

ECONOMIC AND POPULATION GROWTH STRATEGY

Municipality of The District of
Guysborough





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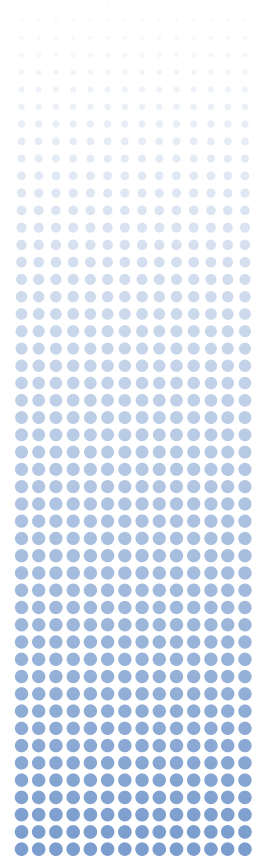
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Message

From Council



MODG is positioned to be the center of an unprecedented level of economic development in Nova Scotia. The Provincial and Federal Governments have, in the past number of years, committed to promoting investments in the renewable energy sector, including funding for research, direct infrastructure investments, project funding through the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB), establishing regulatory processes, and soliciting renewable developments on Crown Land assets in MODG. The Premier of Nova Scotia and Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia recently sent a clear message to project developers, potential investors, and Nova Scotians that we are, as a province, open for business. MODG has committed a great deal of effort to position itself as a leader in rural economic development in Nova Scotia, focusing on strategic land acquisitions, land use planning and deliberate industrial zoning to help attract large-scale investment.

The planned developments in MODG range in scope from a spaceport, gold mine, tidewater aggregate quarry, marine terminal, renewable energy park, and onshore and offshore wind developments. Most of the planned developments have a robust scope with the potential to have a generational impact on our Municipality.

As a Municipal Government, we must stay focused on maximizing the socio-economic impact of each potential development. Each development brings exciting direct and indirect employment opportunities during construction, operations and maintenance. Large-scale development will stimulate the economy and provide a magnitude of opportunities for the small to medium-sized businesses in the Municipality that we last saw during the Sable Gas days.

We want people connected to industry to live in our Municipality, increasing the need for the development of small businesses and infrastructure that attracts people to become residents, not passersby.

As we look into the future of our Municipality, we find ourselves at a crossroads. We are faced with promising opportunities with tremendous potential local benefits, and we can choose to sit back and hope to benefit from these investments, or we can choose to seize the opportunity and take control of shaping our own future and maximize the sustainable impacts in MODG. Our decision to strategically invest in our Municipality today will be the key to unlocking our full potential, allowing us to control how we grow and prosper for generations to come.

- **Warden Paul Long**, *Municipality of the District of Guysborough*





Planning Context

The Municipality of the District of Guysborough (MODG) is located in the northeast of Guysborough County, Nova Scotia. Covering an expansive area of 2,200 km², the Municipality encompasses a rich tapestry of natural and cultural resources, appealing to both residents and investors. Like many rural communities in Nova Scotia and across Canada, MODG has experienced a population decline over recent decades, with a slight increase reported in the last few years. Attracting and retaining newcomers is vital for boosting population growth in the Municipality. Similarly, it will take enhanced coordination and prudent economic planning to economically sustain this population.

Over the past decade, MODG has received significant investments in the renewable energy sector and other large-scale industrial projects. As a result, it appears poised for a renaissance in economic growth. Clean Energy Canada expects the Canadian clean energy sector to grow by nearly 50% by 2030. They also predict a 60% rise in the sector's GDP contribution and significant job growth alongside this expansion. The growth in the clean energy sector presents new opportunities, especially for rural communities, such as MODG, where developers are active and clean energy is explored. This includes more high-paying jobs across various supporting sectors, improved quality of life for residents, and increased government revenue. There is an opportunity for MODG to capitalize on these developments to strengthen its economy, improve resident well-being and enhance attractiveness to new residents.

