

Public Engagement-Digby Station October 23, 2025

Members Present:	Mayor Mike Bartlett Deputy Mayor Paul Saulnier Councillor Rick Foote Councillor William McCormick Councillor Shane Weir Charles Haliburton
Staff:	CAO T. Ossinger Deputy CAO Leslie Brinton Receptionist Karen Morrell
Regrets:	Ed Moore

The Planning session held on October 23, 2025, focused on addressing commercial and industrial development, infrastructure needs, and community services. The meeting was part of the continuing work to review the Town's current Municipal Planning Strategy and Land use By-Law. This was a second community engagement that provided the community members with a background regarding the current Strategy and By-Law policies and for the community to have a discussion on what they feel are important to the town and its residents. There were two tables, with the attending residents split into two groups with a facilitator and a recorder. The main focus that was noted were:

Community Development:

- Strong focus on enhancing commercial and industrial growth, especially near the waterfront.
- Ideas for repurposing the mall, it is felt that the mall's underutilized.
- Need for more business spaces and possible zoning changes.
- promoting local businesses.

Infrastructure Improvements:

- Emphasis on enhancing transportation systems, including sidewalks and bike lanes.
- Enhancing transportation networks to boost community mobility.
- Expanding recreational areas for community activities.

Community Services and Amenities:

- Proposals for community gardens and fresh food markets.
- Need for diverse housing options, including high-density units.

Tourism Promotion:

- Highlighting local attractions to increase visitor interest.
- Developing waterfront areas to improve the overall aesthetic.
- Suggestions to beautify the town to attract tourists, with potential for new attractions and events.

Community Engagement:

- Importance of community pride and maintaining a vibrant town atmosphere.
- Suggestions for enhancing identity through public art and signage.

Proposals for Enhancing Transportation Systems

Sidewalk Expansion:

- There is a significant need for more sidewalks, particularly to connect key areas such as the mall and the hospital. Enhanced pedestrian pathways would improve access to local amenities.
- Suggestions were made to establish connections between various local amenities, such as creating a sidewalk connection from areas like Warwick Street to NSLC and Sobeys'. This would facilitate easier access for residents and visitors.
- The meeting highlighted that walking is the primary mode of transportation for many residents. Expanding pedestrian pathways to vital locations like the library and recreational facilities was emphasized.
- Expanding sidewalks may reduce the number of pedestrians on the road, improving safety for both walkers and drivers.
- Sidewalk expansions can help decrease barriers for those without access to vehicles, allowing more residents and visitors to engage with community resources and events.
- Overall, the proposed sidewalk expansions in Digby could significantly enhance the community's connectivity and vibrancy, making it a more enjoyable place for both everyday activities and special occasions
- Expanding sidewalks to connect key locations like the mall, hospital, library, and recreational facilities will allow residents to access these amenities more easily, promoting greater use of local services.
- Improved sidewalks can cater to individuals with mobility challenges, ensuring that seniors, parents with strollers, and others can navigate the area safely.
- Wider, well-maintained sidewalks create a safer environment for pedestrians, encouraging more people to walk instead of drive.

- Well-maintained sidewalks can improve the overall look and feel of the community, making it more inviting for residents and visitors alike.

Bicycle Infrastructure:

Proposals included the expansion of bike lanes to encourage active transportation. This aims to create a more bicycle-friendly environment, supporting healthier commuting options. Safer and more extensive sidewalks encourage walking and biking, reducing reliance on vehicles. This supports a healthier lifestyle and can contribute to lower traffic congestion.

Lighting Improvements:

- Better street lighting was identified as a crucial issue, especially along sidewalks and roads. Improved lighting would enhance safety for pedestrians and cyclists. If the sidewalks accompany enhancements in lighting, this can further increase safety during evening hours, making the area feel more secure.

Community Engagement and Federal Assistance:

- (Dalhousie University) was proposed to evaluate costs and timelines for potential projects. There was mention of seeking federal or governmental assistance for transportation improvements. Additionally, conducting a feasibility study through a local university

Ideas and discussions reflect a commitment to improving transportation options in Digby, ultimately enhancing mobility, safety, and connectivity for the community.

The proposed sidewalk expansions in Digby could significantly enhance access to local amenities for both residents and visitors in several key ways:

Walking and Biking: Increased Foot Traffic: More pedestrian-friendly routes can lead to increased foot traffic around local businesses, potentially boosting their sales and community engagement. By connecting high-traffic areas, more visitors may be drawn to local shops and services. Residents are more likely to shop locally if they can easily walk to stores rather than drive. Sidewalks promote a vibrant community atmosphere where people can meet neighbors and engage more with local culture and commerce.

- **Community Engagement:** The expansion of sidewalks in Digby could notably promote active transportation and provide several benefits for local businesses.
- **Convenient Routes:** Direct connections between residential areas and local amenities make it easier for residents to choose walking, biking, or even rollerblading as their primary modes of transportation.

- **Infrastructure for Bicycles:** Alongside sidewalks, the addition of bike lanes or bike racks can encourage cycling as a viable option for commuting, especially for short trips.
- **Promoting Healthy Lifestyles:** By fostering a walkable community, residents may be more inclined to incorporate walking or biking into their daily routines, leading to improved health outcomes.

Community Events and Gatherings:

- **Support for Events:** Improved pedestrian access facilitates events, farmers' markets, or festivals that encourage walking and biking, increasing community engagement.

Benefits for Local Businesses

Increased Foot Traffic:

- **Higher Exposure:** With more people walking around, local businesses can attract more customers simply due to increased visibility. More pedestrians mean more potential customers stopping in for quick purchases.
- **Enhanced Retail Environment:** Businesses benefit from being located along busy pedestrian routes as customers are more likely to explore multiple stores in one outing.

Social Interactions and Community Spirit:

- **Gathering Spaces:** Sidewalks can create areas where people can congregate, fostering a sense of community and belonging that can lead to increased patronage of local businesses.
- **Cafés and Outdoor Dining:** Enhanced sidewalks promote outdoor seating for cafés and restaurants, inviting pedestrians to stop for a meal or coffee.

Improved Customer Experience:

- **Convenient Shopping:** Easier access to various stores leads to a more pleasant shopping experience for customers, likely increasing the time they spend (and money they spend) in the area.
- **Accessibility for All:** Improved sidewalks cater to various demographics, including seniors and families with children, expanding the customer base for local businesses.

Economic Growth:

- **Boosting Local Economy:** Increased foot traffic and customer engagement lead to higher sales for businesses, contributing to the overall economic vitality of the area. Successful local businesses can reinvest in the community, stimulating further development.

Brand Loyalty and Support:

Community Connection: Businesses that are more accessible and that align with the community's values may foster greater customer loyalty, leading to repeat business and word-of-mouth referrals. Enhanced walkability can promote community events, markets, and public gatherings that encourage social cohesion. By expanding sidewalks,

The reoccurring theme with all participants was that Digby can create a thriving environment that not only encourages active transportation but also fosters economic growth and community engagement.