to still be relevant. No changes have been made.

- Transparency** We commit to ensure decisions are made openly and publicly and access to information is easily accessible.
- Accountability** We commit to ensuring a trusting relationship with the public and the responsibility for the decisions of Council and their impact.
- Diversity** We commit to embracing diversity and inclusion, and treating everyone with courtesy, equity and fairness.
- Sustainability** We commit to making decisions that meet the needs of our community, while also being mindful of future needs and opportunities and ensuring long-term viability.
- Engaged** We commit to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and/or empower our residents on decisions and the decision-making process.
- Informed** We commit to seeking out complete information in order to make appropriate and evidence-based decisions.



Strategic Priority Areas

Strategic priority areas are the initiatives that an organization focuses on to achieve its goals over a set period. They are the core values that the Town wants to accomplish. Council created the below strategic priority areas for the previous strategic plan. These strategic priority areas were reviewed and determined to still be relevant. No changes have been made.

Environment



Maintaining a healthy and natural environment through responsible use, protection and sustainable practices.

Infrastructure



Well maintained infrastructure and facilities that meet community needs and allow growth and development for prosperity.

Economy



Building a strong and vibrant community by attracting, supporting and retaining businesses and residents.

Community



Building social capital and engaging citizens and partners to improve the well-being and diversity of the community.

Governance



Fiscally sustainable government focused on strategic decision-making, transparency and inclusiveness.

Council's Strategic Initiatives

Council's strategic initiatives represent key priorities the Town aims to accomplish over the next four (4) years. These initiatives are essential components of the Town's overall strategy, helping to focus efforts, and allocate resources effectively. Initiatives serve as a roadmap to achieve the Town's long-term vision by translating broad goals into focused, actionable areas. Following a comprehensive review of community feedback gathered through the Community Engagement Survey and feedback provided by staff, Council held three strategic planning sessions. After thoughtful consideration, Council identified **eight (8)** strategic initiatives.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1

PERFORM AN ASSESSMENT OF POLICING SERVICES WITHIN THE TOWN OF MIDDLETON

Public safety is an increasing concern due to many contributing factors. The General Duty Police Resource Methodology (GDPRM) review performed by the RCMP shows that the frequency and severity of crime is increasing in Annapolis County. Crime in Middleton varies and includes theft, violent incidents, vandalism, youth violence, speeding and reckless driving. This has contributed to a sense of unease within the community, as concerns around mental health crises and substance use continue to grow. These challenges can sometimes result in unpredictable or unsafe behavior in public spaces. Council acknowledges the rising demand from residents for enhanced safety and security, understanding that a safe community is essential to a thriving one. Community safety impacts property values, business investments, and the overall well-being of residents. Over the next four years, Council commits to strengthening relationships with policing services, ensuring the Town of Middleton is a safe place to live. Council is committed to pursuing effective, accountable, and community-oriented policing.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2

EXPLORE THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MULTI-FACETED FACILITY FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Infrastructure is aging, including both utilities and buildings. As a result, Council is exploring a **multi-faceted municipal facility**. This is a centralized building that contains town services and amenities—such as the town hall, library, community center, and fire hall—under one roof. Municipal units throughout the province are investing in multi-faceted facilities:

- **Cost Efficiencies** - shared maintenance/utilities avoids redundancy of multiple aging facilities
- **Resident Convenience** - single access to services makes it easier for those with limited transportation
- **Community Engagement** - space for meetings, programs, and cultural events helps build a stronger community identity and connection to one another
- **Land Use** - Efficiently utilizes town property and provides existing sites with options for redevelopment
- **Future-Ready Infrastructure** - incorporates green design and sustainable technologies

Over the next four years, Council commits to assessing town facilities, engaging consultants to perform feasibility studies, and conducting community input sessions. This information will guide the path forward. This could be more than just a building, but an investment in community connection, efficiency, and long-term growth.



Image is a rendering only

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3

CREATE A PLAN FOR REPLACING ROAD AND SIDEWALK INFRASTRUCTURE IN PRIORITY AREAS

Investing in roads and sidewalks is essential for economic growth, public safety, and community well-being. Well-maintained roads improve transportation efficiency, reduce vehicle maintenance costs, and support businesses by ensuring reliable access for employees and customers. Sidewalks enhance pedestrian safety, encourage walking and biking, and promote healthier lifestyles. Together, quality roads and sidewalks foster inclusive, accessible communities, support environmental sustainability by reducing traffic congestion, and can increase property values.

Council recognizes that the condition of many roads has deteriorated to the point where comprehensive overhauls are necessary, rather than simple repairs, which increases costs and complexity. Recent changes in our region's climate have led to frequent freeze-thaw cycles, which cause road surfaces to expand and contract. This process results in the formation of potholes and accelerates the deterioration of pavement, posing hazards to drivers.

