



# **GUYSBOROUGH DISTRICT BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP**

December, 2023

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## Background, Scope, and Methodology

The 13 Ways Team was contracted by the Guysborough District Business Partnership to:

- 1 Engagement:** Engage a diverse group of citizens-at-large, business owners, and community leaders throughout the region using pre-arranged individual meetings and focus groups, as well as ad-hoc opportunities within the community and the greater region.
- 2 Community Assessment:** Identify issues and opportunities significant to the future growth of the region, and offer recommendations the team deems important for leadership to consider in its deliberation and decision making.
- 3 Strategic Direction:** Provide to the Guysborough District Business Partnership and its partners a strategic direction for consideration with a specific focus on economic growth opportunities.

Each of these activities have been completed. This report is the final product.

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## Executive Summary

Doug Griffiths attended the community on February 8th, 2023 to do his presentation, 13 Ways to Kill Your Community, at the Community Summit Event. Following that event, 13 Ways was contracted by the Guysborough District Business Partnership to do an assessment of the community, engage varied community members, and craft a strategic direction for the region.

The Team completed desktop research related to news and social media sources to identify issues and people to interview, as well as a situational analysis of the municipality and region using online resources, those provided through the Guysborough District Business Partnership and the Municipality of the District of Guysborough, as well as some information and documents provided by other organizations and members of the public.

Doug Griffiths and Heather Thomson attended the community, held meetings, and toured the region June 18th to June 21st, 2023. A kickoff presentation, open to the public, was conducted on June 19th where a presentation was made and a Q and A session was held. The team attended the GDBP Board Meeting on June 20th, where pertinent and timely questions and issues were discussed. As well, four community organizations were met, almost two dozen people were interviewed, and an extensive tour (walking and driving) was done of the region and its communities. The intent was to become personally familiar with the region, its people, its environment, and its potential. Following that trip, Doug and Heather conducted interviews and focus groups remotely (Zoom) while exploring and researching the best options for the communities and the region given the current global situation, and Canada and Nova Scotia's plans to take advantage of those global opportunities.

Our team conducted over 80 individual interviews. As well, four focus groups were held and multiple community organizations were consulted. Out of all of the communities we have worked with around North America over these many years, we have never had such uptake in our call for interested parties to be interviewed. We found it necessary to create a cut off date of September 10th for interviews so we could compile and present this report in a timely fashion. We recommend continuing such regular communication and engagement for the Partnership and the Municipality beyond this process.

Though we could not meet with every resident, everyone who wished to participate was given the choice of an interview or encouraged to submit concerns, ideas, and opinions to the 13 Ways Team. Although done in-person where possible (scheduled and unscheduled), most interviews were done remotely simply because of the number of interviews and the limited timeframe we had in the community. In some cases people requested follow up conversations, however we did not count those as a separate interview. Our team met with business owners, retirees, young leaders, elected leaders, volunteers, and concerned citizens from communities across the region. Many we interviewed recommended further people for us to consider interviewing, so we interviewed many beyond our initial list.

See [Appendix A](#): *General Interview, Focus Group, and Written Submission Comments*

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## Assessment Summary & Recommendations

Specific strategies and actions are provided in the next section of the report: **Strategic Direction**. In this section we provide our observations with some explanatory notes to support them.

Your region, and the communities within it are poised for exceptional growth and development in the coming years. Strategic industrial and large commercial investments made by the municipality have ensured a tax base and resources that support future strategic investments which will generate population and small business growth. A lack of population and housing are the greatest physically limiting factors for your region. Those issues restrict the success of new businesses from opening, and may put the long-term viability of your important basics, such as education and healthcare facilities, at risk. **You need people to prosper.**

Thankfully, you have people who want to locate in your community. You have younger generations who want to come home. You have entrepreneurs who recognize the eminent growth potential of the region. You have people who have simply recognized they want to live in an authentic community, connected to nature with a more relaxed pace of life. And you have a Premier still planning to double the population of the province in a country that is ramping up the number of new immigrants it welcomes in each year. While you might have once been an undiscovered Canadian beauty, you are undiscovered no more. People want to live in your region and its communities.

However, you have a significant challenge because your housing is in short supply. You are not alone in that regard, as housing is an issue in communities across North America. The pandemic drove people to purchase property sight unseen in locations such as yours. That created a housing shortage issue for you and many other communities across your province, across the nation, and across North America. That particular trend has slowed significantly but you still have a critical housing shortage within the entire region, and you have further issues compounding it. Namely, your region has few developers and a limited number of trades which means, even as people are willing and excited to invest to increase the housing stock, there are not enough skilled trades available to construct the houses your communities and region needs.

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While other communities need to invest strategically to find and attract people to move to their community, your marketing strategy needs to ensure you attract tradespeople specifically. We don't mean you need to attract them exclusively but you need to target them specifically. Marketing to people to live in the region, open businesses in the region, or to visit the region is ineffectual if they have nowhere to call home in the short or long-term. **Housing is the top priority that needs to be addressed.** As a diversity of housing becomes available, a diversity of people will come and new businesses will open, which will draw more people as visitors and residents, and your economy will grow and diversify as your quality-of-life amenities and small business services improve.

Tradespeople to support housing developments and investments are important but we include all those with special and particular skills in this group as well. As housing stock grows and more people are able to affordably move to your communities permanently, intermittently, or occasionally, they will require and even demand more services. That means you will also have a growing demand for daycare and homecare, teachers and health professionals, cooks and mechanics and personal care services and professionals. Targeting tradespeople is important but don't lose sight of the types of tradespeople you will need as well. The more specific your marketing and attraction efforts are, the more likely they are to not only succeed but meet your needs by helping you grow where you need to grow.