MODG is at the forefront of green energy initiatives in Nova Scotia, on track to be the largest hub for onshore wind development in Canada. As the host of significant green hydrogen and onshore wind projects like Port Hawkesbury Paper Wind's 168MW Goose Harbour Lake windfarm, EverWind's 2,000MW, and Bear Head Energy's 500MW windfarms, MODG is positioned for substantial growth and transformation over the next 30 years.



With all this potential, MODG is vital to advancing the provincial and federal government's efforts to generate green energy in Canada. This will help meet local power needs while enhancing Canada's global standing as a leader in green energy production. Several onshore wind developments are planned, with MODG on track to see over 2,668MW of onshore wind capacity once scheduled projects come online. In addition, several large-scale industrial investments are earmarked in MODG, such as Maritime Launch's Spaceport Nova Scotia, the Melford International Terminal, and mining and quarry activities, including the NexGold gold mine project in Goldboro and Vulcan Materials' Black Point Quarry. Notably, construction is already underway on some of these projects. MODG is also working closely with the Province to advance the offshore wind energy sector in Nova Scotia. At the same time, the Municipality is collaborating with Simply Blue Group on a proposed eco-industrial park in Goldboro to produce Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAFs) and other green fuels.

Population and economic growth demand intentional actions from the Municipality to ensure the right investments are made at the most appropriate time

Collectively, these developments have the potential to stimulate economic growth and attract skilled workers to the Municipality. There is a recognition that concerted efforts are needed to retain this workforce and, at the same time, improve infrastructure to support population growth. MODG recognizes the opportunities these projects present and has taken several steps towards strategically leveraging planned and ongoing developments to aid population and economic growth. The Municipality has developed a five-year (2023-2028) strategic plan to guide its activities across various areas, including investments in people, the economy, infrastructure and wellness, among others. Similarly, the 13 Ways Team, through extensive community engagement, completed an assessment of communities within the Municipality and identified key opportunities that could be leveraged to stimulate growth. This assessment is considered foundational for the current economic growth strategy.

Further, it is important for the Municipality to develop a strategy dedicated to economic and population growth, acting as a roadmap for development. The existing strategic plan is broad, and expectedly so, encompasses all responsibilities of the municipality. As noted earlier, population and economic growth demand intentional actions from the Municipality to ensure the right investments are made at the most appropriate time. Thus, this growth strategy is targeted at increasing the population, developing infrastructure to support population growth and enhancing economic development activities.

The strategy, while recognizing the significant potential of new investments, will also support and respect traditional industries, which are foundational to the Municipality's economic landscape. MODG champions a balanced strategy that promotes growth across multiple sectors, preserving and enhancing the enduring value and opportunities of traditional industries. This approach ensures that the well-established sectors, known for their promise, growth, and resilience, continue to thrive alongside new developments across the district, reflecting MODG's commitment to a holistic and inclusive economic strategy.

Success is predicated on the continued leadership of MODG at both a strategic and operational level. MODG recognizes that without focused, sustained and concerted leadership and a plan based on consensus in priorities, the remarkable future they have been working and planning for, for generations will not have the desired positive and pivotal impact. MODG wants to be ready, in every way possible, to encourage local investment, enhance the local business community and create the type of service and community profile that encourages businesses to invest in and operate out of MODG. Concurrently, the Municipality wants to support community capacity and build infrastructure that welcomes new residents eager to make their home and build their business within MODG. This strategy is aimed at achieving that balance.

