

Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Initiatives Engagement: What We Heard Report

December 2025



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Town of Bridgewater HAF Initiatives
Engagement: What We Heard Report

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This report was prepared by Upland Planning
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Introduction



About the Project

Like many communities across Canada, Bridgewater is experiencing housing challenges as the community continues to grow. The Town is focusing on strategic actions to make more housing available in the town to meet the needs of residents, today and in the future.

In December 2024, the Town of Bridgewater entered into an agreement with the federal government under the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). The HAF is a federal initiative that offers incentive-based funding to local governments that implement initiatives to boost housing supply. The Town is eligible to receive over \$3.3 million in funding from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) through the HAF to accelerate housing supply and affordability in the community. Full receipt of the funding is based on the Town's progress on the initiatives detailed in their application.

Housing Action Plan

The Town of Bridgewater has committed to 5 initiatives with their HAF funding, making up the Town's new Housing Action Plan:



E-Permitting and Regional Inspection Services



Incentives for Affordable Housing



Municipally Owned Land for Housing



Pre-approved Plans for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)



Remove R1 Zoning in Priority Areas

To learn more about the Town's Housing Action Plan, or the 5 initiatives, you can visit the project website at: bridgewater.ca/haf

What We Did



How We Communicated

For this project we built a website on the Social Pinpoint online engagement platform. The website consisted of a landing page with general information about the project, including a dashboard keeping up to date on the Town’s progress at fulfilling their permitted unit target, as well as links to sub-pages for each of the 5 initiatives. The sub-pages contained additional details about the initiatives, as well as the milestones associated with each one. Where relevant, engagement activities were also included to give residents and stakeholders the opportunity to share more detailed feedback on the initiative.

We advertised using the Town’s social media platforms and website, as well as through the Evening Post. The project team delivered flyers to targeted households for the Municipal Lands for Housing event, in addition to sending out email invitations to stakeholders.

How We Engaged

Online Engagement

The Social Pinpoint page served as the main online hub for the project. The project page received:

887 Views	372 Visits	220 Visitors
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The page also received 17 online contributions from residents through Quick Poll questions (results can be found in the What We Heard section).

In-Person Engagement

The project team hosted multiple engagement sessions in the community:

- Let’s Talk Housing Pop Up Session - Wednesday, October 15th from 2-4pm at the South Shore Centre Community Room
- Let’s Talk Housing Intro Presentation - Wednesday, October 15th at 6:30pm at the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre
- ADUs & R1 Zoning Removal Pop Up Session - Thursday, November 13th from 12-4pm at the South Shore Centre Community Room
- ADUs & R1 Zoning Removal Pop Up Session - Saturday, November 15th from 9am-1pm at the Bridgewater Farmer’s Market
- Municipal Lands for Housing Pop Up Session - Wednesday, November 26th from 12-3pm at the South Shore Centre Community Room
- Municipal Lands for Housing Community Workshop - Wednesday, November 26th from 6-7:30pm at the HB Studios Sports Centre

What We Heard



General Engagement Themes

Across all discussions, people shared that Bridgewater needs more housing options that are affordable, supportive, and suited to different stages of life. Many stressed that “affordable housing” must reflect local incomes, and that current rents are out of reach for many workers, students, seniors, and families.

Participants also said the housing system feels complex, with different levels of government offering different programs. People want clearer information about how these programs work together, how long affordability can be guaranteed, and how the Town, Province, and Federal Government coordinate on things like water, sewer, transit, and land use.

A strong message echoed throughout the engagement: housing growth must be responsible and future-focused, protecting natural areas, planning for transit and active transportation, and making sure schools, healthcare, and community services can keep pace. Many also expressed support for adding “gentle density” - through ADUs or missing middle housing - while respecting neighbourhood character and ensuring green spaces, trails, and trees are not lost.