**You should consider partnerships and programs that can attract people before they become skilled tradespeople in any sector as a critical future asset.** Attracting talented people will not be difficult with your offerings of housing affordability and accessibility (as the stock continues to grow), your quality of life amenities, and your beautiful natural settings. However, many of those people are also more mature and potentially established in other locations, so it may be slightly more difficult to attract them. Younger people anticipating developing competencies and skills will also be attracted to all your communities have to offer but would also be compelled by the opportunity for offered apprenticeships and potential jobs in addition to that.

Communication and Marketing are critical to your success. **The Municipal District of Guysborough and the Guysborough District Business Partnership need to enhance their communication strategies.** We understand and appreciate the extensive effort put into such diverse communication methods to reach the populace. And then to hear people say they still don't hear what is going on can be frustrating. There are so many channels of communication and so much noise on each channel. Our advice is that you keep up the work and keep directing people to the many places where you put out information. The best rule of thumb for communications is to assume no one knows what you are doing, and tell them all again, and again, and again.

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However, we also advise that you shift part of your communication from telling the public ‘what is happening’ to sharing ‘what it means’ to your communities and the region. Information is more easily retained when there is an emotional appeal that connects us to the facts. Consider this: we don’t often remember the facts of history, but we remember what the stories we heard mean to us. For instance, few of us remember the exact date of the famous Halifax harbour explosion, yet we remember the event because of the emotional connection we feel to it. Don’t just share the facts of what you are doing. **Ensure your community understands why it matters and what it means to them.**

**Make change and success stories a significant part of your communications and your culture.** Ceaselessly communicate your plans, goals and vision for the region and each community. You must ensure you tell people what you are going to do and why you are doing it when you create the idea, when you plan the idea, when you activate the idea, when the idea becomes reality, and all the way through communicate what it means to them and their lives, and what they can do to take advantage of it.

**We recommend you consider training and education on entrepreneurship and business ownership as you discuss and encourage locals to take advantage of the opportunities.** The growth we forecast is coming to your region will pose challenges that need to be mitigated. There is a tendency in your region for residents to believe they do not have the tools or opportunities available to capitalize on the coming growth. In some cases that may indeed be true, while in other cases it is a perception forged into reality. Regardless, there may be a strong sense with local residents that they do not have the opportunity to take advantage of the growth. As outsiders with resources buy up and build housing, invest in and open businesses, and otherwise make money, there may grow resentment among local residents. **We encourage you to consider local programs and training that support entrepreneurship opportunities for local residents so they have the opportunity to benefit from the growth opportunities as well.**

Marketing your region in terms of its livability and quality of life is not particularly necessary and as such is corollary and complementary to your primary marketing campaign. You have a beautiful environment with incredible amenities. **Your marketing should focus on attracting entrepreneurs, developers, investors, and tradespeople, for once they arrive in your region its beauty and livability will sell itself.** As mentioned above, you need tradespeople and developers to help build the accommodations you lack so those who want to come visit or live can do so. As the housing is built, you will then want investors and entrepreneurs to become aware of your population and tourism growth so they can invest appropriately.

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And as people continue to locate in your region the demand for more services and business amenities will require more people with particular skills and trades related to family care, food, quality of life services. Focusing in those areas will create a draw for new people and new small business investments, which will further encourage new populations to come live and visit, and new small business investments.

We were in awe at the number of communities your region has, and realize it creates some challenges for growth and investment. It is important to focus your efforts to ensure an economy-of-scale approach that creates momentum for success while also not neglecting other communities in favour of one. It's not an easy task but it is important to remember that you must start somewhere. Investments cannot be evenly distributed between communities with any expectation of success. Let me share a story to illustrate:

*Within one county there were two towns 28 km apart from each other, each with a population of about 1200 people, and five hamlets with less than 100 people in each. When a seniors health and housing project was going to be built, it had to go into one of the communities because research had shown that one 60 unit facility (the entire region needed 54 units) could be built more affordably and had the economies of scale to run efficiently. Two 30 unit facilities (one for each town) would cost much more to build and operate, and each would run significant deficits. The communities argued they should each have their own 30 unit facility so they were evenly distributed. Following that logic, each hamlet would also be entitled to one or two units as well. Of course, that would have made the costs exorbitantly higher to build and operate. Each community could have their fair share but that would have increased capital costs by 248% and increased yearly operating costs by almost 60%. The project, in such a form, was untenable.*

It is important that communities in the region are not excluded from investments and growth opportunities but it is also critically important that investments are made strategically so the region can prosper. **The next step in investments by the Municipality and the Partnership must be geared to accommodating population and small business growth, and complementing the story told through a well designed marketing campaign.** This must never become about everyone getting an equal piece of the municipal investment pie but about growing the economic and population pie for the entire region to everyone's benefit. Those are two different perspectives, and important to understand if the region AND its communities are to truly prosper.



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In that vein, it is important to recognize that housing is important in all of the communities. People want to move back to their unique communities - Black/African, Acadian, English - but they need housing in order to move back, and bring with them the skills, education, and entrepreneurship each community needs. However, Guysborough and Canso currently stand as the communities with the greatest potential to draw in investment, development, entrepreneurs, tourists, professionals, and so on. Strategic investments need to be made in each of those communities to attract investment and people, with the understanding that as they grow, other communities will grow, and be supported to grow, as well.