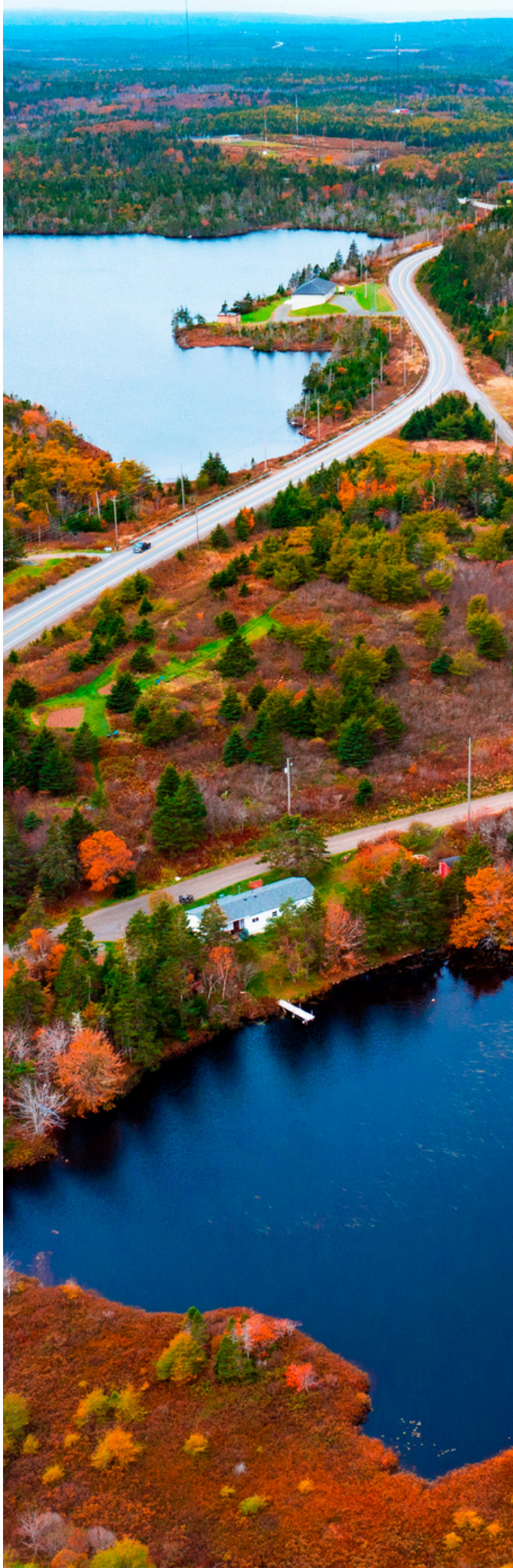


Background Research



Extensive background research was completed to provide insights into the current socio-economic state of MODG. This included examining the housing market, economic opportunities in various sub-sectors—particularly related to renewable energy and other industrial activities—and population trends within the Municipality. Key findings from this research are summarized below, and the full report is available in a separate document.

- **Population Trends:** The MODG has experienced historical population decline; however, recent trends indicate stabilization, with a slight increase expected until 2027. This is attributed to rising interprovincial migration linked to economic opportunities from upcoming projects like renewable energy development. Population estimates suggest that even as some projections anticipate long-term declines, the short-term outlook is positive, supporting local economic and community planning.
- **Economic Opportunities and Industry Focus:** The region is expecting major investments, particularly in renewable energy and industrial sectors, such as wind farms, which promise numerous job opportunities in areas like construction, maintenance, and professional services. This investment is poised to stimulate economic growth within the MODG and attract more businesses to support related industries.
- **Housing Market Dynamics:** MODG faces a significant housing shortage, already projected at nearly 300 units. While this shortfall may decrease by 2032 due to expected construction, the availability of housing remains a concern, especially with rising housing prices that are expected to climb due to increased demand from population growth associated with new projects.



- **Healthcare:** According to provincial data, MODG residents are more likely to have access to regular healthcare when compared to others in Nova Scotia and nationally. Notwithstanding, healthcare challenges remain, including staffing shortages and coping with increased demand due to expected population growth. Initiatives such as introducing virtual healthcare programs, utilizing pharmacists to operate community-led primary care clinics and improving facilities are underway to address these challenges.
- **Quality of Life and Community Resources:** Residents report high levels of satisfaction with their quality of life in MODG, including strong community ties and access to recreational facilities. This can be attributed to investments in cultural and recreational infrastructure, such as the Chedabucto Lifestyle Complex, which supports vibrant community life while making the area attractive to new residents and investors.
- **Crime and Policing:** Crime rates in MODG are considerably lower than the provincial average. Despite increases recorded at the County level, crime rates remain below the provincial averages. In terms of law enforcement personnel, MODG is fully staffed, and efforts are underway to improve community policing and oversight, enhancing community safety and addressing growing concerns as the region develops.
- **Education and Workforce Development:** MODG residents possess strong educations in trades aligning with the needs of the local job market. Programs from nearby institutions like St. Francis Xavier University and Nova Scotia Community College provide additional educational resources critical for preparing the workforce for future opportunities in emerging industries.

