



LOCAL LOGIC

How to get there from here

Survey results and recommendations
on the economic future of
Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia,
and its surrounding communities

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AIRO 
Annapolis Investments in Rural Opportunity

Our Mission

We believe in the potential of our region. We're dedicated to stimulating entrepreneurial activity in Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County through research, funding and collaborative action.

Our Vision

We want what you want – to make Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County the place of choice to work, live, play and thrive in Nova Scotia.





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FOREWORD

“It’s a small population, but has such a big impact in the surrounding area.”

When the French explorer Sieur de Mons sailed up the Annapolis River in 1605, he and his cartographer, Samuel de Champlain, were looking at the Mi’kmaq land on which the Town of Annapolis Royal sits today. A lot has happened in the intervening 411 years – war, fire, economic upheaval – but Annapolis Royal, the Royal City of Anne, has survived it all. With a population of just under 500 citizens, Annapolis Royal is considered “Town” by another six thousand plus people who live outside it – drawing them in for school, shopping, services, health care, art, entertainment and community.

It’s an extraordinary place, but Annapolis Royal, stubbornly resilient though it may be, is caught in the same bind as the rest of Nova Scotia – a continuous slide toward a weaker and more dependent economy. Our province is at a tipping point – a fact made only too clear by the findings of the 2014 Ivany Report “Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotians”, and the recommendations of its 2015 follow-up playbook “We Choose Now”. Like it or not, Nova Scotians all have to “step up” if we want to survive and thrive. We have to change our attitudes, welcome innovation, attract new people and retain our younger population. We have to “get there from here” – or suffer the consequences.

At AIRO – Annapolis Investments in Rural Opportunity – we are dedicated to stepping up. We are a private economic development and investment firm that supports solutions to the challenges of rural growth.

We may be tiny, but our mission is big – to significantly increase entrepreneurial activity in Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County. We do this by investing in new or existing businesses. We also offer collaborative support in developing business plans and models, with advice and mentoring along the way. Additionally, we support marketing initiatives that further our mission, and collaborate with local governments on action-orientated economic development projects.

To work wisely, we believed we needed a better understanding of how the people of our community see their opportunities, their challenges, their vision of a bright future. So, we asked them where they thought Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County needed to go. In July and August of 2016, AIRO interviewed 33 people between the ages of 14 and 80 – a wide cross-section of community members – as well as politicians, economists and other experts. We spent more than 100 hours in extensive discussions with these folks. We asked them to tell us what they liked and what they didn’t like – what they wanted and what they thought was holding them back from getting it. We asked them to dream big and then we wrote it all down. Basically, we took the temperature of the community for a perspective on all aspects of rural living.

We asked participants for both their blue-sky ideas and their realistic recommendations on how the Town and surrounding community could grow and prosper. And we also asked for their individual stories. Newcomers told us how they came to choose Annapolis Royal and district, natives recounted significant events and new perspectives, and young students illuminated the advantages and challenges of life as a rural teen.

The single strongest thread running through all of our conversations was a love for this community and its natural beauty that motivates its residents to contribute in surprisingly active ways...in community collaboration, culture, preservation and progress.

This passion, combined with a remarkable quality of life and the potential for new business, makes Annapolis Royal and neighbouring areas a particularly promising centre for the kind of economic renewal called for in the Ivany Report.

We are truly grateful to those who agreed to be interviewed. Their thoughtful responses to sometimes difficult questions are the backbone of this report and have deeply informed the way forward for AIRO and the rest of us. We thank you.

The AIRO Team...



Jane Nicholson
Founder & CEO



Adele MacDonald
Executive Director



Christie Nicholson
Director of Research



The strongest thread...

"It's just a great place to live. We love having our family here. It's also a great place to have a business. You can make a real difference."

"What we have in this town is because of people who care about their community and make the investment and are involved."

"There are really amazing people – salt of the earth people – who will do a deal on a handshake and be true to their word."

"It's a beautiful town. It's gorgeous. We've got water views, we've got historic homes, we've got beautiful old vegetation and trees. We've got one of the best historic gardens in North America. You can go on and on and on and on...."

"We've got people here from all over the world. Every person who comes here brings some different piece to the community."



CHAPTER 1

How we see ourselves today

The joys

We asked participants to share what they considered to be the greatest day-to-day joys of living in Annapolis Royal and surrounding areas. Combined with this question, we also asked what assets are the most beneficial for them personally.

The Health Centre was listed as, by far, the most critically important asset. Although there were some complaints about wait times and what were perceived as erratic closures, overall we found that the Annapolis Community Health Centre is considered to be the “*number one deal-breaker*” across all ages. Meaning, if the Health Centre were not here, the impact on the Town’s population would be profoundly detrimental. People value health care and want it close at hand.

The Farmers and Traders Market took the lead for the most mentioned top joy. It is clearly a beloved spot for buying local fresh food and artisanal wares, but more than that, it is the nexus that binds the social fabric of the area. And this is where the “joy” stems from. The Market – as the social event where people connect in person to share the news of the week – provides the kind of human support that is the reason people love living in a small town. One of the few Nova Scotia farmers’ markets that operates year-round, its importance as an attraction in Annapolis Royal cannot be over-stated.

The beauty of walking along the boardwalk followed closely. Many spoke about walking with pets and loved ones in the evenings, and taking in views “*that would make you cry.*”

The natural beauty of the area was also consistently mentioned as a top joy. “*The trees. The sidewalks. We always described it as a perfect small town, like you see on movies.*” The sheer beauty of the town and waterfront bring daily joy – even to long-time residents.

Favourite joys for the younger participants were the playground on St George Street, the Christmas Parade of Lights and the Natal Days activities and events.

Some said they were “in love with the built heritage of it.” And one person noted specific buildings, like the Annapolis Royal Regional Academy, “*I love that school. I went to school there. My mother went to school there – it has a lot of character. It’s a beautiful building.*”

Nearly all participants said that the “people are the great joy.”



The strongest thread...

"They throw you a simple hello, and 'hi, how are you doing today', and they stop and talk."

"When you see people you know, you got to come in, have a cup of coffee. You got to have a doughnut or a cookie. It's just the way of life. You don't get that in New York, I'll betcha."

"I love the people. I leave for work 10 minutes early because I know I am going to run into someone and want to have time for a conversation in the street."

"They help us out in so many ways. I buy my firewood from my neighbour and he throws it right in the back door of my basement. He delivers my hay to me; he drives with the tractor and drops the bale off whenever I need it. They've been fantastic in that way and if we need something they'll help us out."

"There's just a sense of community. I don't necessarily think that you get that everywhere else."

The frustrations

When we asked about life in Annapolis Royal, we were flooded with passionate responses that described a love and loyalty to a place unlike anything we've ever heard. **But no place is perfect.** Many frustrations were raised by our interviewees. But nearly all came with the quick caveat that: *"it's a reasonable price to pay"* for living in *"paradise"*.

In fact, some of our interviewees said they only think of frustrations when asked directly about them. As one of the young teenagers from the community so aptly put it when describing life: *"Whatever limits you is also an opportunity to do something new."*

We assessed the frequency associated with each frustration, and we've documented here those that were mentioned most often (i.e., a strong level of commonality among all those interviewed) and caused the most unhappiness.

IT'S THE DAMN INTERNET

It won't surprise anyone in rural South West Nova that the challenge of accessing high-speed Internet, specifically outside of Town, was raised often and with exasperation. What is surprising are the stories of resilience in the face of isolation, where people either cobbled together solutions or have learned to accept incredibly inconvenient work-around strategies.

Still, all wished they had not been forced to cope with the issue on their own, and most say lack of rural high speed Internet is the **number one deal-breaker** in attracting home-based workers to South West Nova Scotia.

Even just five minutes outside of Town, many residents have barely satisfactory connections, or pay a high price (\$150+ per month) to get a somewhat acceptable speed, and many still use dial up. *"In town it's okay. Outside of town it's miserable."*

"It is limiting economic and rural development in this province. And it's probably the biggest thing that is stifling any sort of economic growth."



Here's just a small sample of the many comments we received:

"Currently our speed is 8 Mbps for download and .5 Mbps on the upload... it's painful. And when our neighbour goes online to stream movies, then it becomes impossible."

"It impacts us on Parker Mountain Road every single day. A lot of my clients are out of province and I can't say, 'It is raining in Toronto so I can't send you that file because of the way our satellite signal is transmitted,' or 'There are clouds right now, so can I send this to you when I go to the library?' It's come very close to being a deal breaker for us."

"We did do a lot of research to come up here – the Valley – we knew it was going to be a slower pace and we knew heating was going to cost more, but what surprised me the most was we were told by Eastlink and Bell that they were installing fibre optics in 2013. And they did not. It is really frustrating."

"The now defunct Annapolis Digby Economic Development Agency did quite a bit of work promoting and encouraging home-based businesses and they even identified graphic design as a need. If they singled that out, I thought they must have the infrastructure. But now, four years later, there are many days where I feel as though we've been sold a false bill of goods."

"I have many times thought about taking on a new business idea but I am reluctant to, because it would be web-based and require a high-speed connection."

"We had friends come here specifically to look for real estate who wanted to make the move here, but chose not to solely because of the Internet issues."

"When we moved here we looked forward to Skyping with friends and family – we have not been able to do that from here. Ever."

"We have found it frustratingly slow to move ahead with the County municipal government when trying to actively solve our Internet issues. And at the provincial level there have been other slow-downs and frustration with a lot of red tape over what ought to be dead-easy issues."

FRIENDSHIPS ON THE GROUND

“There’s an invisible line.”

Many recent transplants (within the last five years) wish they felt a stronger sense of belonging in Annapolis Royal and the surrounding areas. Everyone noted the remarkable generosity of their Nova Scotia-born neighbours, but lamented the difficulty in forging deeper friendships with them.

“They are friendly and very generous, but when it comes to an invite to watch the football game on a Sunday afternoon, it’s not going to come to us.” Some transplants say that 80 to 90 per cent of their close circle of friends are, by necessity, also from away.

“Nova Scotians are the friendliest people you could imagine, but you will never be invited in for a cup of coffee. There’s an invisible line.”

“The ‘CFA’ (come from away) mentality has the ability to make you feel like you are not welcome.”

“Just to have that local, that real connection, that historic connection where you can sit around and people can tell you stories about what so and so did when their grandpa did that. Like that kind of cultural attachment...”

“...there’s a group of organic farmers that do an organic potluck that a bunch of people go to... A good percentage of those people moved here from away – the local farmers have their own little social clusters already.”

You may read the comments above and think this feeling is common to all rural areas and small towns, and that the burden is on the transplants to make the connections. You may think it’s a complaint voiced by all people who move to small towns filled with generations of familial connections, but that doesn’t mean it’s something to ignore or push away as unsolvable.

This lack of deeper acceptance by long-term residents was the second most common frustration, only surpassed by slow Internet speeds. We need to pay attention to it, and do more to get together. Rural people are often shy and may not be the first to reach out. Research has shown that our social circle directly impacts our health and motivation. It also provides the necessary “stickiness” to keep the population in the Valley. You may not think that having people over for supper is part of a major economic stimulus package, but it is. Our area is home to a large number of people who have moved here from elsewhere; the solution may be to create more opportunities for ALL of us to connect with each other.

WHY AREN'T YOU OPEN?

“Things shut down at 5pm.”

Most participants mentioned that the shops, restaurants and cafes along St George Street close too early. They felt that this not only hindered their own enjoyment of evenings in Town, but also, and more importantly, didn't provide the kind of liveliness visitors are expecting in a vacationing seaside escape where tourism is the number one economic driver. People were especially critical of the lack of open shops and cafes on Sundays.

It's important to note that interviewees gave this criticism with a strong and clear caveat – they know the early operating hours have to do with low population, lack of resources and cultural habits.