In Guysborough, the buildings formerly known as the Rare Bird Pub and Skipping Stone are a hindrance for two reasons. Obviously they are incredible buildings in prime locations that are important to the growth and development of mainstreet Guysborough. For approximately 100 years those buildings have sat in prime locations and been significant to the local and regional economy. The fact they are currently vacant is a shame but they also stand as embarrassing monuments to the owner and the community for their unkempt appearance and the story about why they remain unused.

However, they are also a hindrance because they have become the focal point on the topic of progress and improvements. There is a general sense among the public that nothing will improve until the issue of those two buildings is addressed. The release of, and use, of those two buildings would be wonderful and a great place to start in rehabilitating mainstreet Guysborough. That would not make all the problems in the community and region go away. There is so much more to be done, and so much more that can be done in the meantime. However, overly focusing on those two buildings has caused many other issues to be neglected.

Namely, there needs to be a large-scale plan for the mainstreet/waterfront in both Guysborough and Canso. What land is available and what land should be acquired so businesses such as hotels, restaurants, lounges, coffee shops, tourist services, and other businesses can locate in each community? What beautification, walkability, and event initiatives will be integrated into those mainstreet redevelopments so they continue to deliberately and increasingly draw local people and tourism down to the streets and waterfronts? **What is required is an aggressive mainstreet and harbour plan for those two communities that integrates business and service growth with beautification and events, complete with stunning visuals that help communicate the plan to locals and to potential investors and entrepreneurs.**

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Yes, those two properties mentioned previously are important but they are not the only issue to address and they do not have to be the first issue that gets addressed. The issue holds you back because you let it hold you back. A vision and plan for the mainstreets and harbours in those first two growth-node communities can make the issue of the two vacant historic properties less relevant and less significant to the future of the region.

**Metaphor for the Vacant Properties Issue:** It appears to us that the community knows they are on a path to success but in the middle of that path is a large stone, and that stone (the two vacant historic properties) has become all everyone and anyone can focus on. Either you need to get on with moving the stone, or get on with going around the stone, but either way, you need to stop complaining about the stone and letting it hold you back. Get on with developing and planning for your region's future and stop focusing on the stone in the road.

We sincerely hope a resolution is found quickly so the community and the region can begin to take advantage of the growth that is waiting to come its way.

The harbour stands out to us as an asset with incredible growth potential. We see the ability to attract yachts and small cruise ships that bring in travelers for concerts, shows, food, and relaxation, as well as the ability to add tourism amenities that allow road travelers to access the beautiful waterfront. **Pursuing an expansion of the docks, dredging of the harbour, more tourism facility growth, and the like could be done with a full time harbour master, who would also be able to address safety issues and concerns as water traffic increases and more road tourists access the water.**

We finish our assessment as we started, with a focus on people. **Your community has the advantage of two people streams you can leverage for growth.** The tourism industry is growing rapidly in a post pandemic world, and regions like yours in provinces like Nova Scotia are going to experience more growth and economic impact than most others, if you want it. That will bring in revenue, grow the economy, and attract people. However, you also have the advantage of being an underdeveloped region with room to grow, and you can grow without losing exactly what makes your region unique and wonderful. That means you also have exceptional potential for a permanent resident stream as well. Your strategy should identify those two streams as complimentary, but separate.

Your region and its communities have every opportunity to succeed, but you need to get out of your own way. Communities still compete with each other and argue about what is fair. Many citizens seem to be waiting for someone else to bring success to the region, but there is also an undercurrent that indicates those same people will resent the success of those others who prosper through strategic investments within the region. Arguments and old grudges from the past tend to dominate discussions rather than conversations about the future. People want to come to the communities within the region to live or visit while investors and entrepreneurs want to make money with a growing population and economy but they can't because there is nowhere to stay and no one to hire.

We have worked in many communities and most are struggling to find a value proposition that will help them find a pathway to success. Never have we seen a community with more 'going for it' than the communities in your region. You are literally in a situation where, 'if you build it they will come,' which means you have the ability to grow in the way you want. You don't need to compromise beauty for industry, or compromise industry for beauty. You can have both. The only thing holding you back is a clear articulation of the story of who you are becoming as communities and a region, and your decision to get on with becoming it. We have provided you with assistance with that in the next section.

## Strategic Direction Summary

**Note:** This is not the final strategic plan for the Guysborough District Business Partnership. This draft summary has been prepared by 13 Ways based on our Assessment of the community and region, our Engagements with key stakeholders and members of the community at large, as well as our sessions with leadership. This strategic summary reflects the way we craft strategy documents and comprises our full and unvarnished perspectives and recommendations. This document may be taken in whole or in part as the Guysborough District Business Partnership and the Municipality of the District of Guysborough see fit and valuable for strategic and planning purposes.

