

Municipality of the District of Lunenburg
Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy & Strategy Committee
Held in Council Chamber, 10 Allée Champlain Drive, Cookville, N.S.
Tuesday, January 20, 2026 – 9:00 a.m.

Attendance

Deputy Mayor Chasidy Veinotte, District 10, Chair
Councillor Martin Bell, District 2, Vice Chair
Mayor Elspeth McLean-Wile
Councillor Morgen Reinhardt, District 1
Councillor Wendy Oickle, District 3
Councillor Pam Hubley, District 4
Councillor Cathy Moore, District 5
Councillor Alison Smith, District 6
Councillor Edgar Burns, District 7
Councillor Ben Brooks, District 9 (via Teams)

Regrets

Councillor Kacy DeLong, District 8

Staff

Tom MacEwan, Chief Administrative Officer
Alex Dumaresq, Deputy CAO
April Whynot-Lohnes, Municipal Clerk
Lisa Andrews, Executive Assistant

1. Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Veinotte called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and began by acknowledging that the meeting was held in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

2. Nomination and Election of Vice Chair for Policy & Strategy Committee

Deputy Mayor Veinotte, called for nominations, by ballot, for the position of Vice Chair. Those nominated were: Councillors Bell, Oickle, Burns, Smith, and Hubley. Councillor Burns and Councillor Hubley withdrew their names from the ballot.

On the first ballot, Councillor Smith's name was dropped. Councillors Bell and Councillor Oickle remained on the ballot. On the second ballot, Councillor Bell was voted as Vice Chair, Policy & Strategy Committee.

Moved by Mayor McLean-Wile, seconded by Councillor Hubley that the ballots be destroyed. Carried unanimously.

3. Announcements, Acknowledgements, Recognition

Councillor Smith stated that the Book Mobile is back on the road and asked Councillors to remind residents.

4. Public Input – Nil

5. Changes/Approval of Agenda

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Burns that the Agenda be approved as circulated. Carried unanimously.

6. Approval of Minutes – December 16, 2025

The Minutes of December 16, 2025, Policy & Strategy Committee meeting were approved as circulated.

7. Business Arising from Minutes - Nil

8. Presentations/Scheduled Times

8.1 Partners for Care WellTide Health

Amanda Hatt, Chief Program Officer, Partners for Care and Nick Jennery, CEO, gave a presentation titled “Partners for Care WellTide Health” (circulated with the agenda), providing details on the following:

- WellTide Health Introduction
- Community Needs Assessment Highlights
- Gaps & Opportunities
- Grounded with Purpose
- Guiding Principles
- PFC Collaboration Hub
- WellTide Health Navigation Journey

Ms. Hatt provided clarification that the data for the municipality was obtained through Stats Canada and City Data and that the Partners for Care is a non-profit partner of Nova Scotia Health that supports social enterprises at the QE2 and now also works with communities through partnerships with municipalities.

In response to timelines and communications, construction is on schedule and the building will be ready for tenants by the end of February 2026, with a public opening planned for Fall 2026. A soft opening with care providers is expected in early summer, depending on individual provider timelines. Key messages are being finalized with Q&A’s and key message documents will be shared.

9. Referral From Committees/Council – Nil

10. Staff Reports

10.1 Recreation, Parks & Tourism

10.1.1 Evaluation of Visitor Information Services

Ruth Warwin, Tourism & Event Development Officer gave a presentation titled “Evaluation of Visitor Services” (attached to the minutes) and reviewed the report “Visitor Services Evaluation Report” as circulated with the agenda, providing details on the following:

- Background
- Introduction
- Visitor Services Overview
- Mobile VIC
- Additional Visitor Information Services
- Program Outputs
- Program Outcomes
- Year-Over-Year Trends
- Key Takeaways
- Next Steps

Council discussed tourism operations, budgets, and coordination. Clarification was provided on FAM tours, which involve multiple business visits in one day and include social media promotion, with no tourist feedback on service gaps to date. Budget impacts were reviewed, confirming multiple funding lines support the VIC, pop-ups are more cost-effective than a fixed location, and regional collaboration exists with the South Shore Tourism Co-Op. The cost per visitor interaction is approximately \$12, with a detailed breakdown to be provided. Questions were raised about staffing, use of the Municipal App, availability of metrics, and coordination between departments to avoid duplication.

Council recessed at 10:25 a.m. and resumed at 10:37 a.m.

8.1.2 Community Working Forest Easements

Jennika Hunsinger, Stewardship Forester, NS Working Woodlands Trust and Mary Jane Rodger, Executive Director, NS Working Woodlands Trust gave a presentation titled “Community Working Forest Easements” (circulated with the agenda), providing details on the following:

- Threats to Nova Scotia’s Forests
- Woodland Stewards In NS
- What We Do/Vision
- Eligibility for NSWWT
- Benefits to Land Stewards
- Working Forest- Conservation Easements
- Regenerative Model for Forestry

- Easement Zoning
- Agreed Practices
- Partnerships with Municipalities
- Work to Date

Clarification on forest conservation was provided and that participation was voluntary and prioritized by tree maturity and resilience, not species. It was noted that funding comes from federal and provincial sources, with discussions to extend the program to 2030 ongoing and permitted activities on working forest easements include limited ecological forestry, selective harvesting, and restricted development.

10.1.2 Park Evaluation Criteria Staff Report

Trudy Payne, Director of Recreation, Parks & Tourism gave a presentation titled “Parks Evaluation Criteria” (attached to the minutes) and reviewed her report circulated with the agenda, on proposed parks evaluation criteria and framework.

The park assessment criteria were discussed. It was noted that a broader conversation is needed for areas such as Molega, Pinegrove, and Sherbrooke. Other suggestions included weighting of the criteria, consideration for transportation accessibility, including the park’s purpose, accounting for past commitments and coastal access, ensuring equity and inclusivity, and improving communication on accessibility and suitability for residents.

Consensus was taken and it was agreed that the criteria will not be weighted. Staff was directed to revise the criteria based on feedback and present at a future meeting.

Council recessed at 12:22 p.m. and resumed at 1:17 p.m.

10.2 Finance Department

10.2.1 Property Tax Rebate 2026

Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance was in attendance and reviewed her report titled “Property Tax Rebate 2026/27”, (circulated with the agenda) providing an option to consider household size in the determination of the rebate.

The proposed increase to the rebate program was discussed. Concerns were raised about basing the rebate on household size, including potential exclusion of residents without multiple household members. It was noted that maintaining previous users and adding household size would require an increased budget.

Mayor McLean-Wile left the meeting at 1:46 p.m.