Here's how a couple of interviewees explained it:

- “There are two reasons: One, locals don't go out at night. Two, you can't get people to work. So, nothing happens.”
- “If you don't have the demand, you are not going to open your doors.”

“I see people wandering around on Sunday who are obviously not local and there's absolutely nothing open at certain times of day, and there's really very few places for them to go. It's great that there are new restaurants opening up on the main drag outside of town, but it doesn't help people who want to walk around in Annapolis.”

*“Visitors and the younger population want night life and dining.
And things shut down at 5 p.m.”*

“At the end of August everything shuts down. And you go into the existing places and they are almost empty – and that is not the most enticing atmosphere.”

“I loved the Harbour Club in PEI. There were shops and cafes, pubs and ice cream, and boats in the harbour. There was activity versus here, where everything shuts down.”

OUR HERITAGE

“If the community wants to be held in high regard by the rest of Canada, people need to step up.”

The almost complete disregard of Annapolis Royal/Port Royal as the birth place of European settlement in Canada did not come up as a frustration until we directly asked about it. Then it became one of the most-agreed upon – and most passionately felt – frustrations, on two separate fronts:

- the lack of recognition of Annapolis Royal’s historic significance, and
- the limiting factors inherent in maintaining a heritage town.

Lack of recognition for the Town

“The town needs to market and tell the story! Yes, Annapolis should be held in high regard!”

“Heritage is not that much at the forefront of the Canadian education system.”

It’s worth noting that all participants, even the politicians, could not come up with a good reason for why the Town is not celebrated in the manner that would be expected of an icon of national significance. Most answered by looking down and shaking their heads: *“I don’t know. I really don’t know.”*

Nearly all agreed that Canadians *“absolutely do not know the historical importance of the heritage that is here.”* One man said, *“My fiancée knew of it but not at a deep level, even just being as far away as Dartmouth.”* Politicians acknowledged, *“There is a lack of understanding of the historical significance of this region, even within government.”* And all agreed that if Annapolis Royal were in the United States, it would be revered and treasured as Colonial Williamsburg is today, attracting thousands of visitors and recognized nation-wide. So, why isn’t it?



Lack of understanding of the role of heritage preservation

Some interviewees felt the heritage rules limit the town's economic potential, while others understood that many visitors are drawn to Annapolis Royal specifically because the Town's built and natural heritage is preserved.

One participant pointed to the perceived *"high insurance costs"* needed to keep *"plaqued homes"* protected. And another mentioned that the heritage rules are not efficient or practical, citing the limits on the kinds of materials one can use when renovating historical buildings. There were complaints about other rules as well, like the height of signage, which some participants felt should not be as strict as the Town currently mandates.

Some say that this type of frustration is strong enough that, *"Real estate agents – multiple listing services – should give heads up on regulations, especially for historic buildings. Be up front with that, before we move here."*

One participant attempted to make the case for compromise between a need to progress and a need to preserve, and suddenly mid-sentence, she remembered the Town's slogan, *"where history meets opportunity – our slogan! They can actually live together and create so much more!"*

"I think our history is important and it's a feather in our cap. I'm a little bit of a history buff. But to a lot of people – the people that are our age now – in 20 years, is it going to be important to them? I just find as society goes along, history becomes less and less and less important."





WATER ACCESS

“You can put a boat in quicker in Halifax than you can here.”

Most of the folks interviewed lament the lack of water access. Shockingly, many long-time residents have never taken in a view of either Granville Ferry or Annapolis Royal from a boat. The floating dock at the end of the wharf has been a help, they say, but overall, most participants say the lack of water access is remarkable.

Some commented that *“watching the cadets in the summer on their boats is incredible”* but it’s *“painful we don’t have access to that facility or an option to take part in the sailing school.”* Some asked, *“Isn’t someone able to access that facility? Could a business run a sailing school?”*

Another interviewee recalled an awkward moment at the Annapolis River Festival: *“...it was a scorching hot day, and everyone was lined up at the banks of the river...and no one was in, or even on, the water right in front of them! What a perfect day to have demonstrated kayaks or canoes and yet we were all just standing there and wondering: How do we get in there?”*

“You have a whole generation of youth that don’t know how to sail” in an area surrounded by water, and historically known for water!

CUSTOMER SERVICE

“There is no culture of customer service”

This is perhaps one of the more surprising criticisms of a town known for its friendly people and tourism attractions, and we found it particularly hard to understand, but a number of participants mentioned a lack of commitment to top-notch customer service in many (but not all) places.

“You go into some stores in town and you get: ‘Don’t talk to me’ from the owners.” One interviewee found that when his friends have come to visit, they’ve remarked, *“Even just a ‘Did you enjoy your stay?’”* after staying in a bed and breakfast might make a big difference. And that is missing in some B&Bs.” Others said they find the overall attitude of service to be *“abrasive.”*

But customer service is a tough thing to train: *“Not everybody has that in them naturally to assist any customer. You have to be flexible, adjust depending on the personality, wants, needs.”* One entrepreneur said this was her biggest issue with finding employees – good customer service skills.

RESTAURANT QUALITY

“There’s so much good fresh food here and nobody is cooking it”

We heard a lot of frustration around the variety and quality of food in local restaurants...

“I’d rather eat at home than at any restaurant around. We need more good food. It makes me crazy.” Another interviewee agreed but thought that perhaps, *“The residents don’t want to pay the price for good food.”*

Most interviewed noted a lack of variety in the restaurants in town and in neighbouring areas. *“The lack of culinary diversity was a shock to us.”* This is a frustration that has lingered: *“Three years later we still miss the variety.”*

It was clearly noted by nearly everyone that a *“variety of nice restaurants in the town is missing.”* And another said, *“I challenge you to find a jar of spicy Thai curry in the grocery store.”* Some say food gets what they referred to as *“Valley-fied”* which means that a restaurant might open and start out with an unusual and spicy menu, and then *“in six weeks it’s back to chicken nuggets.”*

RED TAPE

“It gets harder and harder for independent small-medium businesses to do everything that they’ve got to do to satisfy what the government needs.”

Red tape reduction at both municipal and provincial levels was a hot-button topic for many of our interviewees. One described pitching a product idea to several government organizations and was very surprised by the opaque layers she ran into, saying that when she approached these organizations she got a, *“good luck with that”* instead of a *“I know someone you could call.”* She was not trying to get funding; she was trying to get information about the process of starting a business. In the end, she said that *“Annapolis Ventures was the most helpful.”*

Another couple said they found it *“frustratingly slow to move ahead with the county municipal government when trying to actively solve our Internet issues”* and even at the provincial level *“there have been other slow-downs with a lot of red tape over what ought to be dead-easy issues.”*

“When setting up a small business, it is very difficult to find what exactly is required from the government or other organizations. Or understand what was being said on various sites. On the Provincial Registry for Joint Stocks site it says, ‘some but not all forms might be on this site – you may want to get a lawyer to do this.’ No one should be forced to hire a lawyer just to find information!”

And another business person concluded “There seems to be a huge oversight in the government that they don’t want to change processes to make it easy for people to relocate here. It costs \$250 to register the company every year. Nickeled and dimed to death! If the fee were included in overall business taxes, it wouldn’t seem that much of a deal.”

Retirement community - true or false?

All but one person interviewed noted that Annapolis Royal is a “retirement community”. Since the 2011 census shows that **only 35 per cent** of Town residents are aged over 65, we pressed for evidence of this perspective.

Some said they look around and they see it:

“I find the Town more of a retirement community. On the outskirts and the shore is where we see more of our younger families.”

“It’s a little like an ‘old people college.’ You have the art gallery, the gardens and the theatre. Those are the extra curricular activities. To me, the town is full of great places for old people to volunteer.”

Some say they hear it:

“The tourists are saying, wow, I want to move here when I am 65.”

Some say it is a matter of jobs:

“I see it as a retirement town because there’s really not much opportunity for work...If you were looking for a permanent job tomorrow, Annapolis Royal hasn’t got any that I’m aware of. You might get a job in the liquor store that’s part time. Everything is part time. You can’t put your future on part time.”

Curiously, one person who viewed Annapolis Royal as a retirement town didn’t like feeling that way:

“I don’t want to see it as a retirement community because that creates a whole new set of problems. It sounds horrible, but basically it’s like having a bucket with a hole in it. We aren’t building the new generation of residents when we’re retirees, right?”

One interviewee did not see Annapolis Royal as a retirement area. We asked why and this person responded:

“We have retirees here, but we are too progressive to be classified as a retirement town.”

Which then leads to the question, why do people think of the Town as a retirement community? We believe there are three main reasons:

- people over 60 (working or retired) make up the bulk of the volunteers in Annapolis Royal
- retirees often have the disposable income to eat out more often and attend more events
- retirees are not constrained by a “9 to 5” timetable.

All of which means that people over 60 are inherently just more visible – walking downtown in the middle of the afternoon, running events in the evenings, chairing meetings, doing tai chi on the wharf at 8 am.

Perhaps our interviewees “see” the Town as a retirement community because they literally see the retirees going about their daily business while they themselves are working for a living.

The fact is that almost two thirds of the population of Annapolis Royal is aged 64 or younger.

Annapolis Royal in 2027

“Hopefully still here, hopefully more plugged in.”

We asked participants to think 10 years ahead and describe what Annapolis Royal and the County will look like in 2027. **Overall there was a deep sense of hope.** Every interviewee wants the town and neighbouring areas to survive. Many said they suspect it will remain roughly the same, as a “retirement town” with some tourism.

Others noted that there have been great changes and progress recently, and they feel the Town is finally on “the right path” and that “now is the time for opportunity” and if the Town is ever going to turn a corner, it “will happen now.” Some answered this question with an expression of their deepest wish for the Town, and described what “better” looks like to them.

We'll let the voices take it from here:

“Things have gotten better; the Town is on the right path. There are things going on. There are some great announcements happening with funding again here in town. The waterfront development. It is underutilized here, and I think that is the number one selling feature of this area.”

“I believe that there will be a couple of new businesses because I think what AIRO is doing is really good. New condominiums will be good but I believe they will turn into senior homes. I hate to tell you, but I think it's going to be more of a retirement town. I'd love to see some industry come, but I don't know.”

“I think in 10-15 years, hopefully the 16-year olds that are giving positive interviews today are going to be the ones that will be reinvesting in the town and then people can pass the torch over to them. That would be really, really nice.”

“I hope it's better. Better looks like a marina. Better looks like a retail business that looks like it's real retail business versus mom and pop selling yard sale stuff. Better looks like store fronts painted and maintained and they actually look nice and they're inviting. Better is optimism and openness from people in the community versus resistance to change. Better is high speed internet on the shore, not a friggin' Band-Aid solution.”



CHAPTER 2

The paradox of labour

*“The limitation to my business is finding workers.” versus
“There’s very little opportunity for work here in Annapolis Royal”*

Nearly all interviewees remarked on the lack of workers in the town and surrounding areas, saying that the small labour pool is by far the *“biggest challenge”* for their businesses and their lives. Professional computer coders, house painters, administrative support people, shop keepers, gardeners, teachers, wait staff, expert tutors, home care workers and more were mentioned as being *“in hot demand.”*

Business owners we spoke with were crying out for workers, while others said, *“There are jobs here. There are restaurants that are always looking for people. Home Hardware cannot hire enough people to work.”* From these remarks, it would seem Annapolis Royal has an embarrassment of riches in terms of job opportunity.

But then, we heard precisely the opposite from others. There is *“very little opportunity for work here in Annapolis Royal”* and if you find anything it will *“only be part time.”* People who cannot find jobs leave the province in search of work, or stay and collect welfare.

Some commented that *“there is a lack of opportunity for young people”* and that *“a new grad out of Dal does not want to move back to Annapolis Royal”* because there are so few jobs that can utilize university training. Many noted that *“those that had any motivation moved away,”* because there was no sustainable money to be made in Town.

