

## Town of Truro Community Plan

# COMMUNITY ACTION

### 6.1 TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

The big purpose for having and periodically renewing the Town of Truro Community Plan is to enable positive change. Planning, prioritizing, and policy development are not ends in themselves, but rather, they are meant to spur actions that make Truro a better place. This section of our 2023 Community Plan considers how to make progress on Truro's Community Goals through collaborative actions of community and local governments.

The 2010 Town of Truro Community Sustainability Plan presented a series of recommendations and project opportunities in pursuit of a sustainable community. Many of the changes called for in the *Truro, Have Your Say* community engagement that was at the core of that Plan have been achieved. The renewed 2023 Town of Truro Community Plan is centred on a series of sixteen Community Goals that reflect the visions and values of the community and Council, as expressed in the *Truro, Let's Connect* project:

Inclusive Community	Housing for All
Attractive Community	Resilient Community
Vibrant Community	Strong Regional Centre
Active & Healthy Community	Collaborative Community
Steward of the Environment	Prosperous Community
Growing Sustainably	Good Governance
Fiscally Responsible	Safe & Secure Community
Engaged Community	Quality Infrastructure & Services



Sustainability describes the capacity to endure. In the context of community, it implies not only survival but flourishing in the present in ways that account for the needs of future generations. Each of the Community Goals above elaborates the overall vision of sustainability that continues to guide Council as articulated in its 2009 Town of Truro Sustainability Charter:



***The Mayor and Council of the Town of Truro  
commit to developing a sustainable community.***

***Our actions and policies will consider the needs  
of both current and future citizens of Truro.***

***Our vision for a sustainable Truro reflects our  
responsibility to balance:***

***Stewardship of our natural environment***

***Pursuit of a thriving economy***

***Building a just and vibrant community.***

***We encourage all the citizens of our area to undertake  
these goals.***

## 6.2 GOOD STUFF GETTING DONE

Over the past decade, Truro has experienced dynamic growth - not only in population - but in recreational and entertainment activities on offer, cultural diversity, and a sense that this is a desirable place to be. The 2021 *Truro, Let's Connect* community survey found that 82% of respondents agreed with the statement "Truro is a place where I feel at home." While respondents were split on whether they were satisfied with the variety of 'stuff to do' in Truro, 73% perceived an improvement in the Town's appearance from ten years earlier and 85.3% rated Truro's reputation as a place to live as fair to excellent. Truro can no longer be characterized as sleepy or boring. Cynicism is being replaced by enthusiasm and civic pride.

This section of Truro's Community Plan, Community Action, is about maintaining positive momentum to address areas where improvement is still needed. Looking at good things that have been achieved or are in the process of getting done can inform us about how to tackle other priorities.

The chart below describes good stuff getting done in Truro, with a brief note about how progress has been achieved and resources that contributed. While not an exhaustive list, it highlights community, government, and business actions that have added to quality of life in Truro.

PROJECT	PROCESS	RESOURCES
<p><b>Truro Farmers Market Expansion</b></p> <p>The Truro Farmers Market is a not-for-profit cooperative that has grown from a Saturday morning outdoor in a parking lot to a year-round indoor hub of community and entrepreneurial activity.</p>	<p>The Board of the TFM made a proposal to the Town of Truro to use the former fire service building. The Town worked with the TFM to develop a plan that worked for both the TFM and anticipated future use of the Civic Square.</p>	<p>TFM, Town of Truro, NS Dept. Of Agriculture, Downtown Truro Partnership, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Colchester Regional Development Agency</p>
<p><b>Colchester East Hants Health Centre</b></p> <p>A nearly 350,000 sq. ft. full service regional health facility that opened in 2012 to replace the Colchester Regional Hospital</p>	<p>[What was genesis and who/what gov't. drove it?]</p>	<p>Government of Nova Scotia, Government of Canada, community and corporate donations (about 1/5th of original costs).</p>
<p><b>Public Library &amp; Normal College Renovation</b></p> <p>In 2016, the Truro Branch of the regional library was opened in its new home, the former Normal College on Truro's Civic Square.</p>	<p>The Truro Branch needed a larger and better facility. The Town and heritage advocates sought a way to restore and use the former Normal College while developing a Civic Square. A joint committee was formed, and public input sought.</p>	<p>Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Municipalities of Colchester, East Hants, Truro, Stewiacke, community donations and fund-raising. [Province?]</p>
<p><b>Civic Square Park &amp; Skating Rink</b></p> <p>Transformation of public space in downtown Truro from an under-used broken up space with two empty buildings into a unified fully-used Town centre with public gathering space and outdoor skating rink.</p>	<p>A long-time vision of Municipal leadership and staff, bolstered by public engagement and timely opportunity in relation to library developments, was realized by the Town of Truro in collaboration with community.</p>	<p>Town of Truro, Downtown Truro Partnership, corporate sponsorship.</p>
<p><b>Rath Eastlink Community Centre</b></p> <p>A community recreation and wellness centre featuring a hockey and concert arena, and swimming pool capable of hosting large-scale competitions and events, as well as a water slide, fitness centre, and rock climbing.</p>	<p>Momentum from an unsuccessful bid to host the 2011 Canada Winter Games was seized by community and municipal leaders, forming project committees to develop and oversee the project, guided by community input.</p>	<p>Town of Truro and Municipality of Colchester, Government of Canada, Government of Nova Scotia, corporate sponsorship, event and rental revenues, membership fees.</p>
<p><b>STEPS on Arthur Expansion</b></p> <p>Renovations to Rotary House, development of adjacent building for programming, housing, and rental space, and planning of additional parking and activity space on additional property.</p>	<p>Vision and leadership for project components came from staff and volunteer leadership (both STEPS and its Foundation boards) in collaboration with the Town of Truro and local businesses.</p>	<p>STEPS on Arthur Foundation, Valero Energy Inc. (land donation), Rotary Club of Truro, Town of Truro, Government of Nova Scotia, corporate donations and sponsorship, community donations, Bible Hill Kinsmen.</p>