Moved by Councillor Reinhardt, seconded by Councillor Burns that the Policy and Strategy Committee recommends to Municipal Council that Municipal Council adopt the changes to the calculation for the Property Tax Rebate Program as presented, and further that they be included in the 2026-27 Draft Operating Budget with a rebate of up to \$700.

Question was raised on whether data collection on households should be added to the application form, so that future decisions are based on actual information collected.

Motion was voted on and defeated - Opposed unanimously.

Direction was given to not collect data on household size and to include CPI adjustments to the income thresholds for the 2026-27 program.

10.2.2 Amendments to Policy 049 Property Tax Rebate

Not required as 10.2.1 was defeated.

10.3 Administration

10.3.1 Draft Housing Strategy Engagement Results

Alex Dumaresq, Deputy CAO, gave a presentation titled “Draft Housing Strategy, What We Heard Report” (attached to the minutes) as part of his report titled “Housing Strategy Development – What We Heard Report” circulated with the agenda, providing an overview of the community engagement sessions, next steps and possible solutions.

Moved by Councillor Hubley, seconded by Councillor Burns that the Policy and Strategy Committee recommends to Municipal Council that Municipal Council adopt the housing strategy as presented.

Clarification was provided on the changes to the secondary suites program and if a landbank system would have criteria developed. Mr. Dumaresq indicated the first year would determine whether it was feasible, and the Surplus Land Policies and Procedures, has criteria.

The Motion on the floor was voted on and carried unanimously.

Councillor Brooks left the meeting at 2:03 p.m.

10.3.2 Election 2024 Overview

April Whynot-Lohnes, Municipal Clerk gave a presentation on “2024 Municipal Election Overview” (attached to the Minutes), providing details on feedback received from Electors, Candidates and the Returning Officer along with recommendations on changes for future elections.

Ms. Whynot-Lohnes's presentation highlighted the following:

- Executive Summary
- Voter Participation Trends (2016-2024)
- Key Issues Raised
- Paper vs. Electronic Voting
- Voter Turnout by Age & Technology
- Accessibility, Voter Help Centres & Privacy
- Accessibility & Security Recommendations
- Candidate Visibility Challenges
- Provincial Oversight Challenges
- Data Challenges
- Mail Delivery Challenges
- Work Plan – Direction (2028 Election)

Discussion focused on increasing voter participation, especially among residents under 50. It was noted that candidates are responsible for engaging voters, while municipalities can provide guidance and should not organize debates. Concerns were raised about diversity, with few young or racialized candidates running. It was clarified that election signs can be placed in outside the district a candidate is running.

11. Mayor's/Deputy Mayor's/Councillors' Matters - Nil

12. Added Items – Nil

13. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

Evaluation of Visitor Services

January 20, 2026



Agenda

- Background
- Introduction
- Visitor Services Overview
- Mobile VIC
- Additional Visitor Information Services
- Program Outputs
- Program Outcomes
- Year-Over-Year Trends
- Key Takeaways
- Next Steps



Background

Transition to Mobile Visitor Information Services

- In 2023, the Municipality transitioned to a Mobile Visitor Information Centre (VIC) model
- Shift aligned with:
 - Changing visitor behaviours
 - Need for greater flexibility and outreach
 - Improved access at events and high-traffic locations
- Prior to 2023, MODL cost-shared a brick-and-mortar VIC with the Town of Bridgewater (2013–April 30, 2023)
- Transition followed notice that the Town would no longer continue the cost-sharing arrangement



Introduction

- Provided in response to Council direction to evaluate Mobile Visitor Information Services and establish output and outcome measures
- Mobile VIC delivers in-person visitor information through seasonal pop-up locations at events and high-traffic areas
- Pop-ups support access to local information, promotion of experiences/events/businesses, and municipal visibility
- Mobile VIC is one part of a broader Visitor Information Services model (in-person + digital + industry support)



Visitor Services Overview

What the Program includes

Mobile VIC pop-ups are one component of a broader Visitor Information Services model that includes:

- Phone & email travel counselling
- Digital visitor information (ExploreMODL.ca)
- Tourism social media and visitor messaging
- Familiarization (FAM) tours and business visits
- Distribution of print materials
- Support for tourism initiatives and events



Mobile VIC

Seasonal In-Person Engagement

- Operate during peak tourism season
- Delivered at community events and high-traffic locations
- Staff provide information on:
 - Local businesses and experiences
 - Parks, trails, and beaches
 - Community events
- Branded tent and brochure racks at each location
- Engagement tools:
 - Prize draws at high-traffic events
 - Small giveaways at community-based events



Mobile VIC Delivery Model

Staffing & Operational Context

- Original target (2023): ~3 pop-ups per week
- Adjusted standard: minimum of 2 pop-ups per week
- Adjustment reflects:
 - Event prep, travel, setup, and teardown time
 - Post-event reporting requirements
 - Balance with other core visitor service duties
- Additional pop-ups attended where staff capacity allows



Additional Visitor Information Services

Email, Phone, & Social Media

- Visitor counselling supports trip planning and in-destination decisions
- Increasing reliance on social media direct messages
- Provides year-round access to visitor information

Distribution of Visitor Materials

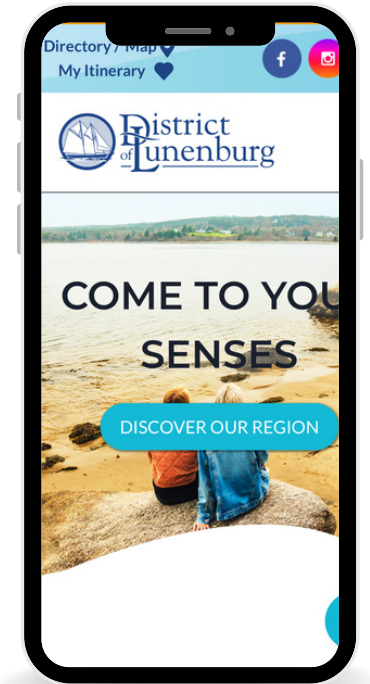
- Annual collection and distribution of brochures and maps
- Materials shared with community and provincial VICs