What We Heard

As part of the strategy development, ATN worked collaboratively with MODG's project team to identify and engage with a variety of stakeholders, including:

- Municipal officials and staff
- Business owners and local entrepreneurs
- Economic development and business support organizations
- Large corporations and industry representatives; and
- Federal and Provincial agencies.

Residents and key stakeholders shared their perspectives on approaches and major investments the Municipality can make to help ensure large investments in the Municipality benefit all. Details on engagement findings are available in the accompanying 'What We Heard' report. Major insights from engagements are outlined below. It is worth noting that delivering on some of the suggestions and concerns raised below will involve extensive collaboration between MODG, other levels of government and the private sector.

“ Delivering on the suggestions and concerns raised below will involve extensive collaboration between MODG, other levels of government and the private sector. ”

- Collaborate with other levels of government to invest more in primary healthcare, emergency services and social services.
- Encourage telecommunication companies and government partners to improve service availability in the Municipality.
- Support small businesses, entrepreneurs and general commercial services through incubator programs, expanded small business loan programs, and regulatory navigation support.
- Improve the Municipal policy environment to better address the unique requirements of businesses.
- Collaborate with local businesses and other levels of government to develop approaches and incentive programs to attract skilled workers.
- Advance strategic partnerships with educational institutions to develop and offer training programs locally to address critical skill gaps.
- Increase housing availability and affordability through partnerships with the private sector, social enterprises and other government partners.
- Enhance and adopt the existing tourism strategy while providing dedicated funding for its implementation.
- Attract investment and support for new and existing tourism accommodation in the Municipality.
- Some engagement participants highlighted the need to constantly communicate and educate the population about development and renewable energy projects to allay any apprehensions about the consequences of these initiatives for the community.
- Participants also noted the importance of recognizing the unique needs of each community within the Municipality in making decisions on their development.

Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

This section presents a SWOT analysis, which captures the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the implementation of this strategy and the onward realization of the objectives outlined therein.

Strengths

- Robust healthcare infrastructure such as Guysborough Memorial and Eastern Memorial Hospitals that ensures quality medical care.
- Strategic location with a vibrant coastline and access to land to support a variety of economic activities.
- A forward-thinking municipal council committed to investments in recreational and cultural activities to improve the quality of life for residents.

Weaknesses

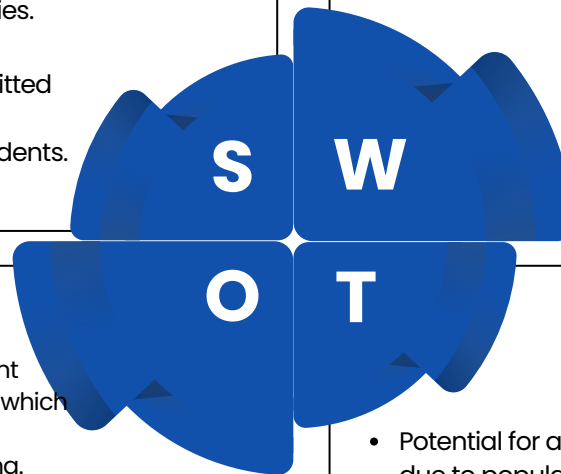
- The absence of post-secondary training institutions limits workforce development and retention, forcing residents to leave for training and education.
- A significant shortfall (about 300 units as of 2023) in housing supply, which poses a barrier to attracting new residents and supporting workforce growth, with anticipated projects expected to exacerbate the situation.