The Town owns approximately 20 kilometers of roads and 25 kilometers of sidewalks. On average, it costs about \$500,000 to repair a single kilometer of road. This is an overwhelming expense for a Town that only has annual revenues of approximately \$4.5 million. However, we understand the need to reserve money each year that is designated for future upgrades of the roads. Implementing this initiative within the operating budget will be challenging, but Council remains dedicated to prioritizing this initiative, recognizing its long-term benefits for the Town. Securing provincial and federal grants will also be a crucial component.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4

CREATE A PLAN FOR UPGRADING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE IN PRIORITY AREAS

Water is something we use every day—often without thinking twice. But behind every faucet, fire hydrant, and drain is a complex system that needs care, investment, and modernization. Upgrading our water infrastructure is about protecting the quality of life for everyone in our community.

- Upgrades ensure every household has safe, reliable drinking water
- Well-maintained hydrants and mains mean firefighters have the pressure and flow needed to respond quickly and effectively during emergencies
- Reliable infrastructure ensures we're ready to grow in a way that's sustainable, and well-planned

Our water infrastructure is aging, which leads to frequent water main breaks, leaks, and service interruptions. Watermain breaks have become a regular occurrence in specific areas like School Street and Connaught Avenue. A full review of the water system will help to identify locations that require upgrading. Although water lines are not visible to us every day, they are critical to our community. We will create a plan that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the water system.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 5

FINISH THE NEW RESERVOIR INCLUDING THE DECOMMISSIONING OF THE OLD RESERVOIR

The reservoir is a critical component of the Town’s water infrastructure system, which provides water to over 1,800 town residents, 125 businesses, the Nova Scotia Community College, Soldiers Memorial Hospital (which serves over 25,000 people), Annapolis East Elementary School, Middleton Regional High School and long-term care facilities. The reservoir acts as storage that provides backup water for fire protection, as well as accessible water during power outages – but the reservoir has a much more important role in the Town’s water system: it regulates the well pumps to ensure there is enough water in the system at any given time, and that the water pressure in the system is adequate. Without a reservoir, the Town’s water system would not function.

The reservoir has been failing for several years. It has multiple cracks and is currently operating at 25% of its capacity to reduce leakage rates. Approximately 10,000 liters of chlorinated water is seeping into the ground per hour. As a result, there is limited emergency water supply and water available for fire protection.



The Town has applied for several grants over the years to help fund the replacement of the reservoir, which is a multi-million-dollar project. In March 2024, the Town received \$3.2 million in funding from the province through the Municipal Capital Growth Program, enabling the Town to move forward with the reservoir replacement. The project was tendered and awarded to Roscoe Construction Limited in August 2024. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$5.7 million.

Council is committed to completing this project, which will strengthen the Town’s water system, support population growth and developments, and positively impact the community.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 6

CREATE A GROWTH PLAN THAT PROMOTES HOUSING AND POPULATION GROWTH, AS WELL AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Growth in small towns is not just a matter of population size, it's a strategic approach to long-term vitality, economic stability, and quality of life. Strategic growth is essential to attract and retain families and young professionals, maintain local education systems and preserve the town's social fabric and traditions. A growing population allows expansion of the customer base for local businesses and the creation of jobs. Growth also enhances the town's ability to attract external investment and entrepreneurial ventures.

As a town with a small population but large responsibility for infrastructure, it is a challenge to generate enough tax revenue to upgrade infrastructure. Growth is essential to increasing revenue through property and utility taxes, allowing reinvestment into public services. It will allow Middleton to become more adaptable and self-sufficient and will reduce the financial burden on existing residents.

According to the Town's 2023 Housing Needs Assessment, there was a housing shortage of 85 units in Middleton at the end of 2022. Projections suggest that to keep pace with population growth, the Town will need 165 new units by 2027. With growth comes new residents, ideas, and experiences that contribute to a more dynamic and inclusive community. New residents contribute to volunteering, community programming, cultural events and greater intergenerational connection.

Growth, when managed thoughtfully, is an investment in the future of our small town. It strengthens the local economy, enriches community life, improves essential services, and secures the town's long-term viability. We are excited by the benefits that potential development will have on the town, including the Northlands, 438 Main Street, and the provincial Property Opportunity Notices (PON) such as Magee Drive. Council is committed to updating the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw to ensure policies promote economic development and reduce barriers.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 7

CREATE A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY THAT ENHANCES PUBLIC COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

Effective communication is the cornerstone of building trust, fostering meaningful community engagement, and ensuring transparency in municipal operations. The Town of Middleton recognizes the importance of clear, consistent, and accessible communication in shaping a well-informed community.