Digital Presence & Content Management

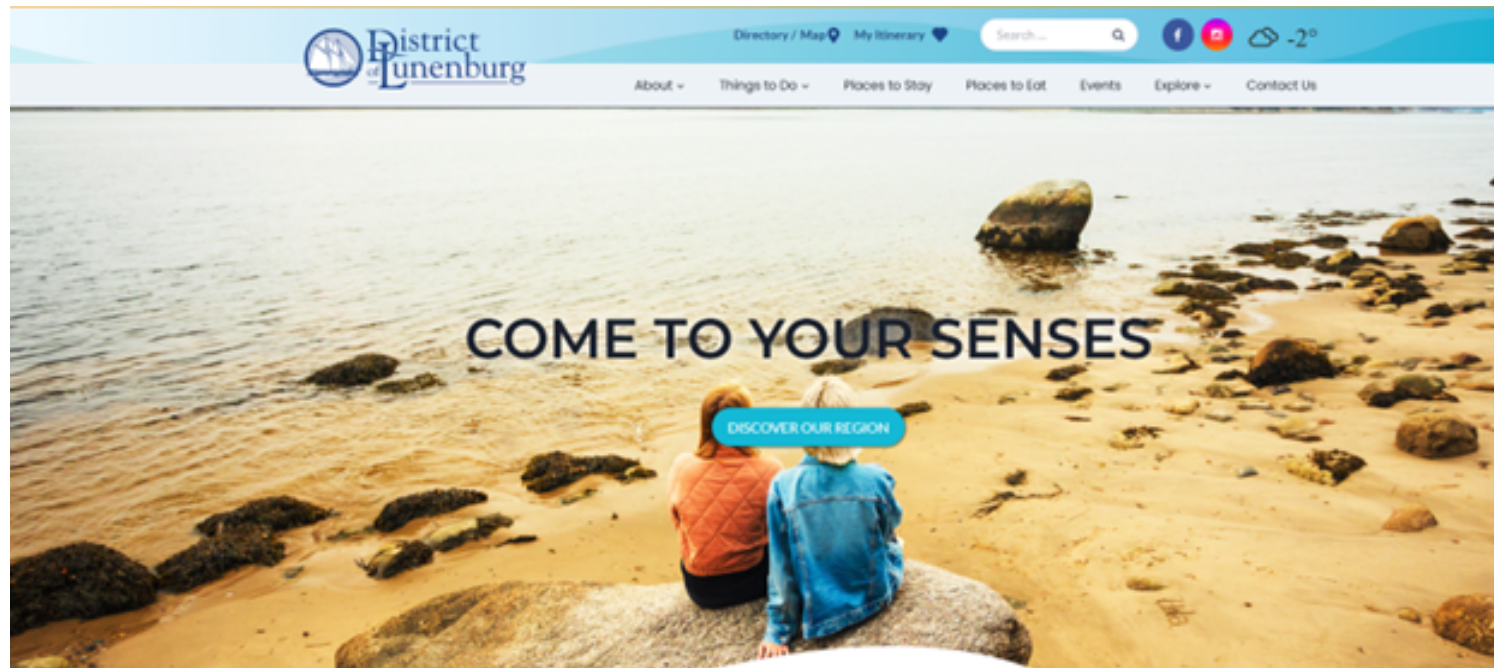
Online Visitor Services

- Maintain and update ExploreMODL.ca:
 - Annual review of business listings
 - Add new businesses, remove outdated listings
 - Add events to online event calendar
 - Create blog and website content
- Manage tourism social media:
 - Weekly Instagram feed posts
 - Daily Instagram stories
 - Daily Facebook posts (plus shared content)



Digital Presence & Content Management Continued

- March 2025:
 - Tourism website redevelopment completed
 - Funded through Tourism Nova Scotia's Tourism Digital Assistance Program
 - Improved access to tourism information for visitors and locals



Operations & Staffing Model



- Core Visitor Services delivered year-round by permanent staff
- Peak season support:
 - Visitor Services Manager (full-time seasonal)
 - Tourism Ambassador (full-time seasonal)
 - Both positions: May–August, 35 hours/week



- Off-season digital support:
 - Part-time staff (approx. 10 hrs/week)
 - September–March

Program Outputs

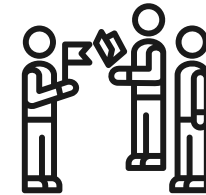
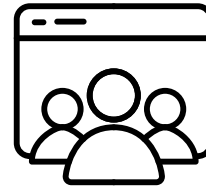
How Activity is Measured

- Email & Phone
 - Number of visitor inquiries responded to (peak season)
- Print Distribution
 - Number of brochures and maps distributed
 - Number of tourism operators represented
- Familiarization Tours
 - Number of tourism businesses visited
- Digital Services
 - Number of business listings reviewed and updated
 - Number of blog posts or content pieces created
 - Volume and frequency of social media content
 - Social media growth and engagement metrics



Program Outcomes

What the Program Achieves



Visitor Experience & Access

- Improved access to timely, accurate information
- Enhanced trip planning and in-destination decision-making
- Increased awareness of experiences and events with District

Information Quality

- More accurate and consistent tourism information
- Reduced reliance on outdated content

Staff Capacity

- Improved staff knowledge through FAM tours
- Greater confidence responding to visitor inquiries
- Stronger relationships with tourism operators

Mobile VIC Evaluation Framework

Data Collection & Reporting

- At each pop-up, staff track:
 - Number of visitor interactions
 - Visitor geographic origin
 - Type of information requested
- Data reported monthly to the Province (June–August)
- Provincial reporting required as a condition of funding



Event Reporting

Assessing Individual Locations

- Event report completed after each pop-up
- Introduced in 2023 as a standardized evaluation tool
- Reports include:
 - Event details (location, date, weather, attendance)
 - Number of direct interactions
 - Visitor feedback and qualitative observations
 - Prize draw participation (if applicable)
 - Staff recommendation for future attendance
- Used to inform annual planning and scheduling decisions



Mobile VIC Outputs & Outcomes

Program Performance Framework

Outputs

- Number of pop-ups delivered
- Number of locations and events attended
- Number of visitor interactions
- Number of prize draws or giveaways
- Number of event reports completed

Outcomes

- Increased awareness of local experiences & businesses
- Improved access to in-person visitor information
- Better understanding of visitor interests & origins
- Stronger municipal visibility in regional tourism
- Improved ability to adjust scheduling based on performance



Year-Over-Year Trends

Why This Review Matters

- Reviews three seasons of Mobile VIC delivery
- Identifies:
 - Engagement trends
 - High- and low-performing locations
 - Opportunities for improved efficiency
- Data supports operational decision-making, not total tourism volume



2023

Establishing the Baseline

- 25 Mobile VIC pop-ups
- 958 visitor interactions
- High interaction volume driven by repeated Town of Lunenburg (TOL) waterfront pop-ups
- Engagement often brief and focused on TOL inquiries
- Strong performance at:
 - Michelin Seniors' Expo
 - More on the Shore Vendor Showcase
- Trade-show-style events identified as high-value
- Lower-value locations:
 - Lunenburg Waterfront
 - South Shore Exhibition