Opportunities

- The natural beauty and cultural heritage present significant opportunities for tourism expansion, which could boost the local economy if supported by adequate infrastructure and strategic marketing.
- Strengthening partnerships with post-secondary institutions to enhance local education and align workforce skills with industry needs.
- Collaborate with other levels of government and the private sector to enhance infrastructure to facilitate economic and population growth.
- Attract environmentally conscious businesses to minimize the environmental impact of industrial activities to preserve the local ecosystem.

Threats

- Potential for an increase in crime rates and safety concerns due to population growth can strain local resources, deter investment, and negatively impact the quality of life.
- Declining global investment and reduced demand for resources pose risks to local industries reliant on significant external investments, potentially leading to economic downturns and decreased business growth.





Economic and Population Growth Strategy



Vision

MODG cultivates a thriving future with strategically managed growth, embracing a diverse economy that respects its heritage and builds on strong traditional industries and infrastructure.

Mission

Lead the MODG towards a future of sustainable population and economic growth built on a diversified economy and resilient infrastructure, creating a strong community that supports various lifestyles and celebrates cultural diversity to attract and retain residents.

Respect our rich heritage and established sectors while encouraging the preservation of our natural environment to support growth.

Value Proposition

A forward-looking, agile Municipality that actively engages with residents and businesses to quickly adapt and meet evolving community and economic needs.

Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide the implementation of the strategy:

- 01** Strategic Partnership and Collaboration: Work closely with other levels of government, the private sector and community members to leverage resources, share knowledge and collaborate on initiatives that drive innovation and economic success.
- 02** Accountability: Ensure initiatives are implemented leveraging sound research and regularly reporting on the progress made on initiatives to the council and the public.
- 03** Diversity and Inclusion: Engage residents actively in planning and decision-making processes, ensuring the strategy reflects the community's needs and aspirations while at the same time supporting equity-deserving groups and addressing barriers to participation.
- 04** Balanced Economic Diversification: Promote a diversified economic base by supporting both emerging industries, such as renewable energy, and traditional sectors.



Competitive Differentiators

MODG stands out among municipalities in a variety of ways. The following outline key areas that differentiate the MODG from other municipalities.

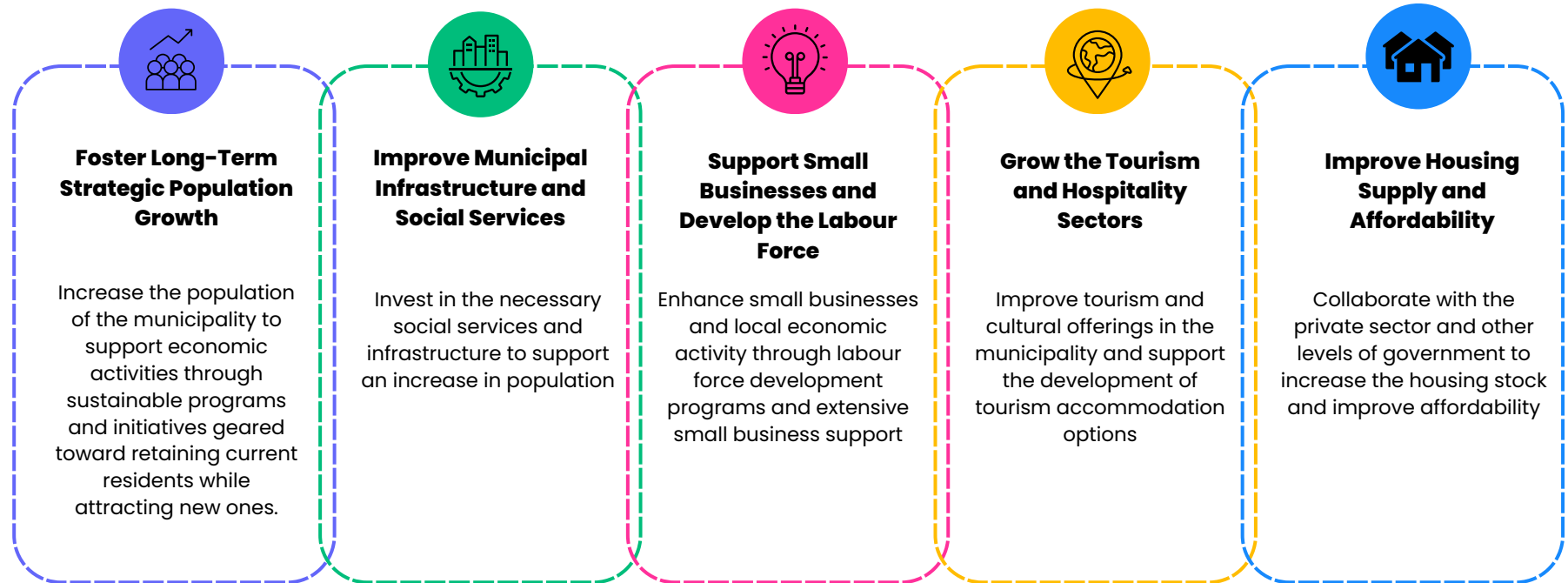
- **Quality of Life and Community Resources:** Past historic investments in amenities such as the Chedabucto Lifestyle Complex, educational facilities, and healthcare infrastructure make MODG a desirable place to live. High levels of community satisfaction and strong social ties contribute to resident retention and attract new families. The availability of recreational and cultural facilities supports a balanced lifestyle, adding to the region's attractiveness for newcomers seeking a peaceful and engaging community environment.
- **Location and Infrastructure:** The Municipality's geographical position, along with existing industrial infrastructure like the Goldboro Industrial Park, provides a strategic advantage for business and industrial expansion. The availability of industrial land and proximity to transportation routes enhance its appeal for logistics and manufacturing industries looking to capitalize on the region's growth potential. The Municipality also has land use planning and setting aside land for industrial activities.



