



2014

# Community Economic Development Strategy



Town of Amherst and  
Municipality of  
Cumberland

# Summary

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Recent changes to the system of Regional Development Associations/Agencies (RDAs) across the province have caused municipalities to review their role and responsibilities regarding Community Economic Development (CED). The proposed Regional Enterprise Networks will focus on business and will bring a regional perspective within a greatly expanded geographic area. Locally focused community initiatives and projects will still need support, as will local business initiatives. Coordination, locally and with other regional and provincial CED initiatives, will be more essential than ever. Tourism is an example.

Cumberland County demographics are cause for concern. Our population is aging and declining at a rate greater than the provincial average. Between the 2001 and 2011 census, our population declined by 3.8%. Only Amherst saw an increase (2.2%). While it is very helpful to have a stable demographic in the Amherst area, that means the rest of the County is declining at an even greater rate. If that trend were to continue, the complexion of Cumberland County will be very different in the other towns and communities outside of the Amherst area. It is becoming more and more challenging to maintain that critical mass of people, programs & services, infrastructure and economic opportunities necessary to sustain our communities. Our local economy cannot sustain itself indefinitely if our demographic trends continue. We need new investment, we need more people, and in particular, more people of employment age with skills that match our opportunities.

We also need to encourage local residents to be engaged in their communities to ensure our communities have the capacity to be sustainable. Residents need and expect quality social, health and education, and recreation programs and services; infrastructure such as libraries, community facilities, trails and parks; and also need retail options to be reasonably accessible. Community Economic Development is about the full continuum from community amenities to economic opportunities and new investment.

This CED Strategy addresses the full spectrum - community capacity to economic investment. It recognizes the importance of local citizens being engaged in their communities and it links our economic development systems to the regional and provincial business investment practices. It recognizes both the critical challenges of our demographics, as well as the opportunities we have here in Cumberland, to capitalize on our resources including tourism, agriculture, energy and our business parks. The CED Strategy is organized into four strategic pillars or focus areas: Business Support, Tourism, Demographics and Community Capacity. These four areas are closely inter-related, and that relationship is evident in the goals and strategies. Goals are presented in measurable terms and there are stated objectives and strategies for each.

## Business Support

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We need to increase business retention and overall success of the existing businesses in Cumberland County. We will implement the Business Retention and Expansion program (BRE) throughout the county. At the same time, we will meet regularly with businesses and business groups to identify threats and opportunities and collective responses.

We already have an environment that is among the most “investment ready” in the province, but we need to be even more aggressive in attracting new business investment. Our existing relationship with key government agencies and business organizations at the provincial and national level is a leg up. We also need to encourage entrepreneurship as a viable option. We need to focus on our resources in Cumberland, so agriculture and energy will be included in this strategy.

To summarize the business section, we will set goals to increase business retention, increase new business entrants and investment, support and strengthen the retail sector and increase the employment readiness of Cumberland youth.

### **Goals & Strategies**

- 1. Increase business retention levels and over-all success of the businesses in Cumberland County over a five year period**
  - 1.1 Implement a BRE visitation program throughout the county
  - 1.2 Liaise with industry/business groups including Chambers, Board of Trade, NS Association of Manufacturers and Exports, etc., to identify threats and opportunities
  - 1.3 Facilitate regular round table opportunities with industry and business leaders focused on perceived threats and opportunities in the future
  - 1.4 Compile baseline data re: current retention rates in Cumberland County
  
- 2. Increase new business entrants and investment in Cumberland County**
  - 2.1 Develop and implement an investment-ready program
  - 2.2 Provide support directly to prospective business owners
  - 2.3 Encourage entrepreneurship as a viable option for residents in Cumberland County. (Ensure local governments support the groups that support entrepreneurship, e.g.: be navigator)
  - 2.4 Participate in trade missions, conferences, etc., in North America and abroad, facilitated through Industry Canada, NSBI, etc., to promote Cumberland to recruit new investment in the county
  - 2.5 Source marketing materials to support new business investment, including community profiles, lifestyle, education/training/skills, etc.
  - 2.6 Develop a "green industrial park" model
  - 2.7 Expand industrial park capacity in Cumberland County

**3. Support and strengthen the retail sector throughout Cumberland County**

*3.1 Develop strategies to improve the attractiveness and appeal for main street/downtown areas with consideration of amenities for both residents and tourists*

*3.2 Development strategies should reflect county-wide marketing plan*

**4. Improve the employment readiness of Cumberland youth**

*4.1 Determine industry and business entry level employment needs*

*4.2 Initiate work readiness sessions for Cumberland youth*

*4.3 Encourage the NS Department of Education and Chignecto-Central Regional School Board to develop a work readiness program for high school students*