PROJECT	PROCESS	RESOURCES
<p><b>New Colchester Food Bank Facility</b></p> <p>A custom-built facility on Prince Street featuring improved food storage capacity, and office and community space.</p>	<p>The Food Bank building on Lorne Street was too small and in poor repair. The Town provided a temporary home. A local property developer offered to sell a lot and construct a new facility on Prince Street below cost. Fund-raising.</p>	<p>Fund-raising, community donations, Town of Truro, Municipality of Colchester, United Way, Community Credit Union, local businesses, and developer Joe Pinto.</p>
<p><b>Douglas Street Recreation Centre</b></p> <p>A repurposed elementary school became home to Truro's Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department and diverse activities and community rentals.</p>	<p>The opportunity to develop Douglas Street School as a community centre was seized by the Town's staff and approved by Council.</p>	<p>Town of Truro, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency</p>
<p><b>Truro Housing Outreach Society Haven House</b></p> <p>A trauma-informed, full-support site, including shelter accommodation for 20-25 individuals.</p>	<p>THOS evolved from a church-based volunteer effort to provide emergency shelter in winter. A not-for-profit organization was formed, funds raised, a building on Prince Street was purchased and developed, and staff hired. A better-suited Arthur Street property was renovated and opened in 2022.</p>	<p>Community and corporate donations, in-kind donations, Governments of Nova Scotia, Canada, and Truro, United Way of Colchester County, The Mental health Foundation of Nova Scotia, Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia</p>
<p><b>Cougar Dome Tennis &amp; Multi-sport Facility</b></p> <p>A 15,000 sq. ft. indoor venue for racquet sports, athletics, and golf practice.</p>	<p>This big addition to Truro started with one family's vision, generosity, and hard work. A not-for-profit organization was formed, funds raised, and support garnered from the Town in the form of a no-cost land lease and service provision.</p>	<p>Private donations, Tennis Canada, Town of Truro, lease revenues, Chignecto Central Regional School Board</p>
<p><b>Railyard Mountain Bike Park</b></p> <p>A 40 km. mountain biking trail network in Victoria Park.</p>	<p>The Town of Truro developed the Railyard collaboratively with local mountain biking enthusiasts.</p>	<p>Community volunteers, Town of Truro, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Province of Nova Scotia.</p>
<p><b>More Festivals &amp; Events</b></p> <p>Music, sports, entertainment, and community-cause activities.</p>	<p>The RECC and Civic Square venues have created new opportunities for Truro to host major concerts, music festivals, and sporting events. Rallies and parades have based in the Civic Square. The Town has allowed street closures to accommodate events.</p>	<p>Town of Truro, Millbrook First Nation, Municipality of Colchester, Downtown Truro Partnership, entrepreneurs, community organizers and volunteers, Province of Nova Scotia, corporate sponsors.</p>
<p><b>Other Parks &amp; Green Spaces</b></p> <p>Trails, playgrounds, parks, and community gardens.</p>	<p>Four new parks, two new trails/walkways, and two new community gardens have been added to Truro by the Town with community input and high rates of use.</p>	<p>Town of Truro, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Province of Nova Scotia.</p>

PROJECT	PROCESS	RESOURCES
<p><b>More Restaurants &amp; Outdoor Cafes</b> A variety of new restaurants and cafes, many featuring outdoor sitting areas.</p>	<p>Entrepreneurs, including new arrivals to Truro, have seized the momentum of increasing population and visitors by creating diverse eating and drinking businesses. The Town has allowed more sidewalk extensions.</p>	<p>Private entrepreneurs, Downtown Truro Partnership, Town of Truro.</p>
<p><b>Truro Amateur Athletics Club (TAAC) Grounds Revitalization</b> An imminent redevelopment of Truro's athletic grounds, clubhouse, and baseball field.</p>	<p>Concerned citizens and Truro and Colchester staff staged a public meeting. Committees were formed to create concept and business plans. The resulting proposal was approved by Truro and Colchester Councils. A TAAC Revitalization Committee led fund-raising efforts, with municipal staff and an external project manager.</p>	<p>Local sports organizations, volunteers, Town of Truro, Municipality of Colchester, community and corporate donors, Government of Canada, Government of Nova Scotia.</p>
<p><b>Truro Active Transportation Plan</b> A detailed plan, commissioned by the Town, to develop a network of infrastructure enabling alternatives to cars as ways to get around while encouraging a healthy community through physical activity.</p>	<p>Responding to calls for Truro to become a more walkable, bikeable, and accessible town, a Active Transportation Plan has been drafted by an external consulting company under supervision of a working group made up of Truro staff, Council, and community representatives. Public consultation.</p>	<p>Town of Truro, local experts, consultants.</p>
<p><b>Beautification &amp; Building Renovation</b> Streetscape improvements through signage, landscaping, and building renewal.</p>	<p>Truro's appearance has noticeably improved over the past decade in terms of branded signage, greenspace development and protection, and regulated building development.</p>	<p>Town of Truro, Downtown Truro Partnership, local developers, local business owners, property owners.</p>
<p><b>Colchester East Hants Canadian Mental Health Association Branching Out</b> Acquisition and renovation of a building to better accommodate programming.</p>	<p>Board and staff fund-raising. Strong community and local business support, including a corporate primary partner.</p>	<p>Corporate donations, community fund-raising and donations, private donations, Municipality of Colchester, Town of Truro, Government of Nova Scotia</p>
<p><b>Renewed Truro Municipal Planning Policies</b> Town policies and Land-use Bylaw revised to enable sustainable growth.</p>	<p>Led by the Town's Planning &amp; Development staff reporting to a Plan Review Working Group made up of Council, senior staff, and citizens from the Planning Advisory Committee. Extensive public engagement through a survey and public meetings.</p>	<p>Town of Truro, community of Truro.</p>