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## Our Story

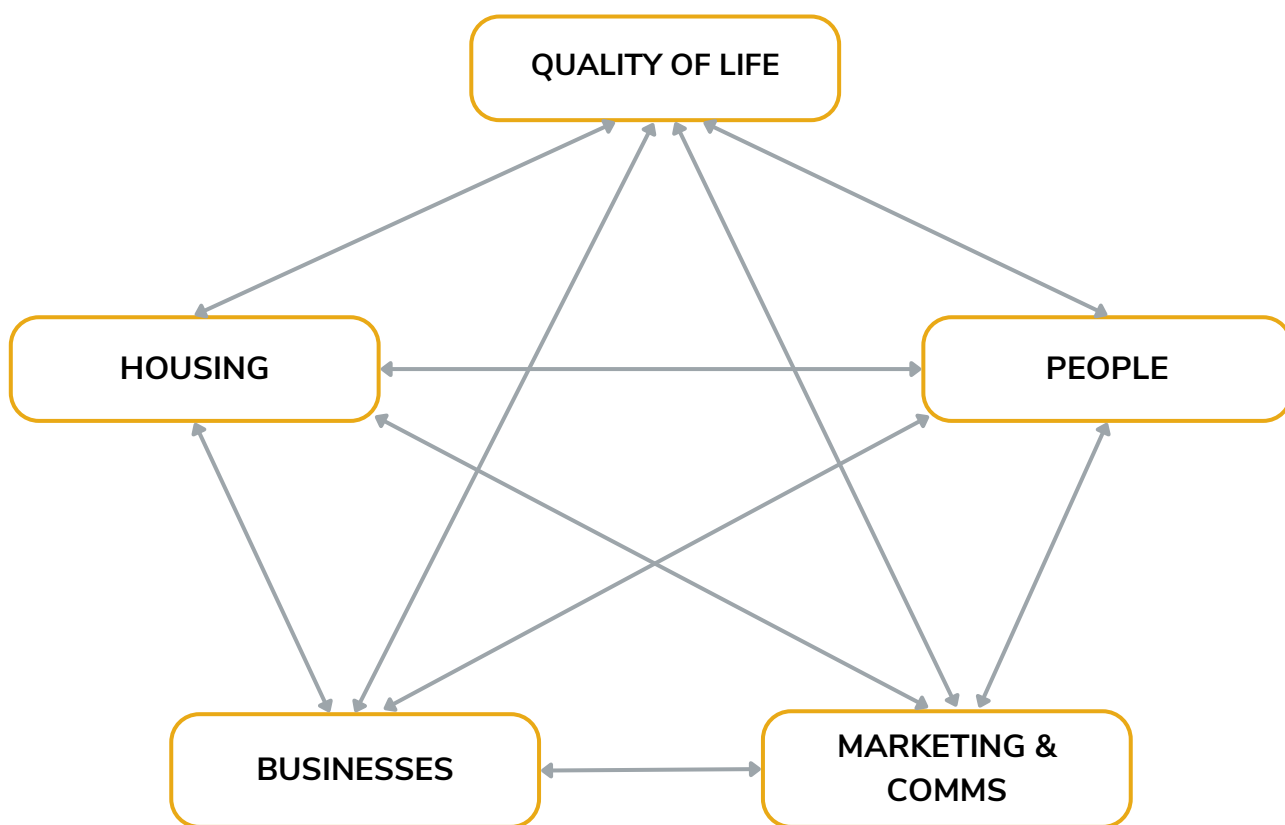
Our history is as diverse and beautiful as our many communities. To the Mi'kmaq we were Chedabuctou. To later English settlers we were Guysborough. We were settled by French and English who were constantly at war. Our communities grew and diversified with the influx of Acadians and Black Loyalists. Our exceptional natural harbour continued to attract explorers, adventurers, and settlers who made their living through fishing, lumber, shipbuilding, agriculture, or trading. Throughout our 400 year history, like the tides in our harbour, our economy rose and fell with each new wave of industry. We know success and we know loss, which is what has made our people and our communities resilient.

Today we see new rising opportunities on our horizon. Our natural beauty and amenities draw people in from across the country and around the world. They come to reconnect with nature and with themselves but they also come to connect with neighbours and friends, to listen to live music and lively conversations, and to experience life rather than watching it race by them on the overpass. New people and businesses are choosing to come to our great communities and neighbourhoods knowing this is where they can find prosperity and quality living. Our region's quality of life is supported with a strong tax base thanks to the commercial projects we have been able to attract over the years, and those commercial investments continue to come to our region.

Our success has come from our own initiatives and our own hard work, because we recognize our success is dependent on us. Though we were once one of the nation's best kept secrets, we are now renowned across Canada and Europe as an ideal coastal destination for visitors, and identified as an ideal place for those looking to build a life and wealth. Our fast growing economy, supported by a growing tourism industry and new permanent residents, is drawing in new entrepreneurs and new investors, and that success is positively impacting each community within our region. Our region is undiscovered no more.

## What We Value (Most)

1. **People:** tourists, immigrants, professionals, and semi-retirees
2. **Businesses:** businesses, restaurants, ocean recreation services and amenities
3. **Housing:** labour shortage, tourism attraction, diversity of needs
4. **Marketing & Comms:** who are we attracting, change the local mindset (internal)
5. **Quality of Life:** economic growth, solid tax base, options and choices, and things to do



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# Milestones and Actions - Summary

**Note:** See [Appendix B](#) for Milestones and Actions - Detailed

## Economic Opportunities

- Housing Diversity and Accessibility
- Labour Pool Strategy
- Immigration Growth Strategy
- People Attraction Strategy
- Business Identification and Marketing Strategy
- Entrepreneurs Symposium
- Investors and Developers Conference

## Marketing and Communications

- Municipal Immigration Nominee Program
- Marketing Strategy
  - Internal
  - External
    - Tourism Strategy
    - Art, Theatre, and Cultural Experiences
    - Measure Results
- Wayfinding Signage Strategy

## Downtown/Waterfront - Canso and Guysborough

- Mainstreet/Waterfront Plan for Development and Beautification
- Niche Cruise Destination Strategy
- Design/Construction Guidelines
- Ecotourism Development
- Investment/Facilitate in Retail Infrastructure
- Retail Identification and Attraction Program

## Quality of Life and Inclusivity

- Entrepreneur Co-op/Incubator Space
- Vacation/Occupation Tax Strategy
- Childcare

## Regional Collaboration

- Welcome Wagon Program
- Ambassador Program
- Communications and Engagement Changes
- Concierge Business Process Review
- Volunteer Succession Plan/Summit/Training

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## Milestones and Actions - Phased Approach

**Note:** This is our recommendation for a phased implementation of our recommended Milestones and Actions, however, this is not meant to be final, as your communities and organizations need to be flexible to adapt to opportunities, grants and programs, and changing realities.