*4.4 Establish partnerships*

**Action 2014/15**

- *Develop and initiate implementation of the BRE visitation program*
- *Liaise with, and regular meetings with business organizations*
- *Initiate preparations for the “business/investment-ready” program*
- *Direct support to prospective investors*
- *Initial plans for business park expansion and “green business park” model*
- *Identify opportunities to promote Cumberland County through trade missions, conferences, etc.*
- *Develop relationships in support of employment readiness for Cumberland youth*
- *Determine industry and business entry level needs for employment*
- *Complete RFP for website design with emphasis on investment readiness*

Cumberland County has great potential for tourism, but we need to maximize our resources and ensure we are presenting our tourism “product” in the best possible manner to cater to the world market. We have included strategies related to product development, marketing and advertising and coordination of festivals and events. We also address the issue of role clarity among the various government and non-government organizations and agencies. Our ultimate goal is to increase the economic impact of tourism in Cumberland County.

### **Goals & Strategies**

#### **1. Increase the impact of tourism on the local economy**

- 1.1 Improve/increase the quality and quantity of Market-Ready Tourism product in Cumberland County*
- 1.2 Increase the effectiveness of local tourism marketing*
- 1.3 Increase the exposure of Cumberland County in provincial and regional marketing initiatives, including internet*
- 1.4 Facilitate coordination among festival organizations in Cumberland County*

### **Action 2014/15**

- *Complete an inventory of tourism product in Cumberland County*
- *Determine product development priorities*
- *Identify base line information re: tourism visitation and economic impact in Cumberland*
- *Support festivals*
- *Clarify roles – i.e. municipalities, CNTA, NSTA*
- *Determine the essential elements of a “brand” for Cumberland tourism and the preferred marketing methods in coordination with regional and provincial initiatives*
- *Produce and/or support the development of local tourism marketing and advertising materials*

## Demographics

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Our population is declining and aging. The percentage of residents between the age of 18 and 64 is declining at an alarming rate. We know we need to retain our young people and create opportunities to entice those of working age that have left to find employment elsewhere, to return to work in Cumberland County. It is a significant challenge and is closely inter-related with the other three focus areas (Business Support, Tourism, and Community Capacity). We also need to work closely with provincial and federal agencies to insure that a proportionate number of immigrants make Cumberland County their new permanent home.

### **Goals & Strategies**

**1. Turn around the decline in population in Cumberland County with a significant focus on the working age demographic in the county**

*1.1 Develop a “Welcoming Communities” initiative similar to CORDA initiative. Match skills and interests of prospective immigrants/inter-provincial migrants with employment opportunities / need*

*1.2 Attract graduating international students from maritime universities to Cumberland - e.g. internships, incentives, etc.*

**2. Increase the number of immigrants to Cumberland County by a margin of 3 times the average, as determined in the past two census periods. (This is consistent with the recommendations in the One Nova Scotia Report)**

*2.1 Enlist the support of recent immigrants and immigrant associations/networks to identify potential immigrants*

*2.2 Connect with immigration strategies that are developed as a result of the One Nova Scotia Report*

### **Action 2014-15**

- *Develop a better understanding of, and relationships with, the provincial and federal immigration system*

## Community Capacity

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Community Capacity is often overlooked in CED discussions, as it is seen as subjective and difficult to set measurable goals. The forces that contribute to the erosion of communities are complex and usually beyond the scope of the local community, leaving residents feeling powerless. Sustaining our communities is challenging, and we will not succeed in all cases. However, by looking at community capacity as a critical mass of people, infrastructure, reasonable availability of programs & services, and economic opportunities from a **strategic** perspective, we can focus attention on those elements that are most critical and valued. More importantly, we can encourage and support local citizens to be engaged in the critical issues that impact their communities. This CED Strategy will identify those communities where there is a readiness for local residents to be involved in the future of their communities and to support them to do so.

### **Goals & Strategies**

#### **1. Increase / improve the capacity of our communities to be sustainable**

- 1.1 *Increase the understanding of “Community Economic Development” by county residents and the role they can, and do play in support of CED*
- 1.2 *Assist communities to determine and develop their readiness to address CED issues*
- 1.3 *Facilitate the development of community/area-specific plans and initiatives*
- 1.4 *Support local development plans*
- 1.5 *Coordinate county-wide initiatives in support of local plans. (e.g. workshops in the wake of the OneNS report, coordination with other government agencies and NGOs, municipal policy and planning*

### **Action 2014/15**

- *Meet and develop relationships with as many organizations and individuals throughout the county as possible*
- *Identify at least 5 communities where there is a readiness for locally-driven CED initiatives and provide support as needed*

## Information & Data Collection

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Throughout this strategy, every effort has been made to set results-oriented, measurable goals and to articulate measures to determine progress. To do that, requires the availability of information, including initial base-line data as well as processes to obtain it on an ongoing basis. This presents a challenge in virtually all four pillars of this strategy as the required information is not readily available in most instances. In some cases the “raw” data is there, but there may be no process for gathering it. In others, it may be available as part of a larger data set, but may be difficult or ineffective to extract it. In some cases it may be necessary to identify specific measures, design new instruments, and develop a process to obtain the information.