## 6.3 CREATING CHANGE

Looking back at the many positive changes that have taken place in Truro in recent years, these elements emerge as keys to success: leadership, strategy, persistent work, and resources.

Achieving progress on Truro's sixteen Community Goals set out in this Plan will require creative and diverse efforts. There isn't a single recipe or formula for success; as illustrated in the chart above, each community project will be unique. However, most progress on issues and opportunities is characterized by variations of these stages:

1

### Specific Opportunity or Issue

Laudable goals such as reducing poverty in the community or increasing healthy and affordable food choices are complex challenges. At the local level, progress is most likely when specific narrow issues are identified. For instance, setting out to find complete solutions to these two issues is less likely to lead to progress than doable projects such as neighbourhood community gardens. This doesn't mean always thinking small – the Rath Eastlink Recreation Centre (RECC) was a big idea, but it was also a specific project that has helped Truro make progress on many fronts.

2

### Passion & Leadership

Whether coming from a place of concern/anger or vision, passion is needed to start and sustain the efforts to bring about change. Strategic leadership is needed to convert passion into effective action.

3

### Broadening Support

Community-based projects increase their chances of getting done when their proponents are able to rally support within the community, transforming a few people's passion into a shared community vision. This can involve targeted or public sessions that educate, promote, and recruit using preliminary communications material. Proposed actions can benefit from early scrutiny and new champions for the cause may emerge.

## 4

### Early Structure & Collaboration

Nearly all the projects featured in the Community Actions chart benefitted from early formation of a committee or project steering group. Often, this leadership structure was made up of key stakeholders and partners. In some cases, municipal representatives were included, in others, local service clubs or business people were key players. A strong project committee should be made up of diverse voices that bring a range of resources to the effort. In some cases, an existing 'backbone organization' should be identified to act as a legal entity or administrative services such as office space.

Working in coalition and collaboration to achieve community development goals at the core of a theory of change called Collective Impact. The theory or strategy describes five conditions vital to making progress:

#### THE 5 CONDITIONS OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

- 1

**Common  
Agenda**

- Common understanding of the problem
  - Shared vision for change
- 2

**Shared  
Measurement**

- Collecting data and measuring results
  - Focus on performance management
  - Shared Accountability
- 3

**Mutually  
Reinforcing  
Activities**

- Differentiated approaches
  - Coordination through joint plan of action
  - Multi-sectoral, diverse, resourced, first voices, expertise
- 4

**Continuous  
Communication**

- Consistent and open communication
  - Focus on building trust
- 5

**Backbone  
Support**

- Separate organization(s) with staff
  - Resources and skills to convene and coordinate participating organizations



## 5

### Development Resources

While volunteer sweat equity is always an essential ingredient of community actions, projects that secure development resources for research, communications, and project development increase their likelihood of success. Some of this may be in-kind but dedicated staffing is ideal.

## 6

### Business Plan & Communications Strategy

Business planning, including capital and operational budgeting, is essential to move projects forward. Financial projections will only be credible if the business plan reflects understanding of actual costs, realistic fund-raising scenarios, legal or policy context, and research showing understanding of community need and benefit. Communications materials need to be developed targeting potential funders, community supporters, and political champions.

## 7

### Strategy, Flexibility, Evaluation

Moving an exciting or important concept toward realization requires strategy. Merit alone doesn't get things done. Several of the achievements described in the Community Chart were propelled by the strategy of aligning causes. For instance, the Truro Farmers Market Cooperative wanted an indoor venue while the Town of Truro needed to decide on the fate of the empty fire hall. Similarly, there was strategic alignment of the desire for a new library home and the need to refurbish the Normal College.

Flexibility is itself a strategy to increase chances of success. New funding programs or newly available properties can offer routes to project achievement if opportunities are seized and there is some flexibility to alter the original vision.

Developmental evaluation, or on-going evaluation, is an important practice for realization of project goals. Circumstances change, including resource needs and sources, throughout the course of project development. Recognizing and learning from failed attempts will allow new strategies to develop.

## 6.4 OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

Perseverance could also be cited as a key component to community actions. A regional hospital and a civic square were envisioned for several decades before becoming realities. However, perseverance without most or all the elements described above is a recipe for inaction and frustration. There are, unfortunately, numerous examples of unrealized visions for community projects that have met this fate.