The Town will develop and implement a comprehensive Communications Strategy designed to solidify its relationship with residents, businesses, and stakeholders. The strategy will aim to strengthen the Town’s overall communication approach, ensuring that information is inclusive, accessible, and engaging for all demographics within the community. The Town will construct communications through various mediums that reach these diverse audiences. Print and digital media will be explored that allows for two-way, clear communication with residents, while also strengthening the Town of Middleton’s voice and reach.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 8

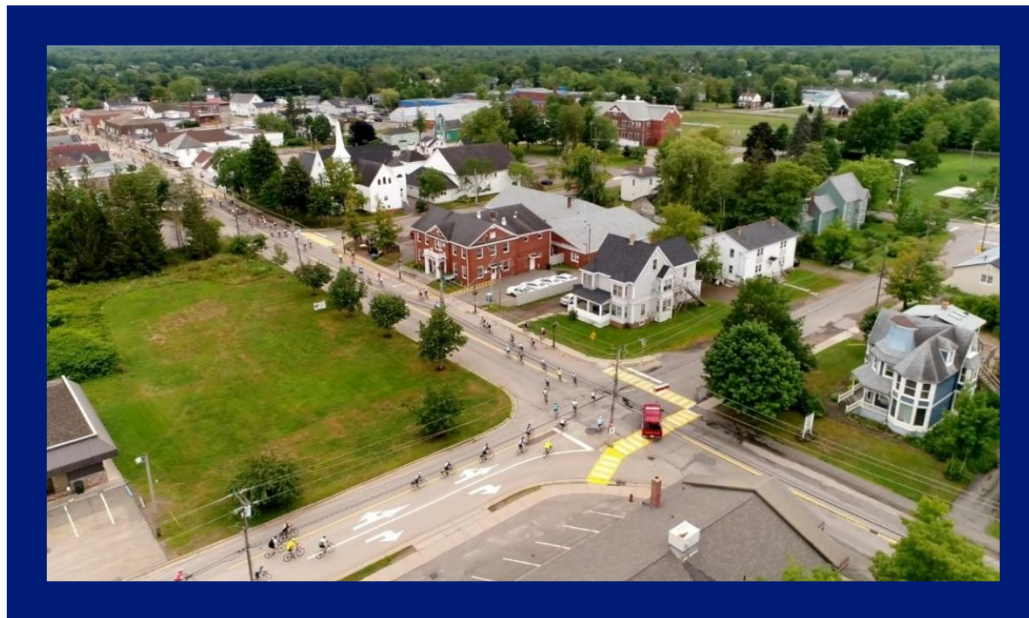
INCREASE RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND SOCIAL EVENTS TO THE PUBLIC

Recreation is a vital part of community life—it brings people together, supports physical and mental well-being, and fosters a strong sense of belonging. The Town of Middleton is committed to expanding

and enhancing recreational programming and social events to meet the diverse needs of residents of all ages and backgrounds. To support these efforts, the Town will explore ways to expand financial support from the County, emphasizing the regional impact of our recreational offerings.

In the spirit of regional cooperation, Middleton will investigate the feasibility of a joint regional recreation facility, working closely with the County and neighbouring communities to assess needs, funding opportunities, and potential locations.

Attention will be given to welcoming initiatives that support newcomers and help foster a sense of belonging. Events and programs that encourage connection, inclusion, and community-building could be explored, depending on interest and available resources. We will aim to examine our current facilities and parks as venues for these events.



Summary

The Town of Middleton’s 2025–2028 Strategic Plan is a clear and thoughtful vision for the future of our community. One that puts people first while preparing for long-term growth and sustainability. This four-year plan serves as a guiding framework for how the Town will make decisions, invest in its future, and respond to the evolving needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. Grounded in public input and

shaped by local values, it reflects a collective desire to build a more vibrant, inclusive, and connected Middleton.

The plan focuses on enhancing the quality of life for all who live and work here. It prioritizes maintaining and modernizing essential infrastructure, while also encouraging economic activity through support for local business and tourism. Community wellbeing is at the heart of this plan, with renewed investment in parks, public spaces, recreation, infrastructure, and communication. It also champions transparency, public participation, and meaningful engagement with residents to ensure that everyone has a voice in shaping Middleton's future.

The Town is focused on ensuring housing options are available and accessible, and that new development supports thoughtful growth while preserving the charm and character of the community. The plan also emphasizes fiscal responsibility and accountability, recognizing that a strong and stable financial foundation is key to delivering on all other priorities. By managing public funds wisely, Middleton will be able to maintain essential services and invest in initiatives that have lasting value.

Overall, the Strategic Plan outlines a bold, balanced, and achievable path forward. It is a living document that will guide the council and administration in making intentional, community-driven choices so Middleton can continue to thrive, adapt, and grow as the Heart of the Valley.