### Phase 1

- Housing Diversity and Accessibility
- Labour Pool Strategy
- Mainstreet/Waterfront Plan for Development and Beautification
- Marketing Strategy
  - Internal
- Communications and Engagement Changes
- Wayfinding Signage Strategy
- Childcare
- Welcome Wagon Program
- Ambassador Program

### Phase 2

- Design/Construction Guidelines
- Immigration Growth Strategy
- Municipal Immigration Nominee Program
- Business Identification and Marketing Strategy
  - Entrepreneurs Symposium
  - Investors and Developers Conference
- Retail Identification and Attraction Program
- Marketing
  - External
    - Tourism Strategy
    - Art, Theatre, and Cultural Experiences
    - Measure Results

### Phase 3

- Entrepreneur Co-op/Incubator Space
- People Attraction Strategy
- Volunteer Succession Plan/Summit/Training
- Niche Cruise Destination Strategy
- Investment/Facilitate in Retail Infrastructure
- Ecotourism Development
- Concierge Business Process Review
- Vacation/Occupation Tax Strategy



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# Appendix

## Appendix A: General Interview, Focus Group, and Written Submission Comments

**Note:** This is a summary of comments and observations made. In some cases, similar comments have been combined into single statements. These comments are in no particular order and are given no particular weighting. They are here solely as a summary for your consideration.

**NOTE:** the waterfront and its buildings came up in every conversation and interview held. We combined the comments to save time and space but we must emphasize this is the top issue on the minds of those interviewed.

- The situation between the communities of Guysborough and Canso have been reversed over the last couple of decades, with Canso facing challenges with the changes in the fishing industry and Guysborough facing new opportunities with tourism and business investment. That has created animosity and division in some cases.
- Want to move to an area with more options for career and a younger population. The community seems more attractive to people who are settled in their careers.
- There are many outdoor activities like trails and the marina but they need to be expanded more for visitors and locals alike.
- We have an amazing arts community but it is still a well kept secret and not part of the tourism and business initiatives – but it could help in marketing the brand of our community.
- We need a pub, coffee space (not just a place to buy coffee) or social enterprise. The current situation is really hurting our community.
- People around here are very supportive of each other but they are also very judgemental and don't much like outsiders.
- If we had better internet connectivity and speed, better opportunities for social interactions (pubs/coffee shops/bakery) as well as diversity and availability of housing, I would never leave and I know a lot more people my age would be moving here.
- This is such a beautiful place with great people and lots of outdoor stuff to do. It feels like home, even when you are not from here (but only if the people welcome you).
- We are missing childcare (desperately so), a place for drinks/coffee/socialization, and a lack of housing. That holds us back.
- Given the beauty of this place we need to be more vibrant and alive. Sometimes we just seem content with the quietness and that leads to stagnation.
- The Guysborough mainstreet situation is the biggest issue holding us back. Great buildings that sit vacant and unused. We need them freed up for businesses who want great social spaces for locals, newcomers, and visitors
- Time for a focus on community development, local businesses and services growth, and so on, given the incredible industrial growth we have and will continue to have. We have the resources to take the next steps.