2024

Program Adjustments

- 23 pop-ups scheduled
- 4 cancellations (weather and staff illness)
- 422 visitor interactions
- Deliberate shift away from TOL waterfront pop-ups
- New locations piloted:
 - Select businesses
 - Parks and trails
- Strong performance continued at multi-vendor, trade-show-style events



2025

Improved Targeting

- 21 pop-ups scheduled
- 1 weather cancellation
- 666 visitor interactions
- Fewer pop-ups, higher overall engagement
- Strong locations included:
 - The Ovens
 - Hirtle's Beach
 - South Shore Shunpike
 - Maritime Mega Geocaching events
- Only two locations considered low-performing



Top Visitor Interests

Consistent Year-Over-Year Findings

- Outdoor experiences remain the top driver of visitor interest
- Beaches and trails most frequently requested
- Most popular materials:
 - Trail Map brochure
 - District of Lunenburg Tourism Map



Key Takeaways

- Mobile VIC provides valuable insight into visitor behaviour
- Data supports:
 - Better location selection
 - Improved staff efficiency
 - More targeted engagement
- Not intended as a measure of total tourism activity
- Results should be interpreted within this context



Looking Ahead

Future Direction

- Continue prioritizing:
 - High-impact, visitor-focused service delivery
 - Trade-show-style and high-engagement events
- Limit low-performing locations unless tied to larger initiatives
- Maintain flexibility to adjust delivery based on:
 - Weather
 - Staffing capacity
 - Event performance



Next Steps

Improving Data & Reporting

- Begin tracking number of social media inquiries year-round
- Expand phone and email tracking outside peak season
- Compile and review website performance metrics to improve understanding of visitor online information use
- Strengthen understanding of visitor information needs across all channels
- Support more complete reporting and informed service planning



Questions?



Parks Evaluation Criteria

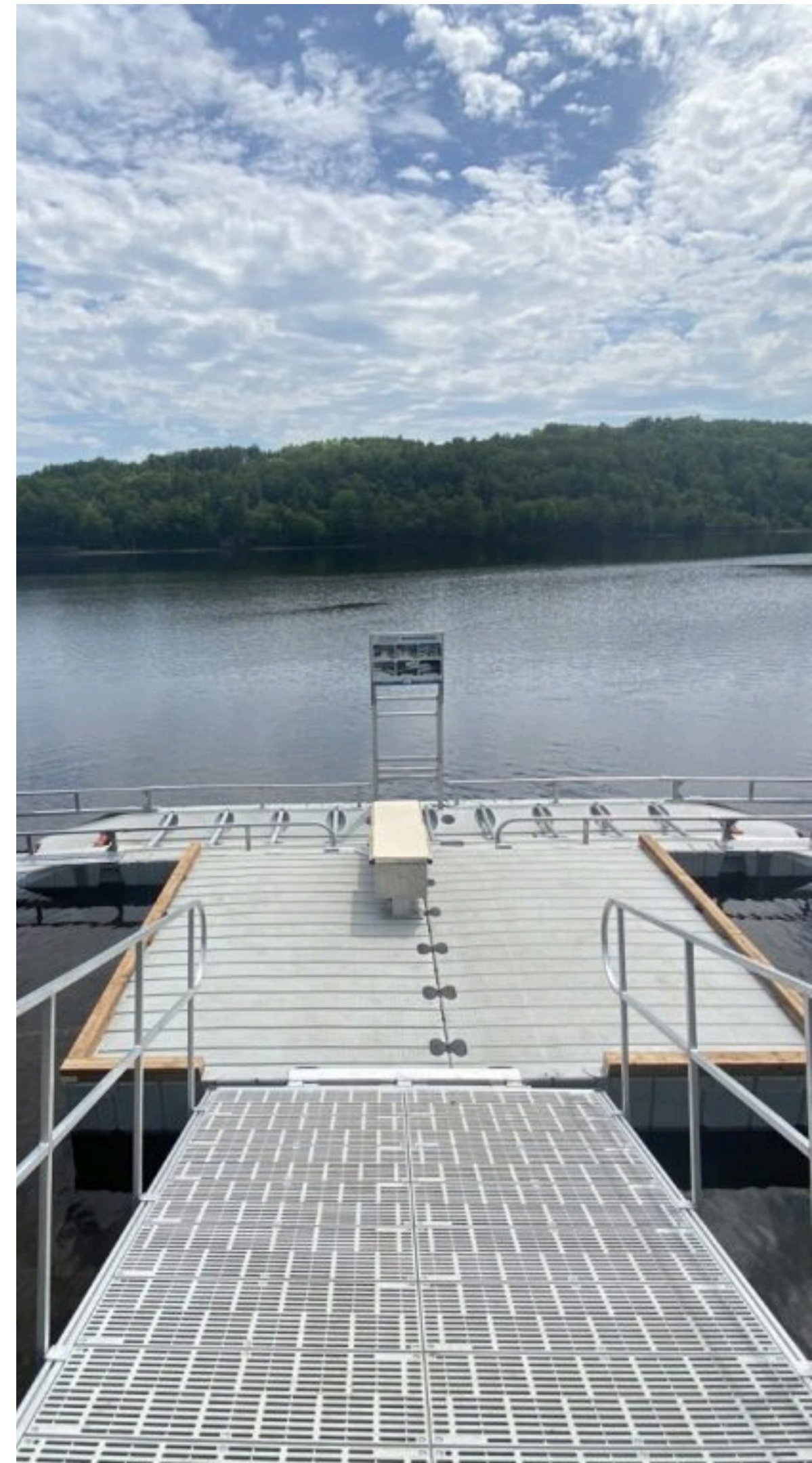
Policy & Strategy Discussion

January 20, 2026



Purpose

- To present draft **park evaluation criteria and framework** for discussion



Questions to Consider



Any evaluation criteria that is missing?