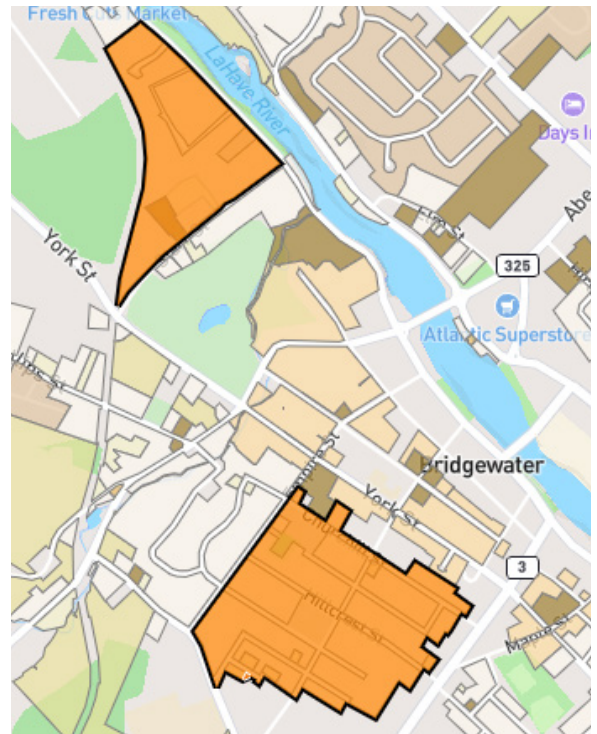


R1 Zoning Removal in Priority Areas

We heard a mix of openness and enthusiasm about changing R1 zoning in priority areas, especially when changes create opportunities for small-scale or “gentle” density. We did not hear any opposition to the proposed zoning changes in the priority areas, however we did hear that zoning changes should be supported by infrastructure and services, such as school capacity and transit access. Participants did note that they are concerned about infrastructure capacity and they have a desire to see upgrades that prepare the Town for future growth rather than reacting to it afterward.

Residents said:

- Allowing more than one unit on a property can help meet growing housing needs.
- Some people living in the proposed rezoning areas said they were excited about having the option to add a unit to their lot in the future.
- Some participants were unaware of the pre-1975 conversion allowance and said that they think that this should be more widely known in the Town.
- A few people mentioned that potential rental income from a second unit on their property could allow them to stay in their home longer, especially if they are retired or rely on a fixed income.



Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

There was strong, consistent support for ADUs. Many saw them as one of the most practical solutions for adding housing without drastically changing neighbourhoods. ADUs were viewed as a way to:

- Help aging parents stay close to family
- Provide semi-independent living for adults with disabilities
- Offer stable housing for young adults or family members
- Increase affordable options in a gentle, incremental way
- Provide rental income to assist with housing costs, like property tax and home maintenance and upgrades.

We also heard excitement about the accessible ADU design offered in the CMHC catalogue (Atlantic Accessory Dwelling Unit 01), making ADUs a more enticing option for seniors and those looking to downsize, while remaining in their community.



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Atlantic Accessory Dwelling Unit 01 (left) and Unit 02 (right), October 2025. This information is reproduced and distributed on an “as is” basis with the permission of CMHC.

Residents said ADUs are a “yes”—but the process feels daunting. People asked for:

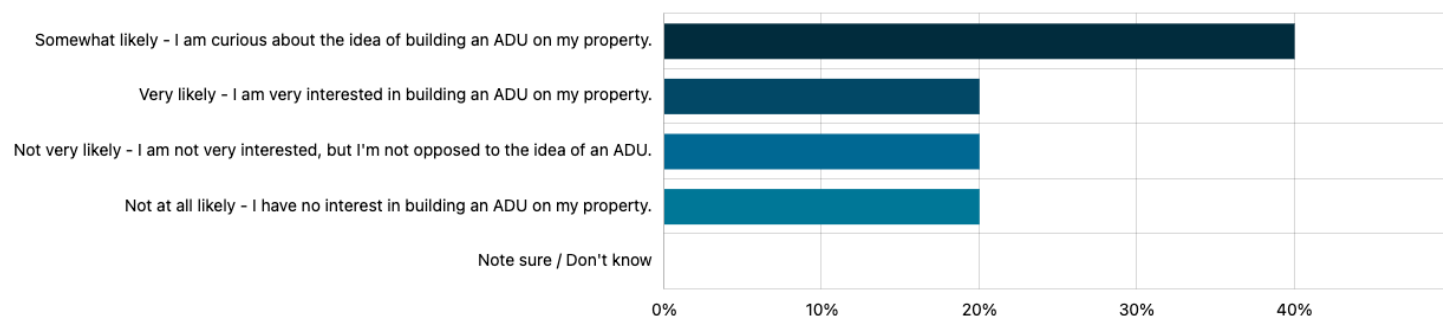
- A simple, step-by-step guide for building an ADU from start to finish
- A “lunch and learn” or workshop with people who have built ADUs to share lessons learned or share tips for developing an ADU
- Better access to info about grants, incentives, and funding

Some residents were cautious about renting ADUs to non-family members due to past negative rental experiences. We also heard concerns about ADUs being used as short-term rentals and wanting to make sure that they were focused on providing long-term housing options.

Similarly to concerns expressed about the R1 zoning removal, some participants expressed that ADUs should be considered alongside school capacity, utilities, and road infrastructure. People supported ADUs as long as these systems keep pace with population growth.

How likely are you to build an ADU on your property?

(5 responses)



Municipal Lands for Housing

The discussions around using municipally owned lands for housing development were more nuanced and complex than the previous discussions around R1 zoning changes and ADUs.