As in any planning process, data collection is not a strategic “result”, but it is critical to **measuring incremental progress** toward stated results, or goals, and for this reason, we have chosen to highlight the importance of building a data collection process into all pillars of the strategy as follows:

	Measure(s) (Need to Know)	Method	Action Required	Date for Completion
Business Support	1. Base line data re current retention rates	Conduct survey	Develop and conduct survey	March 2015
	2. Retention rates – ongoing	Same		
	3. Value of new investment	Building/Development Permits	Arrange with RJS Arrange with Dev. Office	March 2015 March 2015
Tourism	1. Number of visitors to Cumberland County	Exit surveys – NS Tourism Agency	Refine process for Cumberland data set	March 2015
	2. Accommodation occupancy rates			
	2. Tourism economic impact	NS Tourism Agency Survey - NSTA	None	
	3. Accommodation occupancy rates		Refine process for Cumberland Data set	March 2015
Demographics	1. Rate of population change	Stats Can Data	Contract agency to “mine” data	March 2015
	2. # and % of residents in 18-64 demographic	Stats Can Data	Same	
	3. # of immigrants to Cumberland County Annually	NS Office of Immigration	None	
Community Capacity	1.# of communities with active citizen-led initiatives linked to CED strategy	Staff – led annual inventory	Design inventory tool (staff)	March 2015
	2. Year over year average rating on four point capacity scale	Annual self-assessment by selected organizations throughout the County	Design self-assessment instrument and present initially to select organizations (staff)	March 2015



# Appendix A – Implementation Summary

## Implementation 2014-15

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The worksheets in Appendix B include measures for each goal, as well as objectives which serve as milestones to describe progress targets. Detailed action plans have also been developed, which will serve as work plans and will be up-dated annually. Implementation of the strategy will begin in fiscal year 2014-15 and activities are summarized in point form below. This initial year can be characterized as a “start-up” period, with emphasis on creating readiness across most areas of the CED Strategy, including baseline data collection, role clarity, relationship building, program development, and planning.

### Business Support:

- Determine baseline data re current business rates
- Develop and initiate implementation of the BRE visitation program
- Liaise with, and regular meetings with, business organizations
- Initiate preparations for the “business/investment-ready” program
- Direct support to prospective investors
- Support plans for business park expansion and “green business park” model
- Identify opportunities to promote Cumberland County through trade missions, conferences, etc.
- Develop relationships in support of employment readiness for Cumberland youth
- Determine industry and business entry level needs for employment

### Tourism

- Complete inventory of tourism product in Cumberland County
- Determine product development priorities
- Identify base line information re: tourism visitation in Cumberland County
- Support festivals
- Clarify roles – i.e. municipalities, CNTA, NSTA
- Determine the essential elements of a “brand” for Cumberland tourism and the preferred marketing methods in coordination with regional and provincial initiatives
- Produce and/or support the development of local tourism marketing and advertising materials

### Demographics

- Develop a better understanding of, and relationships with the provincial and federal immigration system

### Community Capacity

- Increase residents’ understanding of CED and its importance to our communities and encourage community engagement
- Meet and develop relationships with as many organizations and individuals throughout the county as possible
- Identify at least 5 communities where there is a readiness for locally-driven CED initiatives and provide support as needed

# Appendix B – Year 1 Budget

## Implementation 2014-15

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Business Support:

- Workshops/Training/Conferences \$2,500
- Support for Capacity Building Business Groups \$3,000
- Trade/Investment Missions \$7,000
- Website Development \$20,000

Tourism

- Product Development \$5,000
- Cumberland Brand \$5,000
- Regional Marketing/Promotion \$10,000