- **Generational Impact of Renewable Energy Projects:** MODG is positioned as a prime location for renewable energy projects, with multiple large-scale wind farm projects planned. These projects are set to create significant employment opportunities during the construction and operational phases, making the Municipality the ideal place to relocate and start a career. Additionally, the focus on green energy not only aligns with global sustainability trends but also makes MODG an attractive destination for companies and workers in the renewable energy sector. These projects are a source of municipal revenue, enhancing the municipality's ability to further invest in improving residents' quality of life.
- **Community Safety and Governance:** MODG maintains relatively low crime rates compared to provincial averages, supported by a fully staffed law enforcement body. The focus on community safety and good governance enhances its appeal as a safe and stable place for families to settle and businesses to operate. This focus, combined with proactive community engagement, ensures that resident concerns are addressed while development aligns with local needs.
- **Tourism and Cultural Heritage:** The Municipality offers a unique and rich tourism experience characterized by its stunning natural landscapes, expansive coastline, and deep cultural heritage. The Municipality is home to over 400 kilometers of picturesque coastline and forested trails, providing an ideal setting for outdoor recreation, including hiking, cycling, and water sports. The region's natural beauty serves as a key attraction, drawing visitors eager to explore its unspoiled beaches and lush wilderness.

Strategic Pillars

Population and economic growth are long-term processes that require continuous investments and deliberate decisions. While the strategy takes this long-term approach to identify priority areas of focus, these focus areas may change based on national economic trends and as projects and investments within the Municipality evolve. The following strategic pillars were developed through a collaborative process to guide MODG's economic and population growth decisions and investments over the next 5 years. The pillars will be evaluated at the end of this period to ensure continuous alignment with the Municipality's objectives and overall economic conditions.