On the one hand, businesses in Town are starving for workers. It is a serious issue that puts many businesses on the brink of closing, limiting their hours of operation and their expansion options. It’s the number one issue that keeps business-owners up at night.

On the other hand, we hear that no one will move to Annapolis Royal because there are not enough well-paying jobs to sustain a living.

A business owner practically pleaded when he leaned across the table and said, “... *I can’t survive. Honest to God, our business is in trouble because I can’t find employees and I can’t find employees because there’s an oversupply of jobs and under supply of labour in this community right now.*”

So, what’s going on?

Well, whenever you stumble upon a living paradox, you usually find a complicated set of reasons. We found a number of things at play here.

Those participants who mentioned “part-time jobs” might be the closest to clarifying why people think the Town has a lack of employment opportunities. “*You can’t put your future on part time,*” says a lot about the requirement of jobs for the Town’s population to grow. But there’s so much more to consider...

Competency

Interviewees said there is a **lack of skilled labourers** in the area, remarking that resumes are often incomplete and business sense is lacking. One successful trades entrepreneur noted that the Nova Scotia Community College in Middleton significantly reduced its offerings, removing courses in welding and other desirable trades as it ramped up to produce pipefitters to serve the oil and gas industry in Alberta, now in decline.

Another business-owner recalled, “...*we were trying to get a website done for a local business. We searched all the way up and down the valley for a competent coder and got one person, and that turned into a disaster.*”

One creative business owner, who had tried everything, wound up resurrecting an old-school tactic and was successful: He produced a job fair for his own business. “*It was a success. We had 35 applications. And of those 35, I think we offered 12 jobs. We actually hired eight. And of the eight, I probably have four left.*”

He added that it would have taken him up to a year to find four equally competent workers, and from this one-day job fair he now has four consistently solid employees.

Regarding those workers who own their own businesses, some say they ultimately fail because they have “*no business sense.*” One participant explained, “*They know their trade and can absolutely do the work, but they don’t say no to Mary over here, and they are working for Joe over there, and so have too much on the go. Nothing gets finished and nobody gets paid.*”



Motivation

“Those that had any motivation moved away because we went through such a long time where there was very little opportunity for people to develop any sort of business skill.”

Regarding those who did remain and not “go out west” or “move away”, there were stories of low ambition and apathy towards the purpose of work and life fulfillment. *“I’ll tell you what it is, it’s welfare and they make more money just staying home and doing nothing. That they are unmotivated to work. There are a lot of people using the system.”*

And two more participants described it this way:

“There is an incestuous little problem in Annapolis Royal, it’s called: “I want cash under the table and I want to collect unemployment at the same time.”

Connected to motivation is also the lure of making **more money elsewhere**, *“they go out west, where you can make over \$1200 a day compared to working in the shipyards in Halifax for \$16 an hour.”* One resident said that his son *“will only move back if there is a secure income.”* Another mentioned the need for larger-scale businesses. *“We need career jobs that pay \$35-\$60K so people could afford to buy a house and live here with a family. That is what we are missing.”*

When asked what would relieve this situation, one person said, *“Show them the money.”* Others supported this. *“My quick answer is you can’t get rich quick here, unlike out in Alberta in the tar sands,”* adding, *“Why else would you go live in a dirty, hot camp working in the middle of nowhere?”*

Our younger interviewees noted that a number of the high school graduates who had attended the NSCC, then left for Alberta, are now returning home as opportunities in the oil patch have evaporated. Unfortunately, however, they say **some** of these returning residents *“are driven by working for beer money”* and they *“either find work fishing for a few months or at the fish plant”* but most of them *“just like drinking, partying....”*

“There is a lack of opportunity for young people. That’s what is a big frustration. They just don’t have it. Regional economic development, it’s never worked.”

Population

Many commented that the current demographic mix of Annapolis Royal falls short of meeting the demand for labour. *“Retirees are affluent and have no need to work,”* and *“we have no youngsters.”* Others noted, *“...those that are middle aged raising families are here because they’ve got a paying job that affords them to be here.”*

Many echoed the issues of population mix, which leads us to the other part of this story, one that is more of a classic “chicken & egg” problem. We need people who want to move here to meet job demand, and we also need full-time, paying jobs that will attract them. So perhaps we come back to the question, is there truly sufficient demand to attract a stable work force?

One of our politicians acknowledged: *“We really have a shortage of labour here and people in their 30s and 40s in the area. The population of the province is going up very slowly but it’s almost all concentrated in Halifax. We really have a problem in rural NS. But we have the place that is probably the most family-friendly, the nicest place to live and the nicest way of life. We have the natural beauty and the cost of living is low. We need to make sure people know about it and we have the immigration programs that incentivize people to move to rural areas.”*

Another commented, *“Certainly population growth helps. But it also starts with jobs, and not just the number but the types. If you were to wave a magic wand and raise the income of every individual, you’ll see skilled people meeting the services in high demand. Because the money will be here.”*

Social Safety Net

“We need to review the entire system of benefits”

The social safety net is an enduring and delicate challenge that governments have faced for generations. *“We must support the members of our community, but not to the degree that we remove their sense of agency and motivation”*. Politicians noted, *“We need to review the entire system of benefits. We want to make sure people have the basic means to survive and can raise children, but it can’t be a situation where they don’t have an incentive to work here.”*

And one interviewee mentioned, *“We need to look more at vocational training rather than just saying that you need to get a high school education and you got to go to university. Maybe there should be vocational training in high schools where people can train for the sorts of jobs that are available in the local area.”*

The politicians of the province point to transportation as part of the problem, *“There is difficulty getting from Digby to Meteghan River to go to work.”* Successful companies who want permanent local workers, like Riverside Lobster, have *“bought busses”* and they *“bus the workers in, and buy homes for them.”* It is recognized that not all can or will want to do that. There is always going to be a challenge with transportation. *“You’re never going to have a 100 percent workforce working or 100 percent of people that can work, working.”*



CHAPTER 3

Youth – our untapped resource

“If you want to make yourself an opportunity, then you can be supported in that.”

Nearly all participants noted or agreed that to change the culture of a place, a community, an organization, you need to start with the young people. We interviewed a cross section of youth, boys and girls, between the ages of 14 and 23. **We found all to be thoughtful, articulate, motivated, creative and somewhat shy.** Unfortunately, it seems that the youth of the area are rarely approached for their opinions and thoughts on the Town and its progress, or for their ideas on what can be done. *“There are definitely people in school that just don’t take action because they are not asked or approached about their opinion or input.”*

We found that, once engaged, these young people burst open with authentic stories, and they had a transparency rivalling those of the adults. Ultimately we feel that by **engaging the youth** of the areas within Annapolis Royal and county, **on their own terms**, we would have a much better chance of engaging them in the community. What then naturally follows is a stronger tie to their town and their history. And all of that raises the chances they will either stay in this area, or return when they are ready to start a family. And it was clear that the people we spoke with love their life here, saying that the people “are cool” and that they love that it’s “not too busy.”

One young woman put it this way: *“I really want to see us be able to integrate somehow with the community versus being like the version of teenagers that are driving around in their loud cars and playing annoying music.”*



Love for A Small Town

Nearly all of the young people interviewed said they appreciate the small-town life.

They recognize the value of having communal support, and they love the accessibility a small population offers, meaning they don't need to wait in long lines, they can get into any courses or programs that are offered, they can take advantage and don't have to fight for access like their big-city friends do. Most have a strong affection for the natural beauty of the area, and go on regular walks or hikes, or take part in local pool activities and intramural sports teams. They also noted that the town is full of events and parties and projects, and they really enjoy that aspect, even though they often don't participate themselves.

From the interviews, we found a group of eager people who want to be involved. Most said they don't step up because they are socially shy and it takes a lot for them to *"come out of my shell"* and find someone in town to ask for help to make something happen.

And others said they are not confident that they'd have the opportunity to do anything, even if they did speak up. It was clear that with **an invitation and some guidance** there exists a big population ready to help build this town. Most are looking for a role model who can approach them with a different idea of the future, *"...someone who could just build a little bit of confidence in what you want to do, shape your idea of what your future looks like and get you excited."*

"It takes someone to push the teens to get involved but I think whatever limits you is an opportunity to do something new."

One teen said that because of a summer job where he had to socialize with the greater community, he hugely improved his social confidence. He sees how much better he became at taking initiative, and talking with strangers. He noted that the lack of places to gather has led to teens not being *"as social as they could be. I think it's a big thing right now, to have the space to hang out and be ourselves."* Another added that *"if people don't have the opportunity to get together in one spot, they spend their time on their phones, and not making conversation or learning from social cues."*

One young woman recounted how she felt living in Annapolis Royal at 16. *"I felt trapped. I felt there's got to be more. I felt I had such a big exciting life ahead of me and I felt stuck. I felt maybe I could've been an Olympic gymnast for all I know, but you can't be a gymnast in Annapolis Royal. You can't play rugby in Annapolis Royal. So, I felt I needed to leave in order to pursue some of those things. I always wondered, what could I have been really, really good at – like really good at – that I never got the chance to do when I was young."*

This story shows the energy and ambition that sits just below the surface of the young people. While there are drawbacks from having a small population (for instance, not all sports or academic courses are available) overall, students accept this and they also have a sense of starting things themselves.



Annapolis West Education Center

“you’re all going to move out west because that’s where you can make money”

The Annapolis Valley Regional School Board runs several schools in Annapolis County including AWEC – the Annapolis West Education Centre – the middle and senior high school in Annapolis Royal.

Most of the young people said they *“love high school.”* And many spoke about it as an *“open-minded school, with a social issues group, a gay-straight alliance, and an awesome student council.”* Overall the school appears to have good integration, with some split between academic versus athletic students, as well as across income lines. Students interested in the arts appear to flow across all cliques, and overall the school appears to have a strong sense of community among the students.

Despite the mostly open-minded culture and sense of community, *“no one goes to the school dances”* and many of the students commented that there is little school spirit, *“absolutely zero”* is how one interviewee measured it. The question remains, is this any different from any high school generation that has always disdained anything organized by the adults? As one said, *“When the town or school tries to put on something like a ‘youth fun night’, the moment you hear ‘youth’ it puts you off because at this age the last thing you want to be is just a kid, right?”*

Many commented on a feeling of AWEC being *“closed off”* from the rest of the Town and community. *“There is a lot going on in town that the students aren’t aware of, and events they could benefit from.”* Apparently, the communication between the school and the community is not great. Most students *“don’t find out about events going on until the day before.”* Another said that you only find out about town events *“through word of mouth or texting. No memo goes out at school telling people what’s going on.”* When asked why there is a lack of announcements, nearly all shrugged their shoulders and one said, *“I think it’s a general sense of disorganization.”*

In line with these comments about communication, many young interviewees said they wanted more integration with the community business leaders, specifically to become more aware of current and future opportunities for jobs or careers in town. One young woman said that the *“teachers do an amazing job, and I would never ask them to go anymore above and beyond what they already do, but we don’t have anybody to mentor us.”* And this was confirmed by a local entrepreneur who remarked, *“I have asked teachers, how do I get in to talk to the students about entrepreneurship? Nobody takes me up on it.”* And an older graduate (now in her twenties) said, *“I think that as a high school student, for me to have had a mentor would’ve been very eye-opening.”*

But then there was one young person who confided, *“An NSCC person came to talk to grade elevens and only six students showed up for the presentation. The rest of them, including me, just skipped.”*

Most of our interviewees mentioned being frustrated by the lack of courses, like French, that aren’t offered because of low population numbers. They understand the issue and know there is little that can be done, but still wanted to express their frustration.