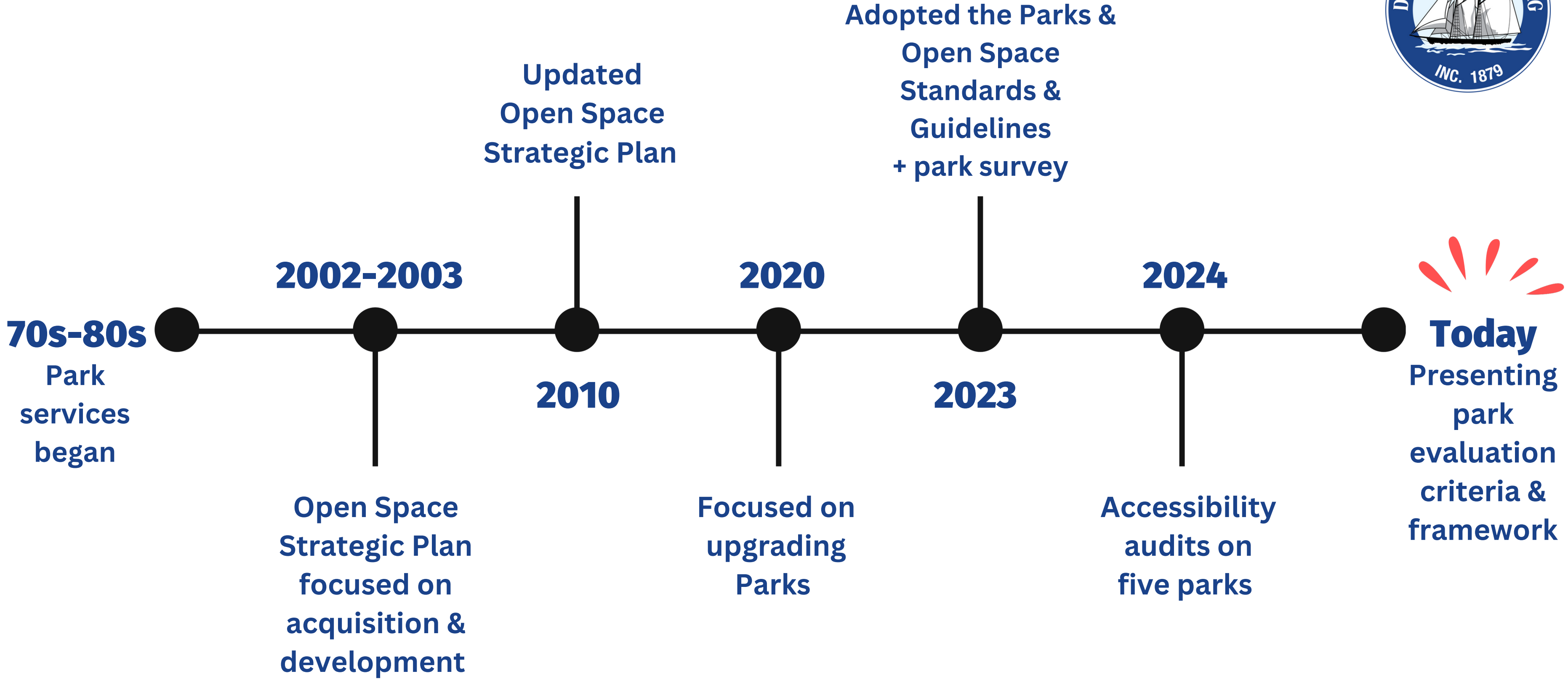
Any evaluation criteria that you cannot live with, and you feel must be removed?

Should some criteria have more weight than others? What ones? Do they need to be weighted at all?

Does the definition need to be revised?



Park Services



Proposed Park Evaluation Criteria



Safety



- **The absence of hazards.** Risk and liability are factors when assessing safety of amenities and assets.

Safety should always be a priority criterion



Physical Condition



- The physical condition of park amenities which is impacted by maintenance, age, degradation, and the wear and tear they endure over time from use and exposure to environmental elements.

Playgrounds

Wayfinding Signs

Park Furniture



Is the park well maintained? Are park amenities in good condition?



Welcoming & Safe



- The park is inclusive and well-maintained, providing a public space that is accessible to everyone.
- It is designed and managed to minimize hazards and reduce fear of crime. It is not just the absence of danger but a safe place that fosters belonging, comfort, and positive engagement.

Belonging

Comfort

Safety



Accessible



- People of **all ages and abilities** can enter, navigate and use the park without challenge. Accessibility supports diverse needs and capabilities.
- **Universal design principles** are used to eliminate barriers. Upgrades, renovations and new builds must adhere to the provincial accessibility standards and legislation.



Can people of all ages & abilities get around the park?



Do people know about the facility and what they can do there?



Are we following Provincial accessibility standards?



Positive User Experience



- A holistic and satisfying interaction with the space that offers physical, mental, social and/or emotional benefits.



Does the park provide a diverse range of amenities & activities?



Is the park comfortable to spend time in?



Is the park reflective of the communities they serve?



Does the surrounding community use the park? Why or why not?



Does the park design & programming reflect the culture & interests of the demographics?



Environmental Impact & Sustainability



- Managing parks in a way that preserves natural ecosystems, supports biodiversity and minimizes negative impact, while also ensuring the ability to enjoy them for future generations.



Does the park protect or enhance natural areas, water quality or biodiversity?



Can investment improve stormwater management or increase tree canopy?



Can improvements reduce maintenance, energy use or carbon footprint?

**Is the park at risk if we do not invest?
(e.g., Woolly Adelgid)**



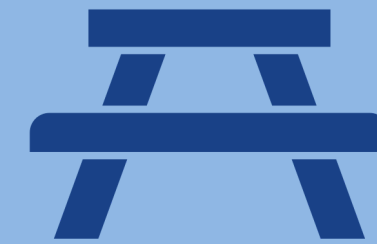
Adaptability



- A park can adjust to changing environmental conditions, community needs and long-term use.



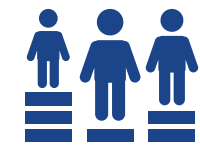
A space that can be used for multiple activities



Moveable benches & picnic tables to accommodate different community needs and activities



Criteria specific to determining if a new park is needed



- Park Equity



- Align with Strategic Plans



- Community Support & Engagement



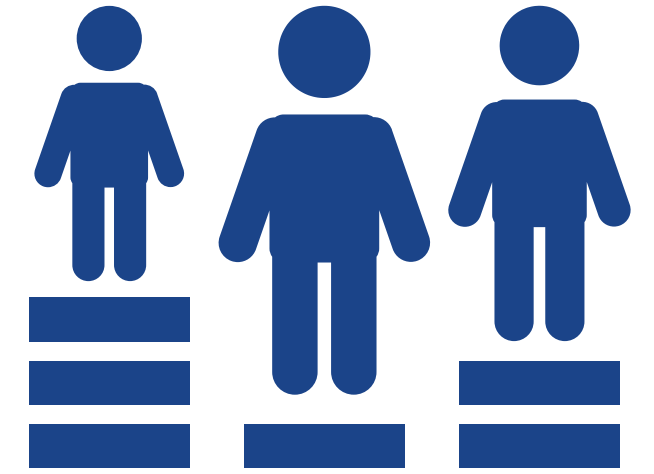
- Financial Considerations



- Reflects Populations & Demographics



Park Equity



- The fair and just distribution of quality parks and green spaces to ensure all communities have access to parks.
- Providing the appropriate level of investment based on need—not simply giving everyone the same amount.

Expanding park access and recreational equipment opportunities for all people, of all races, ethnicities, income and abilities.