Strategic Pillar #1: Foster Long-Term Sustainable Strategic Population Growth

Strategic Pillar	Objectives	Action Items
Strategic Pillar #1: Foster Long-Term Sustainable Strategic Population Growth	1.1 Improve the quality of life for residents through continued investment in social services, infrastructure, and amenities	1.1.1 Progressive investments in identified service gaps to improve quality of life in line with the 13 Ways report
		1.1.2 Continue to attract investment from provincial and federal governments in the education and healthcare sectors while supporting these sectors to make the Municipality more attractive to families and young professionals
		1.1.3 Continue to facilitate discussions with internet and telecommunication providers to improve cellular service quality, which is essential for contemporary living and business attraction
		1.1.4 Invest sustainably in active transportation infrastructure and programming across communities
		1.1.5 Engage with nearby municipalities and the Transit Association of Guysborough (TAG) to develop reliable public transportation networks to facilitate movement within the municipality and region
	1.2 Retain current residents while working to attract newcomers from across Canada and internationally	1.2.1 Continue to work with local African Nova Scotian (ANS) communities to preserve their culture and support greater economic and social inclusion
		1.2.2 Expand programs and initiatives (e.g., GDBP newcomers' program, social and cultural events, newcomer networks, etc.) that celebrate and promote diversity within the municipality
		1.2.3 Consider expanding current programs aimed at attracting catalytic professionals (e.g., healthcare, construction and childcare) to the municipality by offering competitive incentives and housing options tailored for these workers
		1.2.4 Develop and execute marketing campaigns to highlight the benefits of living and working in MODG, targeting former residents and potential newcomers
	1.3 Develop a shared vision for population growth across communities in the Municipality	1.3.1 Maintain proactive engagement with community members to involve residents in decision-making to foster a sense of ownership and community pride

Strategic Pillar #2: Improve Municipal Infrastructure and Social Services

Strategic Pillar	Objectives	Action Items
Strategic Pillar #2: Improve Municipal Infrastructure and Social Services	2.1 Improve healthcare access with a focus on the unique needs of seniors, persons with disabilities and new residents	2.1.1 Work with the Province to enhance healthcare worker recruitment by offering competitive incentive packages (e.g., housing subsidies and relocation bonuses)
	2.2 Expand and build on infrastructure and social services to support a growing population	2.2.1 Establish paid positions for critical roles within emergency services, particularly in the fire department, to address staffing and volunteer shortages, while improving service reliability
		2.2.2 Partner with the provincial and federal governments to improve telehealth services and mobile clinics to reach underserved populations, particularly those with mobility challenges and in remote areas
		2.2.3 Collaborate with businesses to develop new emergency service points to improve service delivery
	2.3 Leverage infrastructure improvements to stimulate local economic development, attract businesses and create jobs	2.3.1 Evaluate the capacity of existing public infrastructure (e.g., sewage management, water supply etc.) to determine the necessary changes needed to support population growth
		2.3.2 Leverage new infrastructure projects (such as the MODG Business Development Centre) to support existing businesses and attract new ones, particularly in the food and beverage sub-sectors

Strategic Pillar #3: Support Small Businesses and Develop the Labour Force

Strategic Pillar	Objectives	Action Items
Strategic Pillar #3: Support Small Businesses and Develop the Labour Force	3.1 Strengthen small and medium-sized business ecosystem, enhance business support networks and increase access to funding and investments	3.1.1 Launch programs to support SMEs through grants, subsidies, and business incubators, emphasizing integration with larger economic projects to create a synergistic business environment that spurs economic growth
	3.2 Create a policy environment that fosters entrepreneurship and supports the growth of small businesses	3.1.2 Develop a comprehensive inventory of local businesses to facilitate their integration with large-scale projects
		3.1.3 Initiate regular dialogues between large corporations and small local businesses to uncover synergies and collaborative opportunities
		3.2.1 Continue to address small business and emerging sector needs through municipal land-use planning refinements
	3.3 Enhance workforce skills and competencies in priority sectors of the economy	3.2.2 Enhance advisory services that support small businesses in navigating municipal and provincial regulatory landscapes
		3.2.3 Continue to invest in and increase the financial capacity of the Guysborough Business Partnership (GDBP) to enhance its service offerings, particularly regarding small business support
		3.3.1 Collaborate with educational institutions such as Nova Scotia Community College to develop and deliver in-municipality skills training programs that are aligned with local industry needs, including in sectors such as construction, tourism, and renewable energy
	3.3.2 Develop an overarching labour force development plan to guide municipal investments in labour force development	
	3.3.3 Establish sector-specific approaches to workforce development (including program-specific incentives and funding support) to address skills and labour gaps	