There appears to be a need to advertise the existing foreign exchange program at AWEC because so few students seem to know about it, *“I know it’s a thing, but I didn’t know about it or what was offered.”* This is made even more poignant by the fact that one participant responded with: *“I’d do that exchange program because that would be really interesting to do”* while others said they could *“see other countries.”*

There were also comments from parents and students about a lack of enthusiasm from the staff and teachers at AWEC. One parent told us, *“Their teachers just say, ‘Well, we know you’re all going to move out West because that’s where you can make money.’”* Another parent commented on a graduation speech given by a school official: *“‘Farewell. We know you’re all leaving. We hope you do well.’ I wanted to get out of my seat and throw that guy off the podium and give a separate speech.”*

Students described their boredom with classes, *“I know for a fact that students walk into the classroom, five minutes late, sit down, just pull out their phone until the bell rings and then just walk out of the class. Teachers won’t do anything.”* And another student added, *“The teachers say: ‘Why should they force us to do our work?’ If we want to do well we can make ourselves do well, they told us that.”*

Here are some things our student interviewees believe about their fellow students. These are their **perceptions**, not documented statistics:

- two-thirds of a graduating class attend some kind of post-secondary education – a roughly equal number of boys and girls
- about two-thirds who leave for college don’t come back to the Annapolis Valley within 5 to 8 years
- those who remain in the Annapolis Valley after graduation tend to stay in the Annapolis Valley
- in general, more boys return to the Annapolis Valley than girls.

The perception of adults outside of the school is that, *“Forty per cent of the graduating class will go on to university. Others will work on fishing boats or other different odd jobs, jobs that they have already and are happy enough with.”*

There was a word of caution about some of those who remain. As one interviewee put it, *“There is a danger of falling into the wrong path. Some kids are drunk every night. They’re just throwing their life and their money away.”* And another interviewee said, *“They’re making money to just spend it. They’re not investing in anything. They’re not moving forward. They’re just stuck.”* One young person confessed, *“I actually said when I was graduating, that I wanted to go as far away as I possibly could. Get me out of here.”*

One student spoke to the danger of never leaving: *“If you grow up in a province that has absorbed “the have not” culture – and then you have that “have not” standard – and if you don’t leave, and learn something else, you will not break free of that mentality and thinking.”*



A Space for Them

“Having a space that can be for people to sit and hang out and talk”

The teens of the surrounding areas all said they would love to have a space of their own outside of school premises, to congregate, socialize and hang out. When “3 p.m. hits” they say they disperse “far and wide” since there are only about “four teenagers who live in the town” of Annapolis Royal. The participants said that there are “not enough things available for people my age” and ultimately all students “just go home.”

Many who recall the old Internet Cafe lament its closing, “Having the Internet Cafe was one place that we could all go and hang out. It was our spot. You could go there and do homework, hang out, whatever. Then it closed, and there has been nothing since.”

When asked what they do for fun in the afternoons and evenings, we got: “We drive to Tim Horton’s. Every night it was just, ‘You want to go to Tim’s?’ ‘Yeah, sure. Who’s driving?’ Then we all head up to Tim’s, sit there for two and half hours, and drive home. That’s our big fun evening out.”

“There is the Sissiboo cafe in Bear River, and the one here in Annapolis Royal, but it is only open until four and we get off school at 3:20 p.m.”

It’s important to note: The students firmly recognize that there is a lot here for such a small town, “We have a theme park, we have two historic sites, bike trails, a theater that doubles as a cinema. It’s an amazing number of things.”

Given that the area already has a lot to offer, what are young people looking for? After our interviews, we concluded that the defining feature is ‘a space of their own’. A place designed by them and used by them.

“It would help a lot if we were in charge of designing it because we would make it something we want.” Teens said it would be important that it be for everyone, preferably between the ages of 14 to 18 years. Most kept the idea simple, a building, a space with “ping pong and pool, everyone loves ping pong – that would draw people in”. And a simple auxiliary input for iPods. Maybe there could be “door admission” or some small amount to cover maintenance. Another suggested that the space also have opportunities to purchase ice cream or other treats, a place where teenagers go and think, “This is the best place to hang out.”



One surprising revelation came from many comments about the local theater. *“The King’s Theater won’t show movies for my age group. They do a kid movie or an adult movie, but if we want to see a movie like ‘Lights Out’ you have to drive one hour to New Minas.”* Interviewees said they were told not enough people would show up for such movies, but then others said *“I think if there was a popular movie, definitely people would go.”* Another added, *“I know for a fact that if Fast and Furious played three nights Friday, Saturday and Sunday, guaranteed every single one of those would be filled because I’d be there probably all three nights.”*

“We’ve got an incredible Kings Theater but the thing is, it’s so formal – every once in a while, we get a really good movie. Like when Catching Fire came, we’re like, Oh my gosh! We’ve got to get tickets. We’ve got to get tickets!”

The teens brought up all kinds of ideas for more collaboration and involvement outside of school. *“Sports is a huge one ‘cause if there is one thing that brings the entire school together, it’s sports teams. And even for those people who don’t really enjoy sports.”* Two people mentioned *“a theater group for people to perform and be able to rent the King’s Theater to perform.”*

One mentioned that really you get out what you put in. *“Any teen who lives here who is my age (17) thinks that this is the most boring place on Earth – but you have to balance it out. If you aren’t doing anything, then obviously, there’s not going to be anything to do around here.”*

So, Post-University, What Brings Them Home?

“It’s the jobs.”

From our interviews, we noted that approximately 40 percent of graduating students pursue post-secondary education, a smaller proportion than perceived by the students we interviewed. Of that 40 percent, two-thirds do not return home to Annapolis County. We thought it might be useful to find out what makes a student return, so we interviewed two young people who recently returned from university. **They came back because there was an opportunity here – a job to make money, or a job to advance their career** – and those are the number one factors in the decision to move back home. From the perspective of employment, all things being equal, they would choose to be here.

For everyone interviewed, getting out of town and seeing the world is important. Many believe it is a necessary life experience, beyond even the often-mentioned job search. Some said they would not *“come back right after university”* but that they would when they were *“ready to settle down.”* Others said they’d be more likely to come back if they knew there would be other young people in their 20s with families living here. Nearly all said *“there are a lot of elderly people in Annapolis”* and that *“it’s a retirement kind of town.”* Others noted that it’s a great place to raise a family, and that it’s *“a kid-friendly town”* but also observed *“there are not a lot of families living here.”*

Some interviewees confirmed that having career models can make a big difference, *“If they knew they could earn \$60 an hour as a plumber they might say, ‘oh, that is not bad, I don’t have to go away to do that.’”* Many said that professionals need to come to the students and show them what’s possible. *“I feel like those kids need to see someone so that they can go, ‘Woah, I couldn’t even think of that before, I never even imagined that that was a possibility.’”*

Financial incentive programs are also hugely attractive to the younger interviewees. They said that college debt is a burden that is at the core of their decision to move away. If there were something here in Annapolis Royal that could help them with their debt, that would have a major impact on their decision to stay.



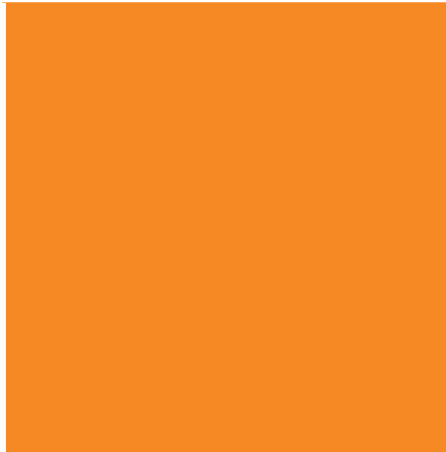
CHAPTER 4

A collective vision for sustainable growth

What's different now is the price of our real estate and the increase in the ability to work remotely...

“Local Logic” is a snapshot – a list of perceived truths. Boiled down, what the people we interviewed want are decent jobs, good Internet service and more opportunities for youth and children. Which means we need **sustainable growth**. To our interviewees, that depends on attracting a younger demographic – people in the 30 to 50-year age range. It’s just that simple.

“When I look at the bigger picture, we need younger families. We need families with disposable income. Ultimately that affects grocery stores, hardware stores, doctor’s offices. That affects everybody. And somehow we need to create some sort of a working demographic here that is 30-50 years old; that the jobs are higher paying and young families can afford to live here. They’ve done it on the South Shore effectively – in Lunenburg and Mahone Bay. There’s a bunch of tech-type businesses that are doing really well and the jobs have followed. That’s the type of thing a community really needs and somehow we have to figure how to get those people here.”



When we reviewed both recent and historical reports that outline the challenges facing Nova Scotia, it's clear the same issues have dogged our economy for generations. For instance, the group ForTheRegion.ca highlighted the following quotes:

“...the population of Nova Scotia is slowly dwindling; its industries are languishing and its wealth is considerably lower than the central provinces... and the opportunities for enterprises and investment are correspondingly small.”

“The result of this condition is that the younger men and women are more or less compelled to leave the Province and to search for careers in other parts of Canada or other countries.”

These were pulled from a Royal Commission report written in 1934! Eighty-three years later we could easily write the same two sentences.

Tied to population growth is attraction, and while many things attract people to a place, **the opportunity to make money is paramount**. While it appears things may not have changed in 80 years, there are two trends that mark this time in history as unprecedented and an invitation to make substantial change. Those trends are:

1. **Real estate has become prohibitively expensive on all North American coasts – except ours.**
2. **Technology has powered the increase of remote working – and that work can be done here.**

At AIRO, we are convinced that the relatively low price of our local real estate and the increasing freedom to work digitally from anywhere in the world gives us a **pioneering opportunity** to leverage Annapolis Royal and its surrounding districts as a sustainable target destination for entrepreneurs and young families.

That's what is different now.

That's where we see the opportunity for growth.

Here are some facts...

The Low Cost of Real Estate

*“...a new couple thinking about moving here.
Their reason: Cheap rent. Cheap real estate.”*

A typical single-family property in Vancouver rose 26 percent in 2015, reached \$1.3M*. In San Francisco the median property is \$1.2M, a 60 percent jump in housing prices in just the last four years.* In New York City and surrounding areas, the median price of a typical property is \$1.1M. Infusions from new tech millionaires and foreign cash* have driven house prices to inaccessible levels, while average local salaries have not risen proportionately. The great majority of people cannot even come close to buying property in key areas along the West or East coasts.

Nova Scotia's gorgeous land and seascapes provide “*views that make you cry*” and bring back the dream of owning oceanfront property. Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County have a moment right now where we can lure others to take advantage of the lifestyle we offer at affordable rates. Why? Because you can still buy a decent house for \$150,000 or a three-acre oceanfront lot for \$50,000.

* The National Bank of Canada estimates that buyers from China made up about one-third of Vancouver's housing market in 2015

* www.rebgv.org

* www.trulia.com

The Rise of The Remote Worker

34 percent of the leaders attending the Global Leadership Summit in London predict that more than half their company's full-time workforce will be working remotely by 2020.

Widespread access to a more robust Internet (more about that later!) has fuelled an acceleration in the number of remote workers worldwide. Most of the new start-ups coming out of Silicon Valley in the last three years are building their businesses with distributed teams working together across the globe.

What used to be known as “telecommuting” has become the norm for those who can produce work online. Mobile devices and software applications like Slack (communication) and Zoom (video conferencing) are quickly making the concept of the traditional workplace obsolete. And the types of jobs are not just coders, but writers, artists, designers, marketers, strategists, musicians, bankers, engineers, researchers – the list goes on and on. According to a recent Forbes magazine article, the most popular jobs include, writer, engineer, marketing manager, healthcare consultant, case manager, development director and recruiter.