Align with Strategic Plans



- Does the **park project align** with our municipal, recreation and park plans?

Parks & Open Space Standards & Guidelines

Accessibility Plan

Active Transportation Plan

Open Space Plan

Climate Action Plan

- Does it support **Council's strategic priorities** – investing in infrastructure (upgrading what we own before investing new), quality of life, improving communications, community fabric & regional economic development?

Are we connecting with our residents and users to ensure our plans are reflective of current day?



Community Support & Engagement



- An active, **collaborative process** where residents help plan, design, and manage local green spaces—building long-term relationships and shared ownership so parks genuinely reflect community needs.

Sawpit Wharf Park

Petite Riviere Community Park

River Ridge Common

Riverport & Area Park



Does the park hold historical or cultural significance to the community?



Are there opportunities for partnerships?



Has the community identified this park as a priority through surveys?



Financial Considerations



- Weighing the **benefits to communities** to the **cost involved**. Considering lifecycle costs, long-term maintenance, replacement costs and whether partnerships can offset costs or improve service delivery.



Can we afford to make this investment?

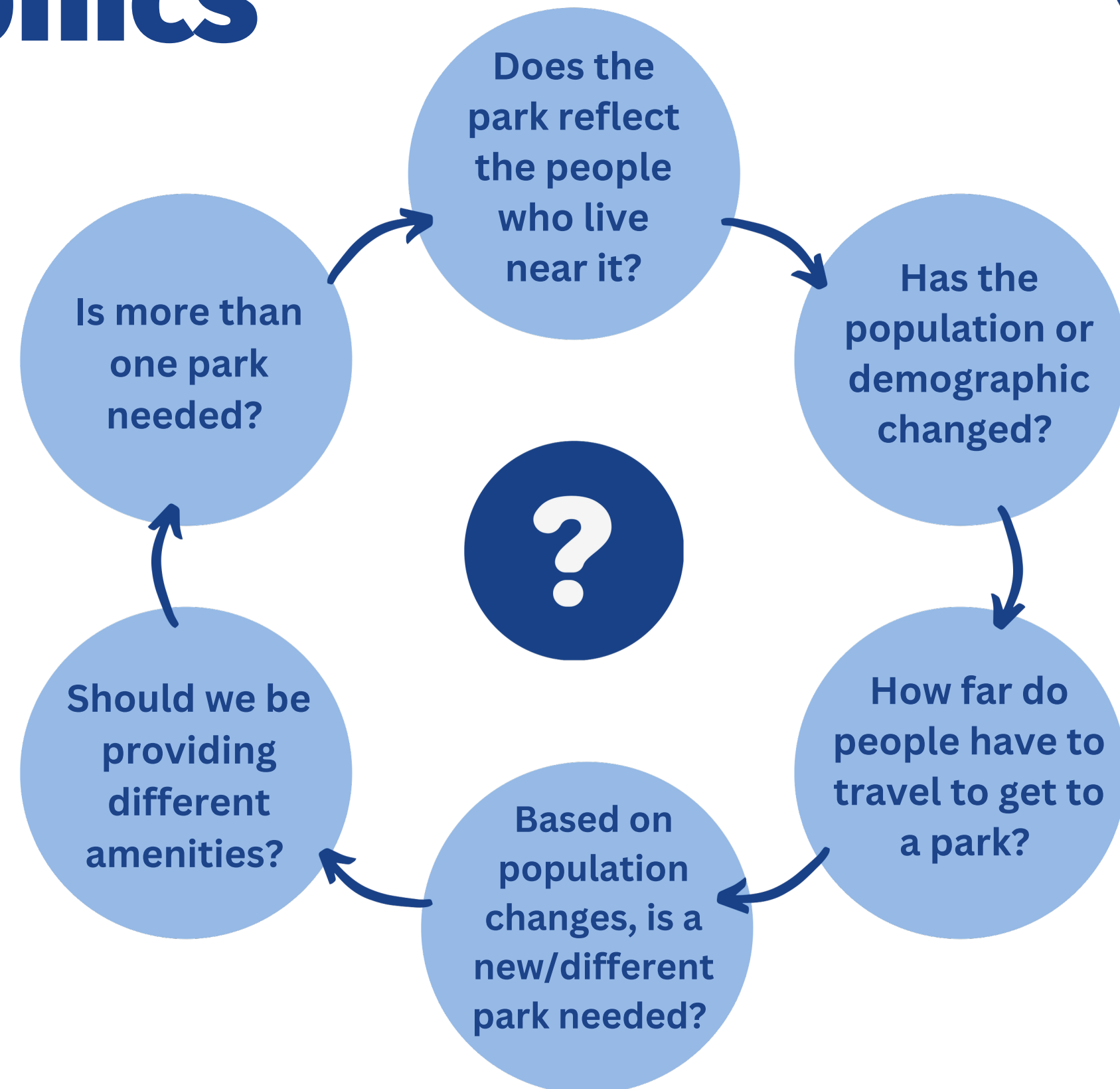
What are the costs if we don't?
Increase in crime, impacts to physical, mental and emotional health?



Reflects Population & Demographics



Who lives near the park or within the geographic area?



Evaluation Criteria Summary



- Safety



- Positive User Experience



- Align with Strategic Plans



- Physical Condition



- Environmental Impact & Sustainability



- Community Support & Engagement



- Welcoming & Safe



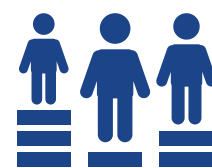
- Adaptability



- Financial Considerations



- Accessible



- Park Equity



- Reflects Populations & Demographics



Evaluation Criteria Framework

CRITERIA					
SAFETY - the absence of hazards.	Any physical hazards?	Regular maintenance checks? Any concerns identified?	Any broken equipment?	Are risks so high the park should be closed?	Anything else?
PHYSICAL CONDITION - the general state, functionality, maintenance and quality of each park's natural environment, features, and amenities. The condition can be impacted by maintenance, age of the park/amenity, degradation, and wear and tear endured overtime from use and exposure to environmental elements.	Are park amenities in good condition?	Is the park well maintained?	Any concerns identified from maintenance inspections reports / checklists?	Any physical limitations? (e.g., limited space for additional parking)?	Anything else?
WELCOMING & SAFE – inclusive and well-maintained, providing a public space that is accessible to everyone. This criterion looks beyond the park and amenities being free from hazards and being designed to reduce crimes – it is about a safe place that fosters belonging, comfort, and positive engagement.	Is there lighting / seating areas, shady pathways?	Is there external, internal wayfinding?	Is there a variety of activities to engage users?	Is the park comfortable to spend time in?	Anything else?
ACCESSIBLE - people of all abilities can enter, navigate and use the park without challenge. It is about minimizing barriers.	Can people of all ages and abilities can enter, navigate and use the park without challenge? Is accessibility supporting diverse needs and capabilities?	Do people know about the facility and what they can do there?	Are Provincial accessibility regulations being met?		Anything else?