Strategic Pillar #4: Grow the Tourism and Hospitality Sectors

Strategic Pillar	Objectives	Action Items
Strategic Pillar #4: Grow the Tourism and Hospitality Sectors	4.1 Enhance tourism infrastructure and diversify service offerings	4.1.1 Explore public-private partnerships to invest in essential tourism infrastructure, such as expanded dining options and enhanced visitor information centres
		4.1.2 Implement comprehensive wayfinding and signage enhancements across the Municipality to help tourists easily locate attractions and amenities
		4.1.3 Encourage community-driven tourism initiatives like heritage walks and festivals that showcase local culture
		4.1.4 Launch digital marketing campaigns to promote MODG's unique natural and cultural assets, utilizing social media and partnerships with travel influencers to reach a broader audience
	4.2 Make the Municipality a top destination for re-generative and experiential tourism in Nova Scotia	4.2.1 Work with Tourism Guysborough County to develop and market tourism packages that highlight local experiences, such as lobster suppers, kayaking tours, and artisanal craft workshops
		4.2.2 Appoint full-time tourism development officer(s) responsible for coordinating experiential tourism initiatives and driving strategic marketing efforts to increase MODG's visibility as a prime destination for unique experiences
	4.3 Increase tourism accommodation options while supporting existing providers to enhance their services	4.3.1 Facilitate investments in new tourism accommodation facilities such as boutique hotels, motels, and eco-friendly lodges
		4.3.2 Support existing accommodation providers through reviews and training programs focused on service enhancement, hospitality management, and customer experience
		4.3.3 Encourage accommodation businesses to diversify their offerings by leveraging innovative approaches (e.g., using mobile units that can be repurposed into medium term accommodation during off-peak seasons, providing flexibility and maximizing usage throughout the year)

Strategic Pillar #5: Improve Housing Supply and Affordability

Strategic Pillar	Objectives	Action Items
Strategic Pillar #5: Improve Housing Supply and Affordability	5.1 Increase the supply of affordable housing	5.1.1 Collaborate with provincial and federal governments to develop a housing strategy backed by funding that meets the unique needs of MODG
		5.1.2 Engage with organizations in emerging sectors (e.g., renewable energy) on developing accommodation options for their workers within the Municipality
		5.1.3 Foster partnerships with local businesses and non-profits to initiate joint housing projects
		5.1.4 Institute incentives for developers who prioritize affordable housing units in their projects
	5.2 Streamline housing development processes and strategically remove barriers to housing improvement projects	5.2.1 Plan for innovative housing solutions like tiny homes, secondary suites and co-housing communities that align with market demand
		5.2.2 Create a dedicated task force within the Municipal government to oversee housing development projects and serve as a single point of contact for developers

Implementation

The successful implementation of this strategy depends on strong collaboration among the Municipality of the District of Guysborough (MODG), various government levels, the Guysborough District Business Partnership (GDBP), the private sector, and local businesses. The strategy will be deployed using an iterative, stage-gated approach that aligns with key milestones of major industrial projects either planned for or currently underway in the Municipality. This approach is designed to minimize the risk associated with Municipal investments, ensuring that such investments are strategically timed for optimal impact and benefit of residents.

Monitoring and Evaluation

MODG is committed to monitoring and evaluating the results of the Economic and Population Growth Plan.

Over the cycle of the plan, performance evaluations will be undertaken annually by the MODG Economic and Community Development Team. The results from this review will be shared with the staff of the MODG and the Council. At the discretion of MODG and the Council, the annual performance evaluation report could be shared with the public to ensure residents are aware of progress being made on implementation.

The annual reporting creates an opportunity to share progress, highlight gaps and consider any required redirection of strategic pillars, objectives and action items in alignment with municipal planning. This approach ensures process transparency and accountability to communities.