In 2016, Global Workplace Analytics' research found that in the United States:

- Fortune 1000 companies are entirely revamping their spaces around the fact that employees are already mobile. Studies repeatedly show they are not at their desk 50 to 60 percent of the time.
- Regular work-at-home, among the non-self-employed population, has more than doubled since 2005.
- 3.7 million employees (2.8 percent of the US workforce) now work from home at least half the time.
- The employee population as a whole grew by 1.9 percent from 2013 to 2014, while the remote employee population grew 5.6 percent.

“...There is one field now, and that's just become true over the last decade, that if you enter this field you can open any door you want in the future and you can try many doors because in every single field nowadays – nutrition, sports, engineering – you need computer scientists. Those are the type of people we can have work here, because they can sit in any room anywhere in the world and do their job, and their job can affect any place.”



CHAPTER 5

Attracting new people

“We love the area. We just love it. It’s got ocean. It’s got farmland.”

When we reviewed all the data from our interviews with those folks who made the pioneering move to Annapolis Royal and settled in town or in the County, we uncovered a strong pattern in shared values, shared experiences and shared desires.

Most of them – about 90 percent from Alberta and British Columbia – told us that the initial draw was the ocean, the charm, the history, the artists. But when we added a value comparison, asking, *“Well if you had all of that back West, would you have stayed out there?”* nearly all paused for a moment, somewhat struck, and realized their answer was **“No.”** **Their move to Nova Scotia was, in fact, driven mainly by low real estate costs.**

Many described selling their home out West and moving to the Valley where they bought five to 10 acres of land and a dream home...all for the about one-eighth of the cost they would have had to pay for the equivalent in B.C. or Alberta.

Many exclaimed, smiling and still clearly pleased, *“we were suddenly mortgage-free and had money left over for savings...and had moved to paradise!”* Another business woman noted that *“five to eight couples moved here in 2015. Every week at the market we talk with a new couple thinking about moving here. Their reason: Cheap rent. Cheap real estate.”*

The other big reason cited was a high *“quality of life for children”* and wanting to *“slow down”* to offer a new kind of lifestyle for *“my children.”* They want their families to *“grow up rurally”* in a place where *“they can spend the day outside playing, not waiting for the next multimedia presentation”* and *“know where milk comes from and where meat comes from”*.

The closeness of community and *“being raised by a collective group”* in a small town is very attractive to this group.

Another key requirement is the kind of people that make up the community. Many said they want to socialize with friends who share their mindset, and those wanting children said it was important to be around other families with young children.

One characteristic that emerged over and over is that these new *“urban pioneers”* want to have a sense that they are *“home.”* And this *“sense”* tends to be measured by how often they are *“invited over to others’ homes”* and how much they are *“missed by their local friends when they are out of town”*. Almost all wish they could integrate more deeply with the long-term residents. One suggested changing the conversation: *“turn us from ‘Come From Aways’ into ‘We Are Here Nows.’”*

Who might they be?

The following points illustrate the strongest patterns we found in this target group and are the basis for our recommendations on page 52.

- Of those interviewed who have come from elsewhere, 80 percent have small town histories and 20 percent come from cities like Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto.
- 90 percent moved from western Canada (BC and Alberta) and the remainder were from Ontario.
- 80 percent had children.
- Nearly all have undergraduate or graduate level education.
- Their professions include digital creatives, artists, project managers, landscapers, carpenters, entrepreneurs and administrators.
- Nearly everyone started a new business here, or transplanted an existing business.
- All have a pioneering personality and outwardly positive; if something is missing, they “*just build it*” themselves, with a strong ‘*make it happen*’ attitude, most are natural entrepreneurs.
- Nearly all had some history of living near water, and being “*coastal*” was very desirable.
- Many are part of the farm-to-table movement and place a very high importance on good local food.
- Nearly all who moved from large cities mentioned the impetus to move to Annapolis Royal or Annapolis County was because they were, “*sick of the traffic, sick of construction, sick of taking 45 minutes to get anywhere*” and noted that here “*I can drive to work in seven minutes*” and “*as busy as we are, there’s still a sense of lifestyle.*”
- Everyone wants to be connected to community and have an impact – although “*enough time*” is noted as the number one restriction.
- Some have convinced their families to relocate here: “*My mom moved here four years ago. She loves it.*”
- Education for their children or future children is hugely important, with many saying that if there were specialty schools, such as a Waldorf program, it could be a powerful influencer in luring more families to the area.

To sum up, nearly all said Annapolis Royal “checked all the boxes” and one participant described it this way:

“It has the film thing, the art scene – this community has all the right elements in terms of a place that is a small town and yet doesn’t necessarily feel like there’s an absence of the cultural life and the kind of creative energy that I think is really important to be around.”

Interviewees also said they were attracted by the easy accessibility to theater tickets, special classes, concerts, cultural events and expert help, unlike in large urban centers where there is a line, a wait list, and often a high fee.

Regarding real estate, one couple’s story unfolded this way:

“We love the area. We just love it. It’s got the ocean. It’s got farmland. We just liked this part of the world so that’s where we would torture ourselves, looking at real estate in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. We’d think, it costs \$300,000 for a little bungalow in the middle of nowhere, near Kamloops, and for \$120,000 we can have a farm in Atlantic Canada. We would just torture ourselves and eventually, it came to the point when we said to each other, ‘Hey, we always joke about retiring in Nova Scotia. We can’t retire yet, but we could go.’ So, we did!”

As we noted, many in this demographic have a strong can-do attitude, as illustrated by one couple who took the “Internet gap” into their own hands and set up their own ISP. Another said, “There is an ability and freedom to create your own expectations. You can put on a dance – you can do it and people will come.”

Many said there was a “luxury of physical space” here and that there is a huge advantage when you don’t have to “compete with so many others.” And with this came the idea of being able to make a significant difference so much more easily in a small town. Even “a renovation to a store” leads to real change and “it’s appreciated.” And ultimately, with the 30 to 50 year olds who have moved here, there is a strong optimism that runs through their outlook. “There’s a growth opportunity for business here. My business has grown every year since I’ve opened. Every year, five percent.”

The Impact of Young Families

“Say we brought in 10 families a year who are each building a house...all of a sudden that money is flowing into the community. It’s not just that money, it’s also the money spent on restaurants and food and everything you need to live.”

At some point during all of our interviews, the interviewee would mention “young families are missing” from Annapolis Royal. This age group is particularly important as this is the life stage when most modern couples anchor themselves with a family and property.

The importance is logical – bringing in a young couple about to have children means that they will build a life and make an investment here that will come with “high switching costs”, meaning, it would take a lot for their established family to leave. The influence of this particular demographic will be huge, particularly in Annapolis Royal, as even attracting just 20 families of four could increase the Town’s population by 16 percent!

And when we asked, so what should we do, we heard, “Somehow we’ve got to get those families here, to the town. They have to come see it. If they see it, they will understand.”

Attracting the Sweet Spot

*“If this is the place to be, then the crowd draws a crowd.
The difficulty is getting that initial crowd here.”*

When we think of luring the “sweet spot” demographic of couples and families in the 30 to 50-year-old age range, the most important takeaway is how those that did settle here found Annapolis Royal in the first place. **Almost none of them had known Annapolis Royal even existed,** *“Actually I have to say that we chose this place randomly.”*

In everyone’s stories of how they came to call this town home, they say the decision came very quickly. All it took was an actual visit to the town, and nearly all described an immediate love for the place: *“When we drove into the town, you hit the one light and as soon as we passed through that one light, I thought, okay, I could live here.”*

An interviewee recounted this story:

“There was a house and garden tour this summer. They had 300 people through the houses. And there was a sister who lives in Bridgetown who contacted her other sister who lives in the US and said: You got to have a look at this, it’s beautiful, you need to buy this land. But it’s that word of mouth: ‘I was here, I saw this’. I don’t know how you advertise that, I really don’t know on a bigger scale how you show people what is here.”

Social Media

It’s clear that web-based videos and photos can catch people who are looking, and make them aware of Annapolis Royal. Fortunately, today there is an embarrassment of riches on the social channels like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and others, that are perfectly made for photos and videos of gorgeous landscapes.

Social media networks reinforce the idea of a global village – we are immediately brought to every corner of the world in a very personal way. If it’s photogenic, we can send it. The distribution channels are free – but someone has to do the distributing!

Here’s a quote from an entrepreneur in the Town who’s taking advantage of social media in an effort to attract awareness and local word-of-mouth marketing:

“I did a virtual tour of our bed and breakfast. After I posted that on my Facebook page, it reached 800 people. Those are going to be primarily local people but those local people, I bet 50 percent or more have never been inside the place and they live right here and they don’t know what it is. How can they sell it if they don’t know what’s here? And that’s what I’m doing all the time – whether I’m deciding, okay, I’m going to do virtual tours or have a little website of artists of Annapolis because people don’t know all the artists.”

The Remote Worker

“If it doesn’t matter where you work, and you can live in Annapolis Royal, then you should. This is the most beautiful place to live. Catch my drift?”



We mentioned earlier that remote working is on the rise globally, and it includes nearly every administrative, creative or technological job description. Software like Slack, Zoom, Jing, Evernote, Skype, and many, many others have allowed for the nearly constant communication necessary for managing distributed teams.

Writers, designers, project managers, strategists, marketers, engineers, academics can all work remotely, at least for a significant fraction of the time. Put together in the right way, you can have a highly-productive globally distributed team for your small business and run it from anywhere. We already have examples of businesses operating this way within the Town of Annapolis Royal.

The key issue is having access to a robust Internet connection and making sure that remote workers and businesses know that it is available.

Nearly all interviewees agreed that if we have the opportunity to attract remote workers to our area, that is a benefit to us in the long term. Internet infrastructure is key, and as another interviewee so smartly noted, to lure digital workers would naturally force better infrastructure, *“Remember, who you have in your community determines what’s available to your community.”*

It’s clear that the remote workers we can and should bring here are computer scientists, engineers and coders. Why?

- Their average salaries of \$150,000 would make an extraordinary economic contribution.
- They make up one of the largest growing segments of remote workers and are the most likely segment to move to rural areas like Annapolis Royal.
- They have strong potential to build a digital startup or base.

Engineers *“can sit in any room anywhere in the world and do their job, and their job can affect any place.”*

Typical engineers between the ages of 20 to 35 tend to be highly intelligent, self-driven and independent learners. While they like to be left alone to think and work, they are also active participants in global communities online and remain interconnected on a daily basis. This is very advantageous for a marketing campaign. They are highly influential because of their strong use of word-of-mouth channels through digital communities, like the digital nomad Reddit board. Additionally, advertising on sites such as Dribbble, WeWorkRemotely.com, StackOverflow or Nomad List could provide a huge advantage to Annapolis Royal, since few towns seem to have caught on to this particular strategy.

Based on DigitalNomad.com, the following criteria are most important for digital workers:

- dependable internet
- cost of living
- weather
- safety/security
- entertainment

Once we have established a few remote engineers and their families here in Annapolis Royal – and they like it – they will act as the best marketers anyone could imagine. In our opinion, even just six engineers moving here in the next two years could have a transformative impact over the next decade.

We know that computer science is becoming a required course in all Nova Scotia schools, and that Dr. Darcy Benoit from nearby Acadia University is working with the Department of Education to set up the curriculum and find the instructors to teach the program. But while we wait for that to roll out, **we need to work now** to take advantage of the trend toward a remote workforce. We need to place our stake in the ground as one of the best places in the world for these “digital nomads” to call home.

CHAPTER 6

Business opportunities

What people are thinking

We spoke with such a thoughtful and intelligent group that was well represented across ages and work experience. So we took the opportunity to tap the collective creative wisdom and at the end of every interview asked participants to share what they thought were the **best business opportunities** in Annapolis Royal and area. We asked for immediately practical as well as blue sky ideas. The results were surprisingly wide ranging and varied. Here they are, **ranked in order**, starting with most often recommended.



