



STRATEGIC PLAN (2022 to 2026)

— *a community for everyone*

Backgrounder Report

July 2022



ABOUT THE PLAN

Charlottetown's new Strategic Plan is a multi-year plan that serves as a road map for City business. As the highest-level plan for the organization, the new plan will highlight the shared vision, outline collective priorities and inform corporate projects and initiatives. Its development represents the City's accountability and commitment to ensuring desired progress is being made – both short- and long-term.

Council approved the creation of a new Strategic Plan on November 29, 2021, and the award of the Request for Proposals (RFP) to Group ATN on April 25, 2022. The development of the Strategic Plan kicked off in early May with Group ATN. The early work focused on initial onboarding discussions, background research and analysis, introductory meetings and a review of other municipal Strategic Plans.

Community engagement was central to the development of the new plan. In addition to the abovementioned early work that was completed, engagement included one-on-one interviews with Council and Department Heads/Managers; the staff and community open houses; visioning and refinement workshops with Council, stakeholders, Department Heads/Managers and the Staff Advisory Group; an online survey; social media; print ads and marketing/promotional materials.

The City also launched its new digital engagement platform – charlottetownhall.ca and prominently featured the Strategic Plan project on its homepage. The new platform was used to provide project information along with key documents to support our engagement efforts.

PLANNING CONTEXT

Charlottetown has much to be proud of and the timing of this strategic plan couldn't be better.

It is clear the City is ready to confront challenges and embrace opportunities and that is what this plan sets out to do.

Experiencing a global pandemic and looking out on the horizon to 2026 and beyond, this strategic plan addresses many important issues critical to Charlottetown's future.

These include:

- The kind of city citizens of Charlottetown want to live in.
- The importance of considering the legacy being created and left to future generations.
- How best to address the complex issues the municipality is facing including governance, reconciliation, population growth, housing, climate change, representation of an increasingly diverse cultural mix, resiliency, hardening of infrastructure, among others.
- Developing the best planning and environmental policies at a time when the stakes couldn't be higher.
- Using technology as a force multiplier for better service, communication and effective community engagement; and
- Considering health, safety and an optimum quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

As the fastest growing city in Atlantic Canada, Charlottetown has benefitted from the increase in population through immigration and in-migration during the COVID-19 pandemic. These trends are accelerated by presence of post secondary education institutions, its place as the cultural centre of the Island, and the confluence of STEAM related sectors and clusters, including bioscience and IT. These features are helping Charlottetown to become a more diverse and inclusive city.

Among the important reasons why Charlottetown has been a welcoming community is the quality of life. As a waterfront community, it is a pleasant place to live, work and enjoy for residents, newcomers, new residents and visitors alike.

The immigration rate in the Charlottetown region has been among the highest in Canada for the past decade. At a time when skill shortages are a challenge, newcomers are helping to address workforce gaps and skill shortages.

Historically, Charlottetown played a formative role in Canada's democracy. BILL C-253 – An Act to Recognize Charlottetown as the Birthplace of Confederation recognizes this significant achievement.

Through this strategic plan, Charlottetown looks to the future with confidence, pride and the sure knowledge that with dynamic, engaged and progressive leadership, past successes can be carried forward in a new spirit of reconciliation.

While supporting our community today, the focus needs to be on the next generation and the one after that, one that inherently reflects the growing diversity of the City's population, while embracing and celebrating individual differences.

A recurrent theme during the engagement process was the observation that Charlottetown fuses quality of life with an outward looking and global perspective.

However, stakeholders were also emphatic in saying that complacency is not an option. There are lots of challenges. The strategic plan addresses the way forward in tackling these.

Like many cities across the country, Charlottetown's growing population means the already tight housing market will need to be addressed at a time when housing affordability and attainability are key considerations.

While the City cannot solve this challenge alone, through collaboration and partnerships with other levels of government, foresight and innovation can be brought to bear in addressing this issue.

Resistance to planning that incorporates greater density and more vibrant and livable communities was noted as a perennial challenge within Charlottetown that also needs to be overcome. Leadership is called upon to bring a whole-of-city perspective to addressing these challenges.

The most critical challenge of the 21st Century – climate change – also looms large. And while Charlottetown has already demonstrated considerable leadership in this area, as an waterfront city, rising sea levels pose a threat that needs to be proactively addressed. Existing infrastructure needs to be hardened and made more resilient. New infrastructure needs to be built to withstand the changing climate. The 'greening' of all municipal operations is a central focus of this plan.

Stakeholders understand that there is some sacrifice and adaptation associated with ambitious targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction. On balance, though, there is a good understanding of the fundamental importance of meeting, even exceeding, established targets as an important legacy for future generations.

Retaining immigrants has been a challenge for Charlottetown. So, redoubling efforts to support and sustain newcomers will need to be a high priority considering the demographic challenges facing the Atlantic Region.

Stakeholders recognize that sustainability in all its forms – fiscal, social and environmental – needs to imbue public policy at every level as a lens through which all actions need to be viewed.

Effective governance and accountability to rate payers was frequently raised throughout the planning process. This includes expanding shared services with adjoining municipalities where possible and 'smart' management of all assets. Stakeholders pointed to success with the current transportation system shared between the three cities as an example to be emulated.

By conducting the strategic planning process in tandem with the Official Plan, Charlottetown will be in a better position to create coherency and strategic alignment across all planning activities.

In the coming months and years ahead, creating, updating and monitoring the City's major plans and reports will provide a blueprint for the future.

Urban planning is a complex and dynamic issue. Stakeholders point to the need to rethink the nature of urban development in the City of Charlottetown.

Taking 'a whole of Charlottetown approach' to planning is seen as a way to ensure balanced and holistic development across the City.

The focus is on:

- Creating a more livable city by rejuvenating neighbourhoods.
- Improving the amenities and services residents need, along with the lifestyle and leisure options they want; and
- Making greater use of urban spaces while protecting heritage features and respecting environmental considerations.

To this end, Charlottetown has committed to upping their game in terms of ongoing community engagement. This will be accomplished by leveraging the Community Engagement Framework, using tools such as the digital platform – charlottetownhall.ca – and through ongoing outreach and engagement to residents, adjoining communities, the rest of Canada and beyond.

By putting a marker down on ongoing engagement with the community, Charlottetown is making a pact with residents to ensure their collective views and insights are consistently prioritized. It will also ensure the City fully understands what matters to residents most.

An important lesson learned from the pandemic has been the value of technology in improving service to citizens and municipal processes. Charlottetown strives to be a smart city using technology as an enabler and facilitator to improve City operations and as an on ramp to community engagement.

Charlottetown envisages a future where residents can engage with smart city ecosystems in multiple ways using smartphones and mobile devices in connected cars and homes. Pairing devices and data with the City's physical infrastructure and services will support enhanced decision making, improved quality of life, investment attraction, cut costs and improve sustainability.