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- Our next steps need to be more diverse housing, waterfront improvements, and labour pool growth for needed housing construction.
  - We desperately need a mainstreet plan for the waterfront in Guysborough but also in other communities such as Canso.
  - Our region and our province are typically risk averse which is a factor that prevents us from taking advantage of our location, our environment, and our economic opportunities. We wait for someone else to do it but we don't like when someone else does it.
  - We undervalue our history - Canada (French and English) began right here!
  - We need more collaboration. This isn't about Canso or Guysborough. It's about all the communities but we need to start somewhere, and then expand.
  - The impasse with the owner of buildings is hurting all of us and must come to an end.
  - There is a fear of competition, that we only need one of everything, but that is wrong. We need more to improve options for visitors and locals, not just one of each.
  - Tourism is underutilized and underappreciated as an economic driver.
  - Businesses don't sell each other around here. When you go into a business they should be telling you about other businesses, and tourism opportunities so more money gets spent. Why on Earth don't we do that!
  - Growth is coming. We need to welcome it, and plan for it in a way that keeps what makes us great, great.
  - People are attracted here by the hospital and the rec facility, but we need restaurants, pubs, coffees shops and activities to keep them . . . as well as a place to live. Damn, we desperately need more housing and housing options.
  - That old pub was packed when it had events that brought people in all year long. There is so much that could be done with it.
  - We need a marketing strategy that reflects our opportunity. It should be aggressive.
  - We are a really friendly community if you try to fit in, but if you are different, we are very nosy and judgemental, and not particularly welcoming.
  - It's really tough around here for small businesses to find people to work. We need a bigger labour pool if we are going to have more small businesses.
  - Guysborough Players are amazing. They put on plays and musicals which should be part of a marketing campaign, but that also means we need more restaurants and places for people to stay when they come for the show.
  - This region is a little depressed because of the loss of major industries. We need to move on.
  - The Guysborough District Business Partnership needs to improve its communication and participation with the community. I know it's just getting rolling but that has to be a priority moving forward.
  - We have too many people happy with the status quo, or believing nothing can change, but we need to believe, and attract more diversity.
  - We need more chances for social gatherings here. There is lots to do, just not enough places to meet and connect with others, which makes it difficult for outsiders to feel welcome and part of the community.
  - Developers want to come but they know we need more business services - food, recreation, socialization - to attract people.
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- It's just people. We need people. If we get more people we get more of everything here, from investment to businesses to housing.
  - Our mainstreet work in communities should have visuals to compliment a plan.
  - The short supply of housing is holding us back. Housing is being held back because we don't have the trades we need to build what we need.
  - We have amazing schools with small class sizes, something people are looking for, but we need complimentary quality of life stuff to go with it.
  - This region should/could be full of spas, boutique hotels, hair salons, aesthetics shops, social coffee shops, and other health/beauty service offerings.
  - There is no place to go on a date. That is an issue, the biggest one, that turns people off about living here.
  - We need social interactive activities and places - we need a damn brew pub!
  - Our groups and communities don't coordinate so we keep having multiple events on the same night, and then nothing on so many other nights. Stop competing, or at least ignoring each other. We need to work together.
  - We have too much fear in this region. People are scared to invest and take a leap of faith. It will still get done, just not by us, and then we will complain when outsiders do it.
  - We aren't welcoming. We say we are, and we say we want people to come here, but we don't make them feel welcome if they are at all different. We still have a segregation mindset between our communities and with outsiders. We don't do it on purpose, but it is built into our thinking and we subconsciously act on it.
  - Our region needs some iconic branding that makes the communities stand out but also identifies them as a region working together - like the red chair
  - Housing, housing, housing. And after those three the number one issue is housing. Where will people live? We just don't have housing for them to live here or visit, either short term or long. We don't have builders and trades to meet (current and future) demand.
  - We need to celebrate and showcase small business, market business opportunities, and teach people they can do it!
  - There are more and more homes being bought up by CFA's and that limits capacity for people who want to live here.
  - All of our communities are very different, which is an asset, but they don't talk to each other and don't see how they have to work together and leverage what makes them each unique.
  - Our region has great industry and the capacity to now focus on small business and mainstreets.
  - Our waterfront, marina, amphitheater, businesses, needs to be leveraged and grown with a vision and strategy. The business development centre (BDC) has money to loan, but people are lacking confidence that it can be done or that they can do it.
  - We have a general mindset that business owners are all rich and not to be trusted but they are not all rich and we need them to be successful as a community and a region. It is part of the reason why local people don't go into business. It's almost viewed as a shameful and self-serving choice.
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- We need new volunteers and the experienced volunteers need to back away and open up spaces to let new folks come in and do things differently.
  - We need co-working space and a sophisticated café, which are perhaps one place.
  - Somehow we have to get over this mindset of punishing each other. We can't move forward focusing on distrust, anger, and resentment.
  - There is some great stuff happening with kiosks and events at the waterfront in a couple of communities. We need to move on and get over the Rare Bird Pub focus.
  - We have such natural beauty and that should be the focus on our marketing and attracting strategies
  - We need housing, especially housing that is affordable and diversified from the traditional. ALL of our communities need housing, not just Guysborough and Canso. We have young people that want to come back but can't because there is no place to live.
  - Childcare. That's all I can say. You want people, offer up childcare options. You can't start a business or get a job without the options of childcare.
  - Our hospital and healthcare is on shaky ground. We need more people to keep our hospital open. We also have one doctor who refuses to partner or work with other doctors so those doctors keep leaving. It's hurting us. We need options, and we need doctors or we won't attract new people, and if we attract new people we need more doctors . . . and we need both to ensure our hospital stays.
  - The GDBP is a wonderful initiative, but we need the communities to recognize they really do need each other and to work together. There is resentment that Guysborough has the name and is identified as the starting point for growth, but you have to start somewhere. You can't do it all at once.
  - We need some kind of cooperative strategy to help potential local entrepreneurs mitigate risk or fear will keep them from taking the leap.
  - Our fibre internet is going to be a game changer for attracting people here.
  - We forget how much art, theatre, and culture we have here that compliments our beautiful nature.
  - We have too many volunteer organizations for the number of volunteers. We need to coordinate.
  - The CLC (Chedabucto Lifestyle Complex) is a great facility for the region. Can't have them everywhere, and wouldn't be the same if there were several smaller ones.
  - We need bold leadership from the elected, administrative, and public to turn the corner and take advantage of what we have. If we don't, someone else will.
  - Europe has discovered Guysborough with new tourists and part-timers coming regularly and buying housing. They compliment the Americans and Canadians who already know it's here. Need services so they have places to spend their money.
  - I know we need to start somewhere, but we also need to recognize we are stronger in our diversity of communities - Black/African, Acadians, History - and we need to celebrate it.
  - The 13 Ways to Kill Your Community are all alive and well in the region, yet, everyone is so kind and helpful to each other.
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- Need a clear direction and action from leadership but it is tough because people seem to resent success.
  - We need an Inclusivity, Diversity, and Equity Committee.
  - Too many volunteer groups competing to do the same jobs (physician recruitment). I don't get it. It burns people out.
  - Stop making the Rare Bird Pub situation the issue. It is not a magic bullet. Move on and make it irrelevant. We need to do more with mainstreet now.
  - Biggest issue is the lack of people. If you want to start a business you have to do everything yourself which is exhausting. We need people, as clients, as workers, as customers.
  - Our hyper local focus to protect our own communities kills us. We aren't big enough or significant enough to go it alone. We need to work together.
  - We need to learn from places like Mahone Bay and Lunenburg.
  - Need a common vision that focuses on small business growth, with a marketing strategy that sells who we are and who we are becoming.
  - When we do grow, and we will, we need to help people locally or they will be further left behind and be forced to move away with the growth and gentrification of the region.
  - We have incredible events, like the Stan Rogers Folk Festival, that need better coordination with each other, and to be leveraged into marketing and growth opportunities.
  - Guysborough and Canso have an unspoken competition with each other that needs to end. They need to complement each other's strengths for the benefit of all of our communities.
  - We all need to go to each other's events throughout the region. We especially need to be there more to support our Black/African communities more.
  - We need our local folks to be the new business owners too, not simply outsiders. It's not the outsiders fault. The opportunities are right there but as locals we don't take advantage of them ourselves.