1. MORE RESTAURANTS - WITH HIGH QUALITY FOOD AND HIP DECOR

“We want to live rurally with all the amenities of city life”

Overwhelmingly, respondents said there is a market for more restaurants. Recommendations ranged from high-end dining and wine bars to old school diners and chip wagons. We received a lot of interest in restaurants associated with a microbrewery, as well as the need for more ethnic restaurants. Within **all recommendations** came an overarching target for extremely high-quality food, as well as trendy and hip” decor. Many agreed that interior design is as important as the food, and it’s time we “*raise the bar*” by creating a “*classy but not pretentious environment*” with a “*commitment to fair wages*.”

Some mentioned creating a space that was a café in the morning and a wine bar in the evening. A few mentioned an ice cream/gelato shop open during the summer tourism months. “*I’ve always, always, always wanted to open up a beautiful high-end gelato place because all we have is Farmers ice cream.*”

One young woman said there is a market for young 20-somethings, “*to have somewhere to go, on a Friday night if I want to go to the bar with my friends, I would like to have a place to go other than The Pub.*”

Another business-owner said that a location like, “*...the train station or the old post office building. It’s beautiful. I could just see that being some sort of farm-to-table type restaurant where everything is authentic.*”

“*We could be a destination for food establishments in this town, A) because of the tourism, but B) because of our location. Between here and Wolfville there’s virtually nothing and then from Wolfville, there’s only a few and then you’re into Halifax. Going the other way towards Yarmouth, I don’t even know if Yarmouth has anything. So, we travel that all the time. There’s one place in Meteghan that’s got some home cooked meals and it’s French, but there’s nothing else.*”

“*I think the residents would go to new restaurants. I think there are enough affluent people and I say affluent, they’re not filthy rich people but I think there are a lot of people that would like to get out a once or twice a month for a nice meal. A business friend of mine goes to a restaurant about 10 times a month. But you get sick of the same place. At the same time she’s bringing clients into town and where else do you take them? So I think there’s all kinds of opportunity, there’s probably room for two or three more restaurants and pubs.*”

2. A MICRO OR CRAFT BREWERY

“how about in the old Post Office...it would be perfect.”

Following the massive trend of craft breweries across the Maritimes, and leveraging the success of Still Fired Distilleries, many said that Annapolis Royal provides the perfect location for a new craft brewery. Lunn’s Mill Beer Company has opened in Lawrencetown, but room exists for more new craft breweries in Annapolis County in order to connect to Canada’s first winery, craft brewery, cidery and distillery trail – the Nova Scotia Good Cheer Trail.

14 grass roots ideas for growth...

1. More restaurants
2. Micro or craft brewery
3. Our own marina
4. Professional trades
5. Marijuana investment
6. Experiential tourism
7. High-end retail
8. Specialized tutoring
9. Taxis
10. Aquaculture
11. Energy
12. Sophisticated night-life
13. Support for entrepreneurs
14. Property development

3. OUR OWN MARINA

“... an economic driver that would attract huge potential”

A majority of the interviewees wanted to see the establishment of a marina. *“You’d have a whole different group of people that might be interested in this town, but are not now because there is no access to water.”*

Others noted, *“it is going to be probably the biggest change with the biggest impact, it will put us on the map as far as boating destinations, and then the restaurants follow with it.”*

“I’d get the marina in. Definitely. Our whole front street is waterfront.”

“Typically the people go from destination to destination and they’ll make a two or three week trip out of it and it’s a big deal. For this town, for as much water as we have around us, it’s totally under-utilized.”

Another described the market by looking at the advantage of a nearby town, *“There is a marine repair shop in Digby and it’s busy, it’s nonstop, so I think that there’s opportunity. Boat repairs for a New England market. So, in Boston and all of these New England waterfront harbours, it might be months worth of wait time to get repair work done on their boats and it might be a day sail from Boston or two-day sail, maybe it’s an opportunity that we could take advantage of.”*

“If you could get more boats into the Annapolis basin, more photographers would come here. Literally. I’m not kidding. If there was more action on the waterfront, more people with cameras would come and Instagram it.”





4. PROFESSIONAL PAINTERS / PLUMBERS / CARPENTERS / CLEANERS

*“You’ve got a few gentlemen that mow the yard and you got one or two painters.
And you have to book them a year in advance.”*

Many said it was “*next to impossible*” to find reliable service labour in town that will work “*on the books*” instead of “*cash under the table*.” We believe there might be an opportunity for a business that can coordinate and manage a team of service labourers – and take a cut in exchange for selling and planning the contracts and offering all the logistics.

5. INVESTMENT IN MARIJUANA CULTIVATION

“There’s your thinking outside the box. A big greenhouse. We could build a nice greenhouse.”

A provincial politician says that one of the largest business opportunities within all of Nova Scotia is in Cannabis cultivation and plantations. Medicinal marijuana use has been legal in Canada since 2001 and the federal Health Minister Jane Philpott announced that the government will introduce legislation to legalize recreational marijuana by spring 2017. This will position Canada to take the global lead on what is expected to be a booming multi-billion-dollar industry.

To date there are 36 marijuana production licenses in Canada generating millions of dollars and yet there are **only two licenses** in the Maritimes – in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

Annapolis County, with its verdant affordable farmland, “*provides an incredible opportunity, and a lot of people want to invest*” in medical marijuana cultivation. And one farmer said there is still a lot of “*land that is underutilized - we’ve got lots of room*”.

There is currently one medical marijuana dispensary in Annapolis County, located in Middleton.

6. MORE EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM

“So many great places and opportunities to go fishing or whatever else, and it just is not tapped.”

Many of our participants brought up the opportunity for more experiential tourism events, like the *“boat project that is on the waterfront now,”* or *“interactive guides for tourists that are more about doing something physical.”* The big idea here is inspired by the “Disney experience” of being immersed in a place or an event. People are not *“buying postcards or shot glasses anymore,”* instead tourists want something authentic, *“something that was made in that town, or hand crafted.”*

One participant mentioned “Segway tours” using a headset to *“hear more about the first home ever built, Alyn Howe’s father’s place.”* Numerous interviewees said they think boat tours on the river or basin and guided hikes for tourists could grab a sizable market. *“We have great trails for biking and hiking. We have great water opportunities for boating and canoeing and kayaking. We have the Bay of Fundy, we have places for rock climbing, and then we have all these people who do it themselves, but no way to connect everyone so that they can participate with a partner.”*

Another put it this way: *“To have a guide! The idea that I’ve had is to have a hub. There’s people who kayak in town. If they have a spare kayak and they wanted to take somebody out up the Allain’s Creek, they only want to do it five times a summer. They don’t want to have a full-time business but if somebody would give them \$30 and say take me kayaking, they would do it. So, I’ve wondered if there could be some kind of cooperative type thing.”*

“Because of the lack of population here, you’re not going to get a tour company opening that’s going to buy a whole bunch of equipment and take people out to do these things. That doesn’t seem like it’s happening, but it seems a shame.”



7. HIGH-END RETAIL AND VALUE ADDED PRODUCTS

“The big idea here is that small towns can be classy.”

Several participants wished for retail stores that sell things “we have to go to Halifax for now.” Others mentioned the need for an independently-owned wine shop in the area. “I have friends who drive to Halifax to buy wine.”

Still others talked about the need for small scale manufacturing.... “there is a lack of good quality-built furniture – people are sick of Walmart chairs – and are willing to spend the money for good stuff.”

“Anything that is craft-based, handmade, whether it’s a product, or beer, wine, or food.”

Politicians in the province have asked for a focus on “manufacturing with value-added” because Nova Scotian businesses currently “ship a lot of our raw products to other places, they then do certain things to it, repackaging or add flavors, and then we buy them back in a bunch of different products. We should not be encouraging our entrepreneurs to do that – the profits need to stay here.”

Two great examples of both value-added manufacturing and export are Nautical Seafoods in Parkers Cove and Riverside Lobster in Meteghan River.

8. SPECIALIZED TUTORING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

“Having a Waldorf School would make a big difference.”

Many parents between the ages of 30 and 40 mentioned the need of, and a willingness to pay for, specialized tutoring in music, language, dance, sports and other academic pursuits for young children, 5 to 12 years.

“What niches are still here? Well, artistic outlets for children, like music tutors or school – there is only one dance school.”

“An art school or music school. There’s definitely a strong cultural base here – there’s retired professors, there’s retired teachers, there’s all kinds of people here that potentially we could tap into.”

9. TAXIS

“A taxi service, there’s not really any kind of taxi.”

The provincial government has already prioritized transportation lines within the province, but within towns, the need to get people from A to B will not be improved by this new transportation funding. Revenue models might be an issue here, but there certainly is a need. People can’t get to work, tourists without cars have access to shuttles from the airport but once here they have no easy way to move between the attractions in the area, and teenagers are homebound. It might not be a full-time taxi company, but one enterprising person could experiment with a micro-version of Lyft or Uber that is texting-based, instead of constructing an entire mobile app.

“That’s something we’re short on: taxis. As I say, my brother’s coming home, he’s home for the weekend and we’re going to go down to the Legion Saturday night. We haven’t really got a game plan how to get home yet, but we’ll walk home if we have to. It’s a couple of miles.”

10. AQUACULTURE

“Aquaculture could be good business”.

Several people interviewed talked about building on businesses we already have in the area. *“They raise salmon here. They raise them in Port Wade. They raise them down in Digby. I think it could be much bigger.”*

And commented on other marine options... *“Possibly sea salt? And more seaweed production and distribution.”*

11. ENERGY

“We see huge potential in green energy, like wind and tidal.”

We had thoughtful comments on alternative energy sources.

“I’m in favour of windmills. I think they should have them all the way up the shore. The reason they don’t is because Nova Scotia Power’s transmission line is at capacity. They can’t take any more. That’s a loss to the County. That generates revenue, those windmills”.

“The only other thing I can see that might benefit us considerably is the tidal power. Digby County is going great guns on that trying to get things organized, and it would help us if they put some of the generators out there in the bay. The tide that comes in out of that Fundy equals all the rivers in the world, everyday, in and out. What an opportunity.”

12. SOPHISTICATED LATE-NIGHT LIFE

“I want to go out somewhere. I just want to dance and I want to see maybe like a pool table area and casual sitting area. I just want it to be interchangeable.”