Evaluation Criteria Framework

CRITERIA					
<p>POSITIVE USER EXPERIENCE – a holistic and satisfying interaction with the space, that offers physical, mental, social and/or emotional benefits.</p>	<p>Does the park provide a diverse range of amenities and activities?</p>	<p>Is the park comfortable to spend time in?</p>	<p>Do all community members feel welcome and safe in and around the park?</p>	<p>Is the park clean?</p>	<p>Anything else?</p>
<p>ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT & SUSTAINABILITY – managing parks in a way that preserves natural ecosystems, supports biodiversity and minimizes negative impact, while also ensuring the ability to enjoy them for future generations.</p>	<p>Does the park protect or enhance natural areas (water quality or biodiversity)?</p>	<p>Can investment improve things like storm water management or increase tree canopy?</p> <p>Does the park support or enhance environmental sustainability and resilience?</p>	<p>Can improvements reduce maintenance, energy use or carbon footprint?</p>	<p>Is the park at risk if we do not invest (i.e. hemlock woolly adelgid)?</p>	<p>Anything else?</p>
<p>ADAPTABILITY – can adjust to changing environmental conditions, community need and long-term use.</p>	<p>Can the space be used for multiple activities?</p>	<p>Can the space be easily and inexpensively changed to address changing needs?</p>			<p>Anything else?</p>

Evaluation Criteria Framework

Determining New Parks & Current

CRITERIA					
<p>PARK EQUITY - the fair and just distribution of quality parks and green spaces to ensure all communities have access to parks. It is about providing the appropriate level of investment based on need – not simply giving everyone the same amount. Expanding park access and recreational opportunities for all people, of all races, ethnicities, income and abilities.</p>	<p>Do different neighbourhoods have equitable access to open spaces</p>	<p>Are amenities of equal quality?</p>	<p>Are amenities culturally relevant and appropriate for diverse users?</p>	<p>Are the maintenance standards being met?</p>	<p>Anything else?</p>
<p>ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLANS – does the investment align with municipal plans such as the Parks Standards document and strategic priorities such as investing in infrastructure, regional economic development, climate resiliency and quality of life.</p>	<p>Are minimum standards being met?</p>	<p>Align with Council's Strategic Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure • Regional Economic Dev. • Quality of Life • Empowering Communities 	<p>Align with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility Plan • AT Plan • OSSP • Climate Action Plan 	<p>Should any plans/priorities be revised, reviewed and/or updated?</p>	<p>Anything else?</p>
<p>COMMUNITY SUPPORT & ENGAGEMENT – Active collaborative process where residents help plan, design and manage local green spaces – building long-term relationships and shared ownership so parks genuinely reflect community needs.</p>	<p>Does the park hold historical or cultural significance to the community?</p>	<p>Are there opportunities for partnerships (i.e. management agreements / stewardship agreements)?</p>	<p>Has the community identified this park as a priority through surveys, emails etc.?</p>		<p>Anything else?</p>
<p>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – weighing the benefits to communities to the cost involved. Considering lifecycle costs, long-term maintenance, replacement costs and whether funding partners or partnerships (such as management agreements) can offset costs or improve service delivery.</p>	<p>Can we afford to make the investment (reserves, grants)?</p>	<p>Any funding or community partners?</p>	<p>What are the costs if we don't invest? (i.e. increase crime, impacts to physical, mental, emotional health, economic impact)</p>	<p>What are the expected life cycle costs? Long term maintenance? Will service be improved?</p>	<p>Anything else?</p>
<p>REFLECTS POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS - Who lives near the park or within the geographic area. The characteristics of the people such as age, gender, ethnicity, income, education, marital status and household size.</p>	<p>Is the park reflective of the communities it serves?</p>	<p>Does the surrounding community use the park; why, why not?</p>	<p>Does the park design and programming reflect the culture and interest of the demographics?</p>	<p>Is more than one park needed? Are community-based organizations involved in the park discussions and operations?</p>	<p>Anything else?</p>

Recommendations

- Prioritize **updating existing parks** to bring to minimum standards before creating new ones, while balancing the need for any potential new parks.
- When upgrading or adding parks, **invest in one larger project** and **two smaller projects** each fiscal year.
- Ensure **funding is balanced** across all park types - not just regional or destination parks, but also to neighbourhood parks or parkettes.



Questions Revisited



Any evaluation criteria that is missing?

Any evaluation criteria that you cannot live with, and you feel must be removed?

Should some criteria have more weight than others? What ones? Do they need to be weighted at all?

Does the definition need to be revised?



Next Steps

1. Bring a **Report to Council** including:
 - **Update for each park** using the **criteria and framework**
 - Identify parks that are in the **maintenance stage**
2. **Seek direction on future investments** from council



Motion to Council

“That the Policy and Strategy Committee recommend to Council to adopt the parks evaluation criteria and framework as presented.”



Thank you!
Questions?





Draft Housing Strategy What We Heard Report

Policy and Strategy Committee Discussion

Presentation to the Policy and Strategy Committee January 2026



Background



Housing Stock estimates

- Total units
 - 12,600 housing units
 - current construction rates will result in 14,000 units by 2030
 - 16,000 units are needed to return affordability to pre-pandemic levels
 - **Need to add between 80-100 additional units a year**
- Affordability gap:
 - 2022 using median household income data for the municipality
 - maximum affordable price for a house was \$264,000,
 - median sale price was \$335,000,
 - **leaving an affordability gap of \$71,000.**



Jurisdiction and Authority

Federal Government

- Sets national funding programs; provides incentives (loans, grants, tax benefits)
- CMHC - Crown corporation responsible for research, financing, and investment
- Build Canada Homes – Focus on affordability and pace of construction
- National economic policy

Provincial Government

- Sets framework for municipal government, land-use planning, and building codes
- Provides low income and social housing
- Provincial economic policy
- Labour and trades management (programs, education, labour laws, etc.)

Municipal Government

- Provision of 'necessary or desirable' *things* to maintain safe and viable communities
- Provides infrastructure (i.e. water and wastewater, transit, solid waste and recycling, etc.)
- Controls local land-use planning and sets property taxes

3 Strategic Areas of focus

- 1. Create an environment for growth:** work regionally to provide more serviced land for high density development and speed up the municipal regulatory processes.
- 2. Facilitate private sector housing starts:** remove barriers that prevent or slow construction of new units.
- 3. Catalyze community efforts to provide housing solutions:** provide wraparound support for community groups who want to provide non-profit housing or develop innovative housing options.