Other risks and pitfalls encountered by attempts at worthy community actions include:

### **Burnout**

The over-extension of volunteers taking on too much for too long. Closely related is founder syndrome, where those who initiate a project are not willing to share control with later arrivals. Diversifying and broadening support is the key to avoiding burnout.

### **Entitlement**

There are groups and causes that are truly entitled, because of injustice or having paid for something not received, but entitlement is not itself an effective strategy for action. The rightness of a cause is essential but not sufficient to spur action from others. Likewise, a project may have strong merit but so do other initiatives vying for resources. Cynicism rapidly drains passion when entitlement is not accompanied by strategy.

### **Gatekeeping**

Groups that form in pursuit of a community action or goal are sometimes resistant to aligning with other organizations or newcomers for fear of losing control. As a result, competition rather than collaboration hinders progress.

### **Means as Ends**

It is wonderful to reach achievements along the way to a community project's realization - policy change, an award, a report - but when these things are mistaken as fulfilling the goal itself rather than steps toward reaching it, they can halt progress. For instance, developing a community sustainability plan is an achievement, but if that phase is mistaken as an end in itself it can divert resources away from making progress in the community that the plan envisions.

### **Donor Fatigue**

Local businesses, governments, and residents are constantly being asked to back causes and projects. Individuals are also solicited by organizations beyond the community. Generosity is limited by capacity. Successive major projects in Truro have created a degree of local donor fatigue, pushing new project proponents to creatively seek new sources of support.

### **Underestimation**

Financing scenarios focussed on exciting capital fund-raising without viable operational funding plans can put a completed project in jeopardy. Under-estimation of the time needed to work with funders and partners will also put success in peril.



## 6.5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

The 2010 Town of Truro Community Sustainability Plan presented a series of Action Opportunities based on community input during the *Truro, Have Your Say* engagement program. As highlighted in the Community Actions Chart, Truro has made excellent progress on some of these Opportunities, especially in relation to:

- more festivals and events,
- Town and citizen communications and engagement,
- development and stewardship of Victoria Park,
- a revitalized downtown,
- parks and green space development,
- beautification,
- welcoming diversity
- re-use of vacant properties,
- and collaboration of local governments.

The call for action on active transportation, although still largely unrealized, appears to be in the works in a serious way, with an ambitious Active Transportation Plan being embraced by the community and championed at Council.

Progress on a few of the Opportunities identified in the 2010 Sustainability Plan has been piecemeal and slow. Not surprisingly, in the 2021 *Truro, Let's Connect* citizen engagement effort, participants reiterated the need to address these issues, specifically the need for public transit, and measures tackle climate change.

In the *Truro, Let's Connect* project, at a series of public and topical meetings and in an open survey, residents voiced their strongest support for action on a number of key initiatives and work on some of these is underway. These priorities, which are discussed in detail below, are listed as follows:

- increasing the availability of family doctors,
- more road maintenance,
- attracting new business and development
- active transportation,
- affordable housing,
- energy efficiency and emissions reduction,
- public transit.

### **Increasing the Availability of Family Doctors**

Increasing the availability of family doctors is the most important action needed to improve community wellness according to *Truro, Let's Connect* survey respondents. The Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Community Health Survey shows that 14.4% of Nova Scotians are without a regular health care provider. This rate is slightly below the national average of provinces, 14.5%. The Nova Scotia Health Authority releases monthly reports on the number of people in need of a family medical practice. It's February 2023 report indicates that 7,883 people residing in Truro-Colchester are without a family doctor. The figure is approximately 15% of the area's population.

Truro is a regional centre for health services. It's growing and aging population has increased demand for family doctors to serve the region. Statistics Canada notes that in 2019, Nova Scotians, more than any other province's residents, reported that the reason they were without a family doctor was because the one they had had retired or moved.

Although the Province is responsible for health care services, supported by federal funding and standards, inadequate health services affects not only individuals but communities in terms of the quality of life available. For this reason, local healthcare, municipal, First Nation, and business leaders have, over the past five years, have organized to recruit and welcome healthcare professionals. The Truro-Colchester Partnership for Economic Prosperity, itself a collaborative entity, has become the lead agency in an effort to market the region to doctors. The organization's resources for this work has been bolstered by grants from the Province.

### **More Road Maintenance**

From the list of community action priorities, one is entirely within purview of the Municipality: more road maintenance. In this respect, achieving it falls outside the strategies and processes described in the *Creating Change* discussion above. The Town of Truro spends about ten percent of its annual operating budget on public works and transportation services, a category that includes street maintenance. Recognizing that resurfacing of roads while they are still in fair condition is far more economical than waiting until they need full reconstruction, Truro has embarked on a street renewal program funded by a Road Preservation Tax. This work is in addition to regular maintenance of Truro's roads.

### **Attracting New Business & Development**

Another priority that is being addressed in a collaborative mode is the attraction of new business and development. The Town of Truro has a dedicated Manager of Economic Development, the Town contributes to a regional approach by participating in the business-led agency The Truro-Colchester Partnership for Economic Prosperity (TCPEP). The effort is funded by local governments, the Province of Nova Scotia, the Turo & Colchester Chamber of Commerce, and individual business donors. TCPEP works toward increasing economic prosperity throughout the region by supporting business development and recruitment.