This yearning for a “place to go” is tied in with the notion of a late-night club that’s welcoming but sophisticated. There were lots of ideas expressed, including the need for *“a private cigar room.”*

13. SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURS

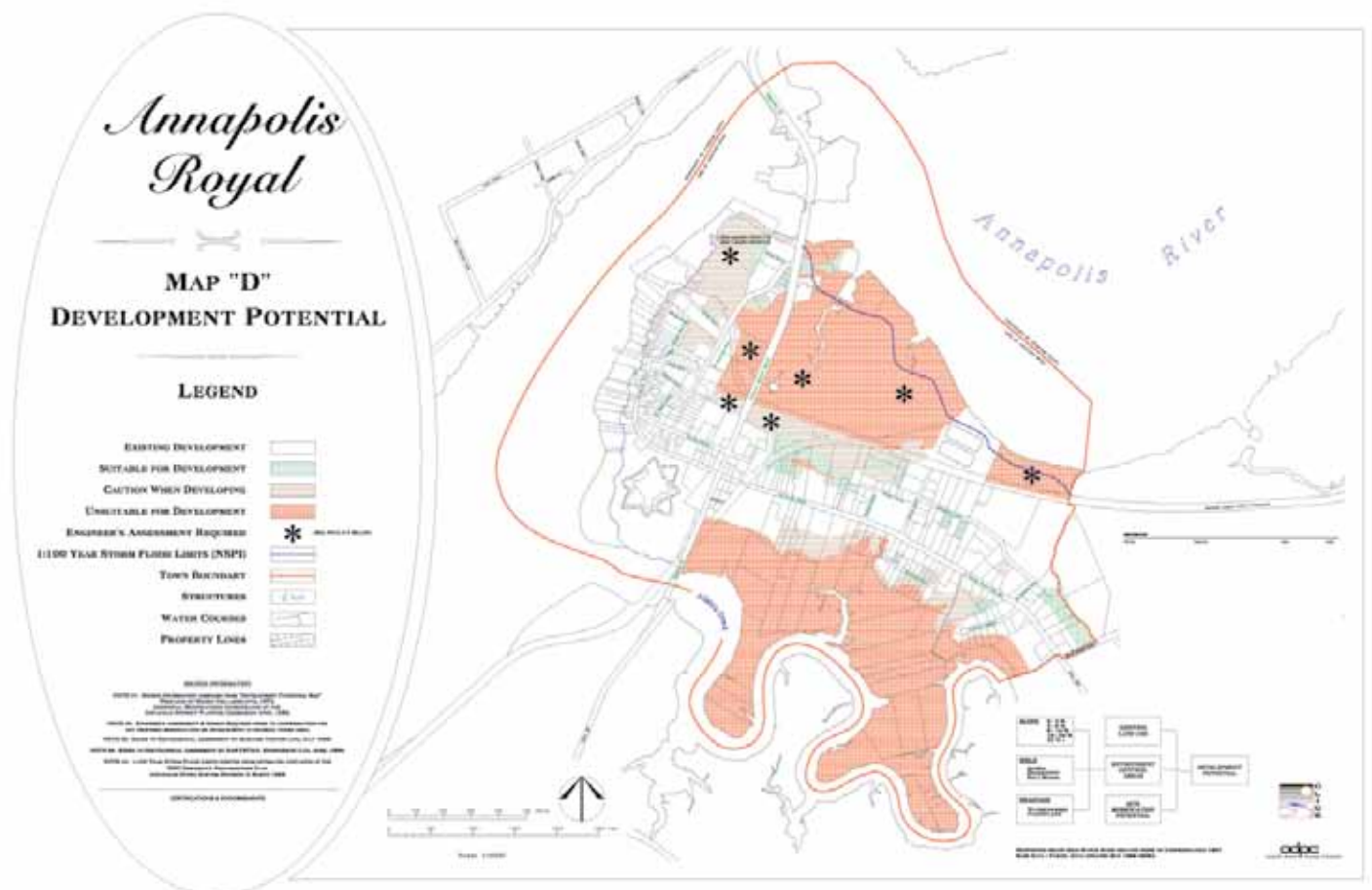
“We want economic development here, but don’t you dare ask us to do anything different.”

A local business owner says she wants to open a ‘business education center’ which could act as a place for locals to learn about entrepreneurship, startup methodology and business models, but also have it act as a destination center for people from the province, Canada and the rest of the world. She feels there is a strong need to step up the game of teaching modern entrepreneurial skills, and that the old-school business plan courses don’t cut it in today’s high-tech domain.

14. PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

*“Everybody says let’s promote what we have, but that’s not sustainable.
You need to develop.”*

The Town of Annapolis Royal has a finite geographic area within which to develop and currently, not all of that area is being used to highest potential. One interviewee noted that, *“We need to develop what we have here - near St. Anthony Street and have another road coming into town between the liquor store and the funeral home. The Town owns all the land behind the Legion but you cannot access it. You can’t develop it. The only way to generate revenue is either through a tax increase or build more taxable properties – we need to generate more from the land that is developable.”*





CHAPTER 7

What's happening now

Currently, there are nine major initiatives ongoing in the Town and surrounding area, several of which have taken years of work to reach this stage. They are divided into five themes: access to the Annapolis River; building revitalization; financial investment; communication and marketing, and upgrading of vital services.

These projects are all game changers. Here are more details:

1. WATERFRONT INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE TOWN

The Town of Annapolis Royal applied for and received just over \$520,000 in funding to revitalize the waterfront. The money is being used to replace the iconic boardwalk; create a stone and grass amphitheatre in the former location of Petit Park, adjacent to Town Hall; connect the boardwalk to the trail system on the grounds of Fort Anne National Historic Site; and build a demonstration space for small boat building behind King's Theatre and close to the Annapolis Royal Wharf. This work should be completed by July of 2017.

2. A FLOATING DOCK AND BOAT LAUNCH AT THE CAUSEWAY

In an ongoing joint project, the Municipality of the County of Annapolis and the Annapolis Royal Wharf Association are creating a new park for the County Parks system, complete with a floating dock and boat launch facility. This park replaces the informal access site at the Causeway that has been used by the public for years for fishing, recreational boating, community events and emergency rescue. The project will provide safer and more convenient public recreational use, beautify and enhance the entry into Annapolis Royal, and improve emergency rescue boat launch abilities. When completed in early summer of 2017, it will provide the greater boating access to the French Basin many have mentioned in our interviews.

The park is a key component of a broader plan called “*Naturally Routed: The Annapolis Heritage River Project*”, which seeks to maximize economic development on the Annapolis River over the next four years. It also builds on the previous success that the Wharf Association has had with providing in-channel moorings and floating dock access to the Annapolis Royal Wharf.



3. THE REVITALIZATION OF THE ANNAPOLIS ROYAL REGIONAL ACADEMY (ARRA)

An iconic 1930s Beaux Art building on the main street of Annapolis Royal, ARRA was declared redundant by the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board and slated for demolition. The citizens of Annapolis Royal took on the responsibility for the 70,000-square foot school, and did not stop working until they found a developer who would respect its heritage and turn it into new living units. Aptly named “The Academy” by Jacob Tanner Developments, it is being transformed into 39 new homes. At the time of writing this report, 24 have been sold, most through social media and face-to-face meetings at the “condo table” at the Annapolis Farmers and Traders Market. The project is slated for completion in late summer, 2017.

4. THE FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM “GET GUSSIED UP”

A joint program from the Town of Annapolis Royal and AIRO, the goal of “Gussied Up” is to refresh the look of our community and create a welcoming feeling for the expected increase in visitors in 2017, the 150th anniversary of Confederation. Funded with \$50,000, the program was designed to assist building owners by providing grants to improve the facades of their homes or businesses. The funds have been allocated to **24 successful applicants** and will be awarded when the work is completed by June 30, 2017.

5. AWESOME ANNAPOLIS FOUNDATION

A chapter of the international Awesome Foundation, Awesome Annapolis seeks to make Annapolis Royal and area “more awesome” by funding locally-driven ideas a \$1000 at a time, “no strings attached”. Trustees provide the money through an annual \$400 donation, and help select the most positive-impact proposal at the monthly meetings. Anybody can be a trustee, anybody can apply to pitch an idea, and anybody can come to the meetings and cast a vote for the “people’s choice” award of \$100. The Awesome model allows for three folks to pitch each month – a six-minute verbal presentation only – and the “winner” walks away with a thousand dollars in a brown paper bag.

nine major initiatives...

1. Waterfront infrastructure
2. Floating dock and boat launch at causeway
3. Revitalization of ARRA
4. “Get Gussied Up”
5. Awesome Annapolis
6. AIRO
7. MEAC
8. Go-Media Canada
9. Annapolis Royal Library

6. AIRO – ANNAPOLIS INVESTMENTS IN RURAL OPPORTUNITY

AIRO is a privately funded angel investor dedicated to stimulating entrepreneurial activity in Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County through research, funding and collaborative action. AIRO can provide advice, connect clients to other helpful resources and potentially micro-fund an idea with a grant, loan, or investment. Since opening in June of 2016, AIRO has received 28 applications and has funding or support agreements with 17 of those economic development projects.

7. MEAC – MUNICIPAL EFFECTIVENESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEAC is a Town of Annapolis Royal working committee comprising both members of Town Council and private citizens. Its purpose is to examine ways to reduce “red tape” for citizens and the business community. The committee is also currently conducting a review of the Town’s municipal planning strategy (MPS) and the land use by-laws (LUB) that form the Town’s governance. The committee will make recommendations to Council with a goal of bringing the MPS and by-laws up to date in these changing economic times and to clarify the language used in the bylaws so that the Town can better communicate the rules and regulations that apply to its citizens. Working closely with an independent town planner, MEAC is expected to complete its work in 2017.

8. THE GO-MEDIA CANADA CONFERENCE

Go-Media is an annual conference that brings international journalists together with Canadian towns, regions, attractions, tourism agencies and tourism-related businesses that want to tell their story in the hopes of securing media coverage. It’s essentially “speed dating” with journalists – 12 minutes at a time – and AIRO thought it was a good idea to go, given the amazing stories we have to tell about Annapolis Royal and its surrounding areas. In mid-October, 2016, we were able to speak with 21 journalists representing many media channels – print, TV, video, social media – and continue to follow up with them all. No guarantees, of course, but the interest in our region was definitely there, and we anticipate some positive publicity as part of AIRO’s ongoing support of a coordinated marketing strategy for the Town.

9. THE ANNAPOLIS ROYAL LIBRARY

Currently located in the back of Town Hall, the Annapolis Royal Library will re-locate next year into the Town-owned west wing of ARRA, a move that will double its space. This is very good news, as the Library, one of the busiest in the Valley system, will be able to offer more programming and gathering spaces for people of all ages. Plans include a “maker space” for youth, and several reading and conversation spaces that will respond to the different needs of the Library’s many devoted clients. One consequence of the Library’s move to ARRA is that the second-floor Town Council Chambers can move downstairs to the wheel-chair accessible former Library space, giving all citizens an opportunity to participate more easily in Town meetings.



CHAPTER 8

Recommendations for the future

The two trends mentioned in Chapter 4 – rare affordable property and the increasing freedom to work from anywhere – dovetail to provide a powerful case for Nova Scotia.

In 2017 we have a pioneering opportunity to leverage these two movements and make Annapolis Royal and area a sustainable target destination for today's remote worker and young families. This is not a lofty, off-in-the-future idea. This is a right now, realistic and practical idea.

Based on these trends and the views of our interviewees, we are making three strategic recommendations for ongoing growth in Annapolis Royal and area:

- **support and promote our Internet access**
- **create and launch marketing campaigns**
- **tap into the potential of our youth**

On an encouraging note, in the last year Nova Scotia start-up companies have raised \$51 million in venture capital, more than 12 times as much as either Manitoba or Saskatchewan, and it could be argued Nova Scotia is leading the way in support for entrepreneurs and their innovative paths. This is the time to take advantage and live up to your ambition.

PROMOTE INTERNET ACCESS

*"There's a lot of people that want to live here and live on the water.
You can't live on the Bay of Fundy and have high-speed Internet."*

A lot happened in late 2016 that indicates improved Internet access is well on its way for rural Nova Scotia. On October 13th, the Provincial Government mentioned additional funding for high-speed Internet access in its Throne Speech. On December 20th, the County of Annapolis announced its partnership with Mainland Telecom to create an open source fibre optic backbone for the County, and the Town of Annapolis Royal has asked to be directly involved. Just one day later, on December 21st, the CRTC declared broadband Internet a basic service and announced its plan for "Closing the Broadband Gap" which includes basic minimum standards plus a funding mechanism to make this happen.

Businesses – both existing and new – need to be ready to take advantage of these coming improvements.

THREE SPARKS OF INSPIRATION:

- In Kings County, the Town of Berwick has announced that, in collaboration with Cisco, Hanatech and i-Valley, the new Berwick Town Hall will employ ultra-high-speed networking and digital solutions to transform the community hub into a smart building. This will make it the first “Smart Town Hall” in Nova Scotia. With improved Internet services, the government offices in the County of Annapolis and in the Town of Annapolis Royal can follow their example.
- Internet Service Provider (ISP) technologies are developing rapidly as companies explore innovative solutions and deliver improved Internet speeds to rural areas. There are also enterprising people in our community taking matters into their own hands by starting their own community-based ISPs. An open source fibre optic backbone in the County of Annapolis creates opportunity for new ISPs to form and serve our area.
- Local businesses with global reach are currently operating within the Town of Annapolis Royal and other towns within the County of Annapolis. They include translators, statisticians, engineers, online art sales, business coaching, graphic design, website development, computer programming, copywriting, and more. This capability needs to be more widely acknowledged. Making global reach possible in all parts of the County will expand our regional economic growth.