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## Appendix B: Milestones and Actions - Detailed

### Economic Opportunities

- **Housing Diversity and Accessibility** - need developers, tradespeople, and a land (information/data) bank and host 'developer days' where you go get them and treat them to a little exploration and appreciation of how the region is growing, what you are doing to support that, and why the region makes for a good investment.
- **Labour Pool Strategy** - your growth in housing and business is currently limited by the lack of trades people, professionals, youth/tourism labour to support growth in key industries.
- **Immigration Growth Strategy** - consider accessing the Municipal Sponsorship Program opportunities as the nation works to attract over half a million new immigrants a year.
- **People Attraction Strategy** - target populations and connections that will help your community grow, such as those who might return home, new immigrants, young professionals and tradespeople, entrepreneurs, and semi-retirees.
- **Business Identification and Marketing Strategy** - instead of being 'open for business' like every other community, determine what businesses are needed, determine and support the business case, and identify who would start it, and then go get them - coffee shop, bowling alley, pub, restaurant, food trucks and kiosks, recreation amenities, waterfront/dock growth, bakery.
  - **Entrepreneurs Symposium** (insider/local focused) - it is important to engage your local public and talk about business opportunities they can access, teach them business strategies, learn about loans, and learn about how the community is growing so they can anticipate and take advantage of arising opportunities.
- **Investors and Developers Conference** (outsider focused) - attract investors, entrepreneurs, and developers with marketing and growth strategies that capture and sell the business opportunities, mainstreet changes, tourism growth, and other initiatives to attract people, because people and energy attracts attention, and attention attracts investment.

### Quality of Life and Inclusivity

- **Entrepreneur Co-op/Incubator Space** - to reduce risk and encourage **local** people to test the waters and try new businesses it will help to have spaces for them to start-up, and it will mitigate some of those risks associated with start-up expenses that turn people away from entrepreneurial endeavors.
- **Vacation/Occupation Tax Strategy** - as your community grows you will attract new people to live, visit and invest, and this may lead to a new shortage of housing caused by short term rental (STR) growth. Consider solutions such as a housing pool to avoid legislating a solution that might divide the community and deter investment.
- **Childcare** - attracting entrepreneurs and a workforce requires continued growth in childcare options and accessibility. Progress is being made, but this issue is unlikely to ever disappear given the requirements and expectations of future generations.

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## Marketing and Communications

- **Municipal Immigration Nominee Program** - as mentioned above, these opportunities will soon come available, most communities won't have the capacity or foresight to utilize it, but it presents the chance to actively attract new populations to fulfill your needs.
- **Marketing Strategy**
  - Internal - to help locals see and understand opportunities - entrepreneurs' symposium (see above)
  - External - to attract developers, investors, entrepreneurs and workforce
    - Google maps, social media, neighbourhood marketing drops to larger centres, 'come visit' initiatives
    - **Tourism Strategy** - adventure and experiential tourism is growing ties into your natural environment while differentiating you from competing tourism programs.
      - Experience Focused - How To Build A Boat
      - Enhanced Historical - (Acadian and Black) Tours
      - Southern and Eastern Shores Branded Tours - Walking, Hiking, Biking, Motorcycles, Healthy Living
    - Art, Theatre, and Cultural Experiences
    - Measure Results - website hits, emails, real estate queries, visitor numbers must be tracked from a baseline today and will become part of your future marketing strategy as you show growth, which will attract more people and investment.
- **Wayfinding Signage Strategy**

## Downtown/Waterfront - Canso and Guysborough

- **Mainstreet/Waterfront Plan for Development and Beautification** (with visuals) - given your natural beauty and ability to attract tourist and visitors you need to make sure your beauty and aesthetics are high grade, which means you need new restaurants, accommodations, tourist services, socialization spaces, and arts and culture integration into your tourism development, but it also has to all be beautiful as it is developed. People need to see what you are becoming through artistic renderings and augmented video to believe and appreciate what you are becoming.
- **Niche Cruise Destination Strategy** - you once had a bustling niche cruise industry, and with investments and development to the harbour, docks, and mainstreet, that will come again.
- **Design/Construction Guidelines** - though the entire region needs implemented and enforced guidelines for building, we recommend you start with the mainstreets/waterfronts in the two larger waterfront communities to ensure quality, aesthetics, and brand consistency.
- **Ecotourism Development** - tourism is growing again post pandemic, but we recommend you ensure your tourism development matches your brand and story so you may prefer to develop kayaking over boats, bicycles over motorcycles, camping over RVs, or fishing, for example. Just make sure it fits with who you are and who you are becoming.