## Active Transportation

Truro is well-served by trails and pathways for recreational use, especially within its parks, as well as by sidewalks in core areas. However, active transportation options, whether recreational for basic transportation are less supported in Truro’s commercial areas and downtown. Moving to a highly walkable, bikeable, and accessible community will require considerable investment in appropriate infrastructure. That investment is planned and called for in Truro’s Active Transportation Plan. The Plan has been developed under the leadership of Truro Council, staff, and community representatives.

Progress on the remaining priorities listed for community action has been less notable than on those discussed above.

## Affordable Housing

Affordable housing has been a priority issue in Truro for most of the past decade, but concern intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Since that time, low vacancy rates, higher construction costs and materials shortages slowing construction rates, increased population and housing demand, and inflation have conspired to create what many consider an affordable housing crisis.

The need and demand for affordable housing was thoroughly researched and documented in the 2021 Affordable Housing Needs & Supply Study for Colchester (including Colchester, Truro, Millbrook, Stewiacke). This consultants’ report was overseen by a team made up of staff representatives from local governments, local community organizations, the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Health, and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

The most prevalent definition of affordable housing in Canada is adequate housing that costs less than 30% of pre-tax household income. The term relates to both ownership and rental but is increasingly used in reference to rental situations. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, a federal Crown corporation that exists to make housing affordable for everyone in Canada, places affordable housing in a continuum of housing situations:

### THE HOUSING CONTINUUM



Whether developed as a social enterprise or mixed-market rental building, any solution that increases the availability of suitable and affordable housing in Truro is an opportunity for Community Action. This could include community or social housing, subsidized or rent-controlled housing, or even low-budget market housing that is for sale or rent. Community housing can take the form housing that is built to be affordable by not-for-profit housing societies or by provincial or local governments. Affordable housing that is privately owned can also be embedded as subsidized units within market-rate rental buildings.

There is positive momentum in 2023 for an increase in new construction in Truro but few feature units designated as affordable housing. The Affordable Housing Needs & Supply Study verified Truro's has a shortage of affordable housing. In 2016, 44% of rental households in Truro-Colchester spent more than 30% of their pre-tax income on rent. The Study provides a situational assessment and points to strategies to address needs. It was not commissioned as an action plan but does contain lay the foundation for an affordable housing strategy.

Based on recommendations of the Affordable Housing Needs & Supply Study and lessons learned about Creating Change (above), the following are suggested next steps to increase affordable housing in Truro:

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### Recommendation No. 1

Truro's Planning and Development Services should prepare communications material to inform property owners and developers of changes to Truro's Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw that enable increased housing development. The information should be presentable in print, on-line, and at workshops. Additional material could include guides on specific topics such as developing apartments within existing homes or backyard suites. For an example of this approach, see the City of Ottawa's publication *How to plan your Coach House in Ottawa*.

### Recommendation No. 2

The Town of Truro should designate a staff person to design and fill the role of affordable housing navigator. This person would serve as a point of contact for developers, whether private, commercial, or not-for-profit, to provide information and to assist with moving housing projects forward that can contribute to increasing affordable housing in Truro. This role could also include connecting project proponents with each other, funding sources, or developers.

### Recommendation No. 3

A greater Truro area affordable housing summit is needed. This could take the form of a one-day conference featuring displays, presentations, and discussion. Suggested content would include:

- updated key findings of the *Affordable Housing Needs & Supply Study*,
- report on recent and upcoming housing construction, and land/building availability,
- presentation of initiatives in the works (e.g., Coordinated Access, land trust initiatives, Colchester's Debert RFP),
- highlights of changes to the Town of Truro Community Plan, especially relevant sections of the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw,
- federal and provincial funding programs overview,
- case studies (e.g., Coady's Place, others),
- developers' panel,
- action options, possible task force formation, and decisions on next steps.

The Town of Truro could host an initial organizing meeting to decide on a route to staging the summit in terms of an organizing committee and resources. Invitees could include representatives from the Municipality of Colchester, the Truro-Colchester Partnership for Economic Prosperity, and the United Way of Colchester.

Invitees to the one-day gathering could include property owners and developers, elected representatives and senior bureaucrats, representatives of federal and provincial housing agencies and organizations, and community groups such as service clubs, sector councils, faith groups, advocacy groups, and business networks such as the Chamber of Commerce.



### Energy Efficiency and Emissions Reduction

Energy efficiency and emissions reduction that contribute to the fight against human-caused climate change continue to be priorities for greater community action in Truro. The Town has recently embarked on a program of upgrades to several of its facilities to reduce the emissions and to generate energy. At a total cost of two million dollars, the project is designed to reduce CO2 emissions by 452 tonnes per year through energy efficiency measures, while generating savings equal to 75% of project costs. The Town of Truro is also funding 50%, along with co-owner the Municipality of Colchester, of the cost of efficiency upgrades to the Rath Eastlink Recreation Centre.

In October 2021, Truro Council voted in favour of becoming a member of the Partners for Climate Protection initiative delivered through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Local Governments for Sustainability. The program, which has over 500 participating municipalities in Canada, guides members through a five-step framework of milestones for taking municipal action against climate change. The steps are creating a baseline inventory of emissions, setting targets, developing a reduction plan, implementing the plan, and monitoring impact.

In 2009, the Town partnered with the Living Earth Council and Conserve Nova Scotia (which became Efficiency Nova Scotia) to run an energy-use reduction campaign called Cool Truro. The project focussed on a competition for residents in year one and on energy improvements in businesses year two. The Town has investigated district heating, solar installations, and small-scale wind as greener energy sources in Truro.