Engagement



Raw engagement statistics

- Online:
 - 365 unique visitors
 - 53 reached level of engaged participant
- 4 in person events
 - Dayspring, New Germany, Broad Cove, LCLC pop-up
 - 20 attendees
 - High quality, in-depth discussions



Engagement analysis

- Low volume, excellent cross-section of perspectives, and high quality input.
- Common themes:
 - A need for alternative housing options
 - A lack of provincial support (funding, available programs, and related services like health)
 - A desire for residents to stay in their community (including ageing in place)
- High Alignment with proposed municipal actions*
 - *Recognizing limits of municipal jurisdiction



Next Steps

- Recommend adoption of municipal actions in the draft strategy
- Begin implementation planning
- Incorporation in 2026/27 budget





Solutions



Directions

Environment for Growth

1. Collaborate with partner municipalities to provide infrastructure for high density housing
2. Establish a land bank of municipal property available for housing development

Facilitate Private sector housing starts

1. Adopt e-permitting and advocate for improved federal/provincial regulation of development
2. Promote the use of the provincial secondary suites program and advocate for improvements to the program
3. Maintain a flexible approach when considering housing proposals

Catalyze community efforts

1. Establish a pre-development grant for non-profit housing projects
2. Prioritize access to the municipal land bank to non-profit projects
3. Facilitate and support non-profit activity and networking throughout the region
4. Develop a property tax reduction program for non-profit housing providers mirroring the income-based property tax rebate for individual homeowners.

Type	Option	Implementation	Budget
General actions	Regional cooperation	Ongoing	\$0- Incorporated into existing staff workplans
	Land bank	2026/27	\$0- Establishment and promotion – acquisition and improvement costs will vary
	Land use plan	Ongoing	\$0 – Incorporated into planning
Private market actions	Preparatory actions	Ongoing	\$0 – Incorporated into land-use
	Secondary dwelling program	2027/28	\$50,000
Investment – urban/sub-urban	Improve transit connections	2026/27	\$250,000-300,000
	E-permitting	Complete (2025/26)	\$150,000 (one-time, regional)
Investment – rural/deeply rural	Advocate for policy and funding reforms	Ongoing	\$0 – Incorporated into existing staff workplans
	Private road standards	2026/27	Included in CAO's workplan
Non-market housing actions	Pre-development fund	2027/28	\$100,000-200,000
	Support non-market housing groups	2027/28	\$100,000
	Evaluation guide	2026/27	\$5,000 one-time cost
	Tax rebate program	2027/28	\$50,000-100,000



2024 Municipal Election Review

Electronic Voting, Participation, and Key Findings

January 20, 2026





Executive Summary

- Second consecutive election with 100% electronic voting
- All ballots cast online or by phone
- Voter participation increased by 988 compared to 2020
- Continued slow growth in civic engagement

- Feedback gathered from:
 - Electors
 - Candidates
 - Returning Officer





Voter Participation Trends (2016–2024)

- 2016: Hybrid voting (electronic advance + paper ballots) – 8,449 voters
- 2020: Fully electronic due to COVID – +635 voters
- 2024: Fully electronic – +988 voters

Steady upward trend over three election cycles





Key Issues Raised

- Electors:
 - Paper vs. electronic ballots
 - Security and confidentiality
 - Limited access to candidate information
- Candidates:
 - Campaign signage rules
 - Electoral boundaries
 - Supporting voters during the election
- Returning Officer:
 - Accuracy and completeness of the elector list



Paper vs. Electronic Voting

- Paper ballots viewed as costly and logistically challenging
- Strong consensus to continue electronic voting
- Voters (70+) primarily used internet voting – shift from 2020
- No clear evidence paper ballots would increase turnout

Recommendation - Focus resources on **public education campaigns** to boost turnout, especially among voters **under 50**, who have lower participation.



Voter Turnout by Age & Technology

- Total eligible voters: 22,171
- Total voters: 10,072 (45.4% turnout)
- 80% voted by internet, 20% by phone
- Lower participation among voters under 50





Accessibility, Voter Help Centres & Privacy

- Phone voting and in-person Voter Help Centres offered
- Voter Help Centres used by ~1% of eligible voters
- Important for accessibility and civic engagement
- Security measures included:
 - Two-step login
 - Encryption
 - Anonymous ballots
 - Auditing capability





Accessibility & Security Recommendations

Recommendations:

- 1) Make online voting **easier to use, mobile-friendly**, and compatible with **assistive technologies**; provide **multiple languages** if needed.
- 2) Clearly explain how **voter data is protected** to build trust.
- 3) Promote the **voter audit system** so people can confirm their vote was counted correctly.



Candidate Visibility Challenges

- No single platform for candidate information
- Limited name recognition
- Strong preference for face-to-face engagement

Options:

- 1) Post **standard candidate profiles** online with bios, photos, and contact info.
- 2) Host **town halls and Q&A sessions** for voter engagement.
- 3) Use **social media** to promote all candidates equally.
- 4) Provide **clear, consistent materials** online and in print.
- 5) Collaborate with **local media** for fair coverage of all candidates.



Provincial Oversight Challenges

- Lack of provincial standards for electronic voting
- Need to modernize the Municipal Elections Act

Recommendations:

- 1) The Province should review the Municipal Elections Act to set clear, province-wide standards for electronic voting, covering **security, accessibility, transparency, auditing, oversight, and public consultation.**

Data Challenges

- Limited visibility of elector movement between municipalities
- Data accuracy and mail delivery issues persist

Recommendation:

- 1) Work with ENS to allow **real-time updates** to municipal elector records using **read-only access** to other jurisdictions.
- 2) ENS capture and verify **full mailing addresses** using up-to-date Canada Post data to reduce errors and improve accuracy.
- 3) Vendors provide a **data verification file** before mailing to catch errors and prevent misdirected mail.

Mail Delivery Challenges

Recommendation:

- 1) Discuss with ENS and Canada Post to identify and address **mail delivery issues** experienced by other municipalities.
- 1) Develop and communicate **province-wide protocols** for how Canada Post handles undeliverable or redirected election mail, including **forwarding rules, returns, and formal directives** to ensure consistent practices.





Work Plan - DIRECTION

2025

- Council review of 2024 election findings
- Confirm policy direction for 2028 election

2026

- Engagement with Elections Nova Scotia and Province
- Advocate for legislative updates and data-sharing improvements

2027

- Develop voter and candidate engagement strategies
- Design communication, education, and visibility initiatives

2028

- Launch voter education and outreach campaigns
- Implement candidate information and engagement tools