Examples worth noting

Dan Mathieson, the mayor of Stratford, Ontario, spoke at an August 2016 event in Berwick about the revitalization of his city after building a community-wide fibre network with 300 access points. *“Fibre networks today are the water lines, the sewer lines and the hydro wires that were once taken for granted. They’re the basis of how people are going to interact in the future.”* In other words, Internet access is a public good like running water or electricity.

At AIRO, we believe our community has to work with the Province, the County, the Town, and both private and non-profit organizations to find a way to get competitive Internet access speed to residents and businesses. Currently, 400 Mbps access is available within Town limits and businesses wanting to locate or expand in Annapolis Royal need to be made aware of this existing service level. In order to guide their growth, they also need to know the boundaries of this service. At AIRO, we believe future service options must include fibre optic access directly to buildings themselves.





TARGETED MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

“HB Studios, a gaming company, is based in Lunenburg. You know why? Because they wanted to live there. Somebody sold Lunenburg to them.”

THREE SPARKS OF INSPIRATION:

- In this report, you have read about those 30 to 50 year olds who have already moved to the Annapolis Valley and are, therefore, a proven target demographic. We outline their goals, desires, values and challenges. Armed with this research, we recommend the creation of an inexpensive experimental and digital marketing campaign.
- On pages 38 and 39 you have read about a new and exciting target demographic – the remote working engineer. Annapolis Royal could be the first rural area to advertise to remote engineers via the online areas where they congregate and search for jobs. The engineers we spoke with directly said: “First step is just letting us know Annapolis Royal exists!” We recommend the creation of online marketing campaigns that target them on Dribbble.com, WeWorkRemotely.com, StackOverflow.com and NomadList.com.
- Today’s mainstream digital channels – Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google AdSense and AdWords – allow for inexpensive and highly targeted advertising. AIRO can kick-start your efforts with information on digital advertising and marketing campaigns or referrals to self-led online marketing training programs – just reach out to us.

Worth noting

When we asked our participants about long-term growth strategies, some said we have to build the Town with the goal of upgrading it to a world-class tourist destination because with this comes more restaurants, a possible marina, entertainment and more infrastructure. Others said we should “stay on the well-worn path” of a retirement mecca, as it has already grown this way organically. And still others think we can gain growth by highlighting the Town as an artists’ haven, and attracting international artists, musicians, dancers, and actors which captures both the tourism destination and the retirement mecca.

At AIRO, we believe the way forward is to prioritize those marketing strategies that promise the greatest impact on the economy and population growth of Annapolis Royal and area.

One suggestion: Brainstorm new ideas and then ask if they fall into one of the following critical categories of **Keep, Get, or Grow**:

- Will the strategy help support those assets we need to *keep* in the community?
- Will the strategy help us *get* assets that we are currently lacking?
- Will the strategy lead directly to *growing* the specific 30 to 50 demographic with long-term potential to set roots in Annapolis Royal?

Ultimately we believe that the crowd is contagious, and more people bring more people – a virtuous circle.

“You’ve got to get the local population excited. If you can get the population excited, they will do the marketing for you.”

BRINGING OUR YOUTH BACK

“They want to find a place where they can contribute.”

Many of our youth in Annapolis Royal and surrounding areas would jump at the chance to create and build the future of their communities if they were asked to do so.

THREE SPARKS OF INSPIRATION:

- Members of the younger generation told us repeatedly that they’d love to participate. Why not seek out young people to sit on the board of every non-profit organization in Town? They could learn valuable social skills, have a voice in the kind of services and entertainment that are provided and be able to communicate what’s going on to their friends and fellow students. And they can teach our organizations how to use the latest technology to communicate with the world.
- Our younger interviewees all said the young people want to build a space of their own, designed by them and managed by them. Let’s collectively find a way to provide the kind of support they themselves want. Our participants provided details on pages 24-29, and it’s clear the space doesn’t need to be fancy to be effective.
- Our report uncovered two potent tactics for nurturing young people’s connection to their home:
 - find and recruit engaging role models in town to speak with and inspire our students,
 - fundraise for more financial incentives to bring our young people back post-university.



Examples worth noting

Annapolis Royal's mayor, Bill MacDonald, is championing more direct engagement with young people in the community. This involves reaching out to the high school in an effort to establish a means for the young people to help the community prioritize the things that are important to them and offer a means to bring those things to life.

It's also time to tap into the growing start-up network in Nova Scotia by getting to know provincial venture capital firms. There's the Youth Connect-IT Tech Venture Incubator, a partnership between Digital Nova Scotia and Junior Achievement Nova Scotia, which launched in November 2016. There is Brilliant Labs, a youth entrepreneurship initiative that promotes project-based learning with a focus on technology. And there's Innovacorp, which manages the \$40 million Nova Scotia First Fund.

In terms of attracting young people back home after they have graduated from university or trade school, Doug Griffiths, author of *"13 Ways to Kill A Community"*, shares a couple of creative solutions.

In one example, a rural community took it upon itself to retain the young people who did not want to leave to attend post-secondary school, but wanted to start businesses instead. Business and community leaders met with the Grade 11 and 12 students and asked them about their plans for the future. They then guided the entrepreneurial students to fill identified service gaps in the community, matching them with business mentors and giving them paid access to online entrepreneurial programs.

In another example, a town's administration met with graduating students each year and then kept track of the students who headed off to university or trade school. They matched each student's future plans with the service gaps in their town and reached out to those students while they were in the final year of their programs. The town purchased a half a duplex, and it offered the duplex **rent free** to a student who had successfully completed his or her program if that student agreed to come back to the town and practice professionally for **one year**. The students who accepted the rent-free accommodation often stayed in the community after that first year because they had established their businesses or were working in a job in their chosen field. They had become rooted in their own economy.

The communities in both these examples became known for being very youth-oriented. Families wanted to live in them because they created a unique opportunity for their young citizens. Annapolis Royal and the surrounding communities are completely capable of this too - at AIRO we're 100% confident of that.





In summary

“the community needs to do the job itself”

Our report gives voice to the economic and cultural challenges our community members face in Annapolis Royal and its surrounding area. Our recommendations identify some key ways to help overcome these challenges. It’s up to all of us to “step up” and make a commitment – big or small – to work together to change the outcomes for our community.

AIRO can help – both financially and as collaborators – but our real purpose is to support those entrepreneurs and other leaders who can make key solutions come alive.

As a community, we don’t need any more meetings to figure out where we need to go. We simply need to get going on a commitment to building a bright future with the incomparable assets we already have.

AIRO’s in. We hope you are too.

Together, we can “get there from here”.



APPENDICES

Biographies

Jane Nicholson

Jane Nicholson is the founder and CEO of AIRO – Annapolis Investments in Rural Opportunity – a private angel investor and community development hub that works to promote and support entrepreneurial activity in Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County. She is also the president of Mrs. Nicholson Inc., a one-woman company founded in 2003 to work on the restoration of heritage buildings in Annapolis Royal, and the owner of Mrs. Nicholson Home, a vintage home décor store she opened in 2012.

Jane spent 30 years in the corporate communications business in Halifax, Toronto and Montreal. An accredited member of the Canadian Public Relations Society, she has been a community volunteer since the age of 16. Jane has sat on countless boards and committees, including the Pier 21 Advisory Committee, the boards of Héritage Montréal, the Annapolis Heritage Society and the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia. She is currently the president of the Annapolis Board of Trade, Chair of the Municipal Effectiveness Advisory Committee of the Town of Annapolis Royal and Secretary of the Annapolis Royal Wharf Association.

Adele MacDonald

AIRO's Executive Director, Adele MacDonald, was born and raised in Alberta and chose to make Nova Scotia her home after spending 15 years on the West Coast. Living in three distinctly different parts of Canada has made it clear to her that Canadians have much more in common, from one end of the country to the other, than they often realize.

As an entrepreneurial Internet marketing and communications consultant, Adele ran her own company for over a decade and moved it from BC to Nova Scotia. She has aided hundreds of small businesses and non-profit organizations with their Internet and social media marketing and communications strategies. She has sat on the Town of Annapolis Royal's Marketing and Economic Development Committee and on its Waterfront Development Committee. Adele has also served on the board of the King's Theatre Society and currently sits on the communication committee for the Annapolis Board of Trade.

Christie Nicholson

Christie Nicholson is an Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Citibank in New York. She is the co-founder of the publishing startup, Publet and, as an award-winning science journalist, she is a contributing editor at Scientific American. Christie is also an adjunct professor at NYU's school of journalism and for the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science. She has coached more than 3,000 scientists on communicating with colleagues, policy makers and the public.

Christie sits on the programming committee for South-by-South-West Interactive in Austin, Texas, and the curatorial board for the annual PopTech conference in Camden, Maine, where intellectuals, entrepreneurs, artists and technologists gather to plan for positive social action.

Resources

AIRO (Annapolis Investments in Rural Opportunity)
<http://ruralopportunity.com>

The Ivany Report - Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotians
<http://onens.ca/commission-report/>

We Choose Now – A Playbook for Nova Scotians
<http://www.wechoosenow.ca>

The Atlantic Growth Strategy
<http://www.acoa-apec.gc.ca/ags-sca/Eng/atlantic-growth.html>

13 Ways To Kill A Community
<http://www.13ways.ca/books/>

CRTC – Closing the Broadband Gap
<http://crtc.gc.ca/eng/internet/internet.htm>

Mainland Telecom
<http://www.mainlandtelecom.com>

Youth Connect-IT Tech Venture Incubator
<http://www.digitalnovascotia.com/youth-connect-it/>

Brilliant Labs
<http://www.brilliantlabs.ca>

Innovacorp
<https://innovacorp.ca>

Town of Annapolis Royal
<https://annapolisroyal.com>

County of Annapolis
<http://www.annapoliscounty.ca>

Nova Scotia
<http://novascotia.ca>

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Credits

Annapolis Heritage Society pg. 15 (row 1, image 1); County of Annapolis, 51 (row 4, image 2); Jane DeWolfe, pg. 16; Dan Froese Photography, pg. 38; Trish Fry, pg. 15 (row 1, image 2); pg. 31 (row 1, image 3, row 2, images 1 & 3; row 3, image 3; row 4, image 2); Kimberly Gunn, pgs. 15 (row 2, images 1, 2 & 3), 27, 51 (row 3, image 3); Istockphoto, pgs. 10, 28, 40; Lois Jenkins, pgs. 24, 31 (row 3, image 1; row 4, image 1), 44, 51 (row 1, image 3); Adele MacDonald, pgs. 31 (row 2, image 2), 42, 51 (row 1, image 1; row 2, images 1, 2 & 3, row 4, image 1), 54, 56, 57; Jim Todd/Peter Mansour/The Academy, pg. 49; Copyright - Parks Canada, Ron Garnett, pg. 14; Queen Anne Inn, pg. 15 (row 1, image 3); Gail Robertson, pg. 43; Shutterstock, pgs. 9, 31 (row 1, image 2; row 2, image 1).

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AIRO is a sharing organization. We encourage responsible, respectful, efficient and effective collaboration. We are happy to share our information and methodologies freely with others in rural Canada.

Questions? Contact us:

AIRO (Annapolis Investments in Rural Opportunity)
151 Victoria Street | PO Box 456 | Annapolis Royal, NS B0S 1A0 | 902.286.2086

ConnectWith@RuralOpportunity.com

 facebook.com/RuralOpportunity

 twitter.com/AIRO_NS

ruralopportunity.com