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- **Investment/Facilitate in Retail Infrastructure**
    - Investing in commercial spaces for businesses to create a service or product that can be used as an amenity for the community. If you won't invest to create spaces businesses can open, you will find it harder to attract businesses that have easier opportunities to open in other locations with more readily available space and locations.
  - **Retail Development**
    - Retail Identification and Attraction Program - don't just be open for business, but go get the ones you want and need.
      - Ex: businesses apply to the GDBP to operate in the vacant spaces for 24 months free leasing and opportunity costs. (Coffee, PUB/restaurant, retail)
      - Ex: Key retail business plan developed and marketed
      - Ex: Acquisition of vacant buildings and properties for future growth plans

### Regional Collaboration

- **Welcome Wagon Program** - increase the activities that welcome new businesses and new people to the community, and raise general awareness of those new people and businesses to the community on an ongoing basis, but ensure this is more than a basket and a card. This must be an ongoing process to truly 'onboard' newcomers to the community.
- **Ambassador Program** - your community needs ongoing champions to change the story internally to the communities and externally. This program should be foundational to changing the internal story and championing the positivities the community has before it.
- **Communications and Engagement Changes** (for the Municipality and the GDBP) - though communication is exceptional, engagement opportunities with the public need to continue to be leveraged. A special focus on sharing changes and why they are important to the communities success is paramount to ensure people buy in and own the success of the region, not just sit as a casual observer who feels like the success is passing them by or not impacting their life.
- **Concierge Business Process Review** - one-window approach to small business growth that can be identified, quantified and used in marketing strategies. You have a good brand and reputation for fast business processes, but don't become complacent at any time. Always review to make sure you are on the right side of the bell curve.
- **Volunteer Succession Plan/Summit/Training** - our volunteers are all burnt out. We used to have a few community groups that worked on important community issues, but now we have hundreds of volunteer organizations all competing for grants and projects, and sometimes they are competing for the same thing, which is redundant at best, and embarrassing at worst. A summit should focus on better coordination of limited volunteer resources to get better results.



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## Appendix C: Actions Currently Being Undertaken

### Housing:

There are currently actions being taken on the housing front- with the understanding that more is going to be needed, but housing will look different in MODG in one year's time.

- In 2016 MODG constructed the Cutler's Brook Subdivision in the village of Guysborough which contained 10 lots. Since that time in the 2022/2023 fiscal year, a phase 2 expansion has taken place adding 26 new lots. All lots are serviced with wastewater and sidewalks and subsidized for affordability. Subsidization of all lots range from \$10,000 to \$15,000 depending on the lot size and location.
- The Municipality, in October 2023, granted the request of the Nova Scotia Housing Trust to provide land in both Canso and Guysborough in close walking proximity to both hospitals and nursing homes to construct housing for health care workers. 2 lots in phase 2 of the Cutler's Brook subdivision have been granted to the Trust for the construction of 2 multi-unit buildings or townhouses containing up to (4) dwelling units each. A similar situation exists for the land gifted to the Trust in Canso, where the lot could accommodate several multi-unit buildings containing up to (4) dwelling units each.
- In 2023 an independent developer began construction of the Carleton Place Apartment Complex located directly in the village of Guysborough on the corner of Church and Queen Street. MODG owned the property and incentivized the sale of the land to the buyer for this development. This 36-unit building is reserved for those 55 years and over and 18 of these 36 units are reserved for those on a fixed income. This housing development currently has a waitlist with all units spoken for. It is expected to be complete and move in ready in 2024. This project not only adds 36 new units to MODG's housing stock, but it will inevitably make more homes available for new families from those who are taking up residence in the new build.
- Due to the overwhelming demand, a second 50-unit building is currently being discussed by the same developer and Municipality to be located in Phase 2 of the Cutler's Brook Subdivision. This new complex will be for all incomes and family types.
- The designated community housing group in the County is currently in the process of become a registered not-for-profit entity. Becoming a registered organization will enable the group to apply for other levels of government funding for housing projects.

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**Main Street(s) Beautification/Enhancement:**

- In 2023/2024, a \$4 million sidewalk project is almost complete in the village of Guysborough. This project makes the village completely walkable and connects Main Street to the shopping complex, to the hospital and nursing home as well as schools and residences. This greatly improves the aesthetics, safety and walkability of the village from end to end.
- Both identified waterfronts in the plan have undergone significant improvements in 2023/2024. The addition of kiosks at both waterfronts provided for additional commerce in both villages and also an opportunity for local entrepreneurs to open a small business virtually risk free. In addition to much needed commerce, this provided a significant facelift for both areas. Other significant additions also took place at both sites- in Canso accessible public washroom facilities were added to match the exterior of the kiosks (all funded by MODG/ACOA), a new boardwalk and bandstand area; and in Guysborough there were many upgrades to the existing buildings (funded by the Guysborough Waterfront Committee/ACOA & Province) as well as placemaking improvements (provincial grant funds obtained by GDBP) to the exterior area such as sunsails, seating, lighting and more. This work created welcoming gathering areas in both communities this summer and was very well received by both communities.
- A new not-for-profit is currently being developed to work on a proposed \$8 million Fisheries Heritage Center planned for the Canso Waterfront. This center would house Parks Canada as an anchor tenant (confirmed), have space for a café, fisheries artifacts from various communities, be a huge tourist draw and have space for a harbour authority. Concepts as well as class D estimates have been completed.

**Other:**

- From a cultural perspective, a new French-first school opened in the Acadian village of Larry's River in September of 2023. The establishment of this facility was long fought for and lobbied by the French communities in an effort to preserve their language and culture. Enrollments are opened to all students, not just those from francophone communities. Approximately 25-30 students have enrolled this year.
- A contract was awarded to Fathom Consulting to develop a wayfinding signage strategy for the entire municipality. This is a joint project between MODG & GDBP and has been budgeted over a multi-year time frame for production and installation. Startup meeting is December 11th, 2023.