To date, Truro has not been involved in administering programs aimed at residential energy generation and efficiency. Over the past five years, the Municipality of Colchester has developed and implemented two programs aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Their projects are called Solar Colchester and Cozy Colchester. These community-oriented projects are central to the County's overall plan called Carbon-Free Colchester. Colchester joined Partners for Climate Protection in 2016.

## Energy Efficiency & Emissions Reduction

### Recommendation No. 1

The Town should investigate a partnership with the Municipality of Colchester that would expand or replicate their Solar and Cozy Colchester programs.

### Recommendation No. 2

The Town should investigate an arrangement with a local organization or organizations committed to climate change solutions to promote residential and commercial measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This could be modelled on the previous initiative with the Living Earth Council where resources were found to embed a project manager within Truro's Planning and Development Services department. Living Earth Council remains active, and Efficiency Nova Scotia is an important available resource.

### Recommendation No. 3

The Town's Planning and Development Services department should keep abreast of innovations in technology and construction that promise energy-use reduction and encourage those seeking building permits and development agreements to utilize them. Further study should be undertaken to determine if it is feasible to adopt a bonusing system that recognizes environmental merit of proposed developments.

### Recommendation No. 4

The Town of Truro should prioritize fulfillment of the five-step Partners for Climate Protection program, including documenting progress being made in its current emissions upgrade initiative.

### Recommendation No. 5

Continue the path toward adopting and implementing an Active Transportation Plan and, while doing so, pursue a viable plan for public transit in Truro (discussed below). Both pursuits, if successful, will contribute greatly to emissions reduction. Many of the infrastructure requirements for active and public transportation overlap and efficiencies will be gained if they are undertaken concurrently.

## Public Transit

In the 2009 survey, *Truro, Have Your Say*, respondents were asked an open ended question about what would make Truro a better town. The number one response was a public transit system. The Town's 2010 Sustainability Plan recommended a course of action in pursuit of public transit for Truro and area. Steps outlined included: 1) conducting a needs assessment, 2) commissioning a feasibility and design study, 3) undertaking public and user-group input sessions, 4) partnership development, 5) financial planning and fund development, 6) regulatory approval and pilot testing, 7) system implementation.

In 2011, the Town collaborated with the Municipality of Colchester to commission an external study that was both a public transit needs assessment and exploration of system design and feasibility. The Regional Transit Feasibility Study

concluded that a fixed-route scheduled public transit system was feasible in Truro-Colchester and recommended that Councils resolve to develop one. The case put forward for feasibility in the Study was favourable but realistic in its assessment of modest rider demand and the cost-revenue factors. Caution was heeded by both Councils in deciding against establishing a public transit system.

Truro and Colchester have tremendous assets to draw on to achieve a successful public transit system. It's hub-and-spoke geography and population distribution, with Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook forming a service centre hub for the region is more conducive to an efficient system than a more distributed pattern of population. A combined population of over 50,000, approximately half concentrated in or close to Truro, could provide the necessary ridership,

especially with a growing consciousness of environmental responsibility. The hub area has predictable travel routes and travel demand times best addressed by a scheduled fixed-route service.

The greater Truro area features two business parks, two thriving post-secondary campuses, one of the largest high schools in Nova Scotia, Millbrook First Nation, an increasing number of eating and entertainment establishments, a modern regional health centre, a world-class sports and recreation venue in the Rath Eastlink Recreation Centre, and is a regional shopping destination. The region has established itself as a cultural and recreation destination with its many trails, parks, and festivals.

Truro is also the base of Colchester Transportation Cooperative Limited (CTCL). CTCL was established in 1999 as a not-for-profit cooperative. For nearly 25 years it has served Truro and Colchester with reliable and affordable on-demand transportation. It employs seven drivers to operate its current six-vehicle fleet used for Dial-A-Ride service, accessible transport, and charters.

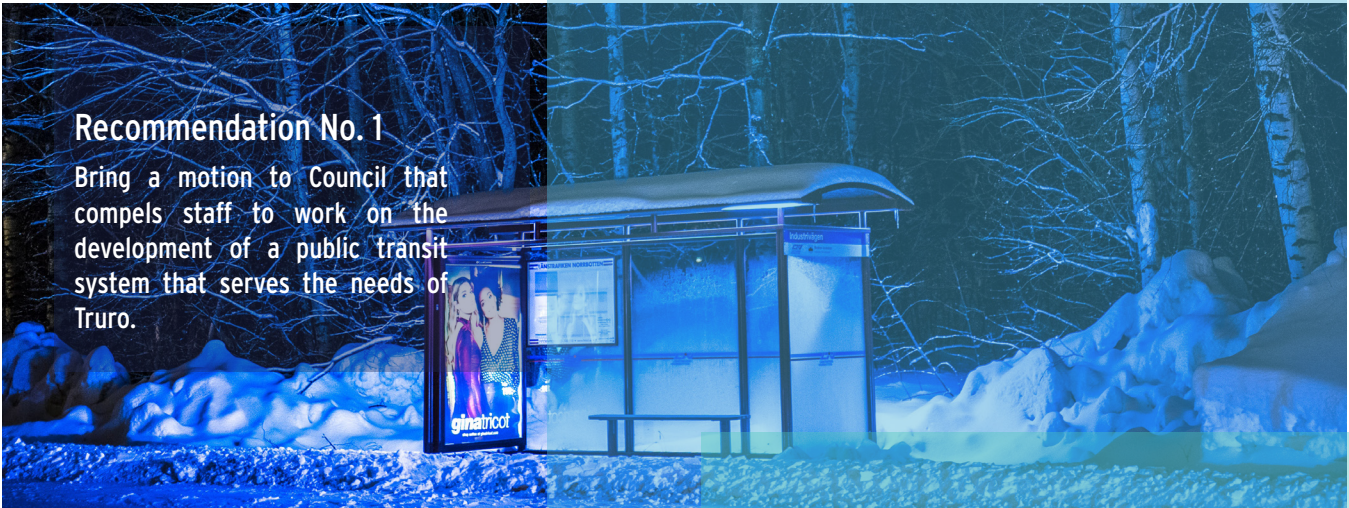
The 2011 Regional Transit Feasibility Study focussed on the feasibility of a fixed-route scheduled service using conventional mid-to-large sized gas/diesel buses owned and operated (or contracted) by the Town of Truro and Municipality of Colchester. The Study assumed revenues and funding would come solely from passenger fees and the two municipalities. It did not explore alternative structures such as corporate, institutional, community organization partnerships (e.g., sponsorship/advertising arrangements, contribution agreements with Community Services or Dalhousie, participation of local service

clubs). Nor did it look at a collaboration with Millbrook First Nation. Structures such as public private partnering or social enterprise were not evaluated. Prospects for provincial, federal, or foundation funding were not explored. Small-to-medium sized buses were not evaluated in-depth as part of a fixed-route system. Demand was surveyed without benefit of a social marketing campaign to transform perceptions of public transit from last resort to cool choice.

It is time create a viable public transit system for Truro and Colchester that fits the fiscal capacity of the system's partners while appealing to potential riders in a fresh way. Designing and assessing such a system will require a cost and benefit analysis that values social, economic, and environmental factors. These elements comprise the value proposition necessary to gain financial support for the project. We now have 16 Community Goals which, along with compelling a favourable decision to pursue public transit, can provide an evaluation matrix for a decision on the type of system and ownership structure that is most suitable.

If/when the governments, businesses, institutions, and citizens of the greater Truro area develop a successful transit system, it could serve as a model for rural and small towns across Canada. In fact, that aspect could be developed as a source of ancillary revenue for the system, along with the potential of up-fitting mid-sized vehicles, preferably green-fueled, for this growing market segment.

# Public Transit



## Recommendation No. 1

Bring a motion to Council that compels staff to work on the development of a public transit system that serves the needs of Truro.

## Recommendation No. 2

Explore resources and collaborations to enable dedicated staffing time (external, internal, or contracted) to lead system development research and project management.

## Recommendation No. 3

Meet with elected representatives and senior staff of Millbrook First Nation and the Municipality of Colchester to discuss early collaboration of system development.

## Recommendation No. 4

Meet with the leadership of CTLC to inform them of the project and express openness to collaboration.

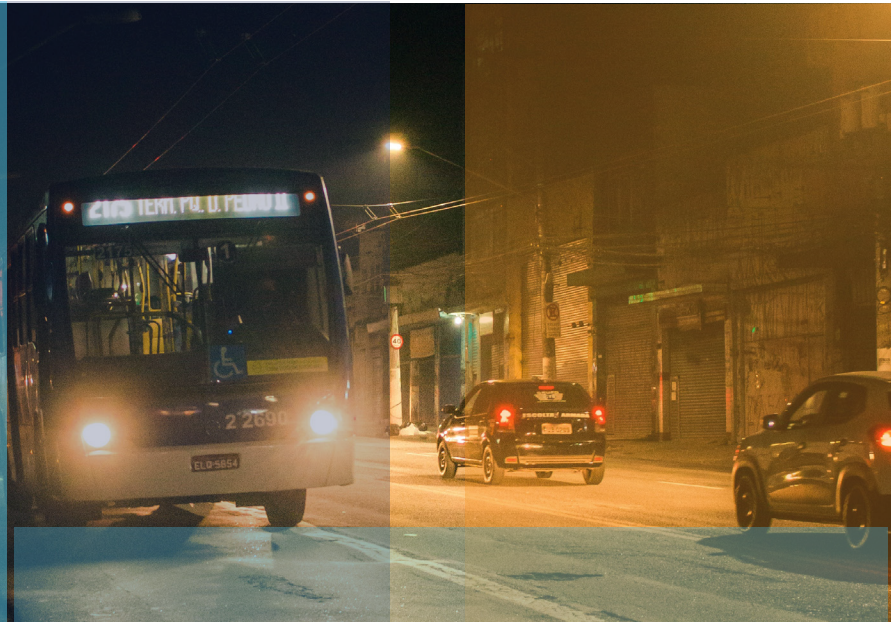
## Recommendation No. 5

Revisit the Regional Transit Feasibility Study of 2011 with a view to updating and expanding its scope and data content. Assess rural and small-town exemplars that have established themselves in the period since the study. Consider external contracting for this element and possibly an economic impact study. Establish a research agenda to include:

- funding opportunities and scenarios, including green funds and sponsorship/naming revenue potential,
- regulatory context, including Utility and Review Board requirements and any exemptions for pilot projects,
- vehicle options,
- mobile app, and dispatch app options,
- route and frequency options,
- ownership structure options, including Nova Scotia's Community Interest Company structure,
- align infrastructure development needs with those of the Active Transportation Plan,
- do system costing, including capital and operating costs such as insurance, fuel, and properly paid labour, as well as potential revenues.

### Recommendation No. 6

Develop communications materials suitable for public and targeted presentation that describe and promote viable system options. Develop social marketing and branding strategies that convey a fun, reliable, affordable, and eco-friendly bus system that will appeal to diverse users, including those currently relying on private vehicles.



### Recommendation No. 7

Stage public and targeted sessions to gather input on and create support for a public transit system. Consider partnering with various organizations such as service clubs, community organizations, TCPEP and/or the Chamber of Commerce, Dalhousie and the Truro Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College to co-host gatherings. Invite potential institutional and corporate sponsors and follow-up with private meetings. Propose contracts to Dalhousie and to Community Services. Prepare for disapproval from local taxi interests by showing mutual benefit.

### Recommendation No. 10

Pursue non-municipal funding for the system.

### Recommendation No. 8

Meet with federal and provincial elected representatives to secure support.

### Recommendation No. 9

Inform Councils of Truro, Colchester, and Millbrook of progress on the initiative. Formulate motions for approval of system development.

### Recommendation No. 11

Implement the new public transit system with a sustained branding and communication effort, rewarding sponsors with exposure (also on vehicles, uniforms, bus stops).



## Concerns and Perspectives of African Nova Scotians

A final item of Opportunities for Community Action comes from a *Truro, Let's Connect* Fire Hall Session held in November of 2022 that focussed on concerns and perspectives of African Nova Scotians in Truro. The Truro area is fortunate to be home to approximately 500 African Nova Scotians, most sharing a historical community connection that goes back over two centuries. Despite continuous contributions to the economic and cultural fabric of Truro, historical and ongoing barriers of systemic discrimination have limited opportunities for African Nova Scotians and have resulted in under-recognition of their place in the community.

In 2019, the Town of Truro announced the formation of a Special Committee of Council later to be titled the African Nova Scotian Community Strategy Committee (ANSCSC). Comprised of members of the local African Nova Scotian community and Council-appointed representatives, the Committee is tasked with developing an action plan “to find solutions to longstanding issues around recognition, communication, and understanding” (from the Town’s Media Release of 8 October 2019).

The Terms of Reference of the ANSCSC states that the purpose of the African Nova Scotian Community Strategy Committee is to provide strategic advice, direction, leadership, and actionable recommendations to the Town of Truro, to address the needs of the local African Nova Scotian community. The Committee will acknowledge and promote the history, contributions, and lived experiences of this unique community while ensuring that historical systemic and racial barriers are addressed.

The Committee will advocate and collaborate with the Town and other stakeholder organizations to be responsive to the needs of African Nova Scotian in their area of responsibility, but not limited to: employment equity/fair hiring practices at all levels; programs for youth and seniors; recognition; health & wellness; dedicated community space; and housing.

The Committee will engage with and collaborate with the local African Nova Scotian community on all recommendations put forth to Council.



In the Fire Hall Session dedicated to African Nova Scotian input into the Community Plan Review, two themes dominated open discussions: African Nova Scotian recognition and dedicated community space in Truro. Realization of the long-discussed goal of a dedicated community space could also contribute to greater public recognition of the presence and contribution of the African Nova Scotian community.

Afrocentric community centres are now a feature of other communities in Nova Scotia. There is also a provincial site, the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, that opened in 1983. An African Nova

Scotian community space in Truro could be embedded in an existing building or could be a stand-alone property. An accessible and prominent location with opportunities for exterior signage, décor, and public art would help achieve recognition within Truro to residents and visitors.

The point was made by community elders at the Fire Hall Session that a dedicated community space should be in service of, run by, and focused on the Black community but should be a place for all, a place where the African Nova Scotian community can host anyone in Truro for learning, entertainment, and recreation. The whole community of Truro would benefit from this development. There has

never been a better time to build on the awareness and support of diverse Truro residents than now as illustrated by the tremendous success of the Black Lives Matter rally held in Truro in June 2020. The event, staged by youthful African Nova Scotian community organizers, had the largest turnout for a public demonstration in Truro's history.

Subject to endorsement of the African Nova Scotian Community Strategy Committee, the recommendations for priority Community Action described on the following page apply elements of the Creating Change strategy to the opportunity of developing a dedicated community space for and with the African Nova Scotian community in Truro.

## Address Concerns and Perspectives of African Nova Scotians in Truro

### Recommendation No. 1

The ANSCSC should advise Council of the need for action of the creation of a dedicated community space, requesting that staff time and/or resources for paid external researcher/organizer be allocated to investigate the following:

- models of Afrocentric community centres in Nova Scotia and elsewhere,
- funding sources used by the exemplars studied, including revenue generation, non-governmental grants, corporate sponsorship, site rentals, community fund-raising, and government funding (federal, provincial, municipal),
- available or potentially available properties in Truro, including stand-alone and shared locations, including the former RCMP site at 379 Prince Street.

### Recommendation No. 2

Results from the investigative work be presented to the ANSCSC and, if they see promise in the prospect for a dedicated space project, they request of Council resources for next step development, including the development of presentation materials to facilitate public input and to generate support from a broad cross-section of the community.

### Recommendation No. 3

A project steering committee be formed that includes representatives of Council, the ANSCSC, a diverse cross-section of business and community leaders. Resources should be sought to hire dedicated staff for project and fund development, and organization of public engagement.