Demographics

- Nil

Community Capacity

- Nil

Information and Data Collection

- Cost for Data Gathering (Measurement) \$25,000

**Total Costs** **\$77,500**

# Appendix C - Worksheets

Focus Area: Business Support			
<u>Goals</u>	<u>Measures</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
1. Increase business retention levels and over-all success of the businesses in Cumberland County over a five year period.	Business Retention rate based on a sampling of existing and new business entrants and response to a predetermine questionnaire	Have a sound knowledge on the current retention rates of business and industry in Cumberland County	1.1 Implement a BRE visitation program throughtout the County
			1.2 Liaise with Industry/Business groups including Chambers, Board of Trade, NS Association of Manufactures and Exports, etc. to identify threats and opportunities.
			1.3 Facilitate regular round table opportunities with industry, business and community leaders focused on perceived threats and opportunities in the future.
2. Increase new business entrants and investment in Cumberland County.	Number of start-ups (based on # of new business registrations with Registry of Joint Stocks)  Value of new investment in Building Permits issued	By substantially investment ready by November 2014  Ongoing support in place by Fall 2014	2.1 Develop and implement an investment-ready program.
			2.2 Provide support directly to prospective business owners
			2.3 Encourage entrepreneurship as a viable option for residents in Cumberland County. (Ensure local governments support the groups that support entrepreneurship, i.e.: be navigator)
			2.4 Participate in trade missions, conferences, etc. in North America and abroad, facilitated through Industry Canada, NSBI, etc. to promote Cumberland to recruit new investment in the County.

Focus Area: Business Support - Continued			
<u>Goals</u>	<u>Measures</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
			2.5 Develop Agriculture Industry in Cumberland County.
			2.6 Source marketing materials to support ne business investment, including community profiles, lifestyle, education/training/skills, etc.
			2.7 Develop Energy Industry Opportunities in Cumberland County
			2.8 Expand Industrial park capacity in Cumberland County
3. Support and strengthen the retail sector throughout Cumberland County		Model complete by March 2016	3.1 Develop strategies to improve the attractiveness and appeal for main street/downtown areas with consideration of amenities for both residents and tourists
			3.2 Development strategies should reflect County-wide marketing plan.
4. Increase readiness for Cumberland youth			4.1 Support entrepreneurship in support programs like Jr Achievement

Focus Area: Tourism

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Measures</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
1. Increase the impact of tourism on the local economy	# of visitors to Cumberland County s per exit surveys and/or sampling of businesses / attractions	Complete inventory of tourism product in Cumberland County by December 2014	1. Improve/increase the quality and quantity of Market-Ready Tourism product in Cumberland County.
	Sampling of accommodation rates - year to year (fixed roof and campgrounds)	#of market-ready products (e.g.: # of new experiences) to increase by 5% by December 2017	
		# of visitors as per visitor exit surveys or surveys of business/attractions to increase by 5% by December 2017	
			2. Increase the effectiveness of local tourism marketing.
			3. Increase the exposure of Cumberland county in provincial and regional marketing initiatives, including internet.
			4. Facilitate coordination among festival organizations in Cumberland County

Focus Area: Demographics			
<u>Goals</u>	<u>Measures</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
1. Turn around the decline in population in Cumberland County with a significant focus on the working age demographic in the County (age 18-64)	Rate of Population decline	TBD	1.1 Develop a Welcoming Communities initiative similar to CORDA initiative. Match skills and interests of prospective immigrants/inter-provincial migrants with employment opportunities / needs
	# of residents in 18-64 demographic		
			1.2 Attract graduating international students from maritime universities to Cumberland - e.g. internships, incentives, etc.
2. Increase the number of immigrants to Cumberland County by a margin of 3 times the average as determined in the past two census periods. (This is consistent with the recommendations in the One Nova Scotia Report)	# of immigrants to Cumberland County annually	TBD	2.1 Enlist the support of recent immigrants and immigrant associations/networks to identify potential immigrants.
			2.2 Connect with immigration strategies that are developed as a result of the One Nova Scotia Report

Focus Area: Community Capacity

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Measures</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
<p>1. Increase / improve the capacity of our communities to be sustainable.</p>	<p>1.1 Year over year rating on a four-component capacity scale</p>	<p>1.1 Identify 5 potential planning-ready communities within defined geographic areas by October 2014</p>	<p>1.1 Increase the understanding of Community Economic Development by County residents and what role they play</p>
		<p>1.2 Complete community plans in 5 communities and identify 5 additional potential planning-ready communities by May 2015</p>	<p>1.2 Preliminary assistance in communities to determine readiness to address capacity issues.</p>
		<p>1.3 Develop at least one community capacity plan in each Municipal Council district and all participating Towns by September 2016.</p>	<p>1.3 Facilitate development of community/area-specific plans.</p>
			<p>1.4 Support local development plans.</p>
			<p>1.5 Coordinate county-wide initiatives in support of local plans. (e.g. leadership development, coordination with other government agencies and NGO's, Municipal policy and planning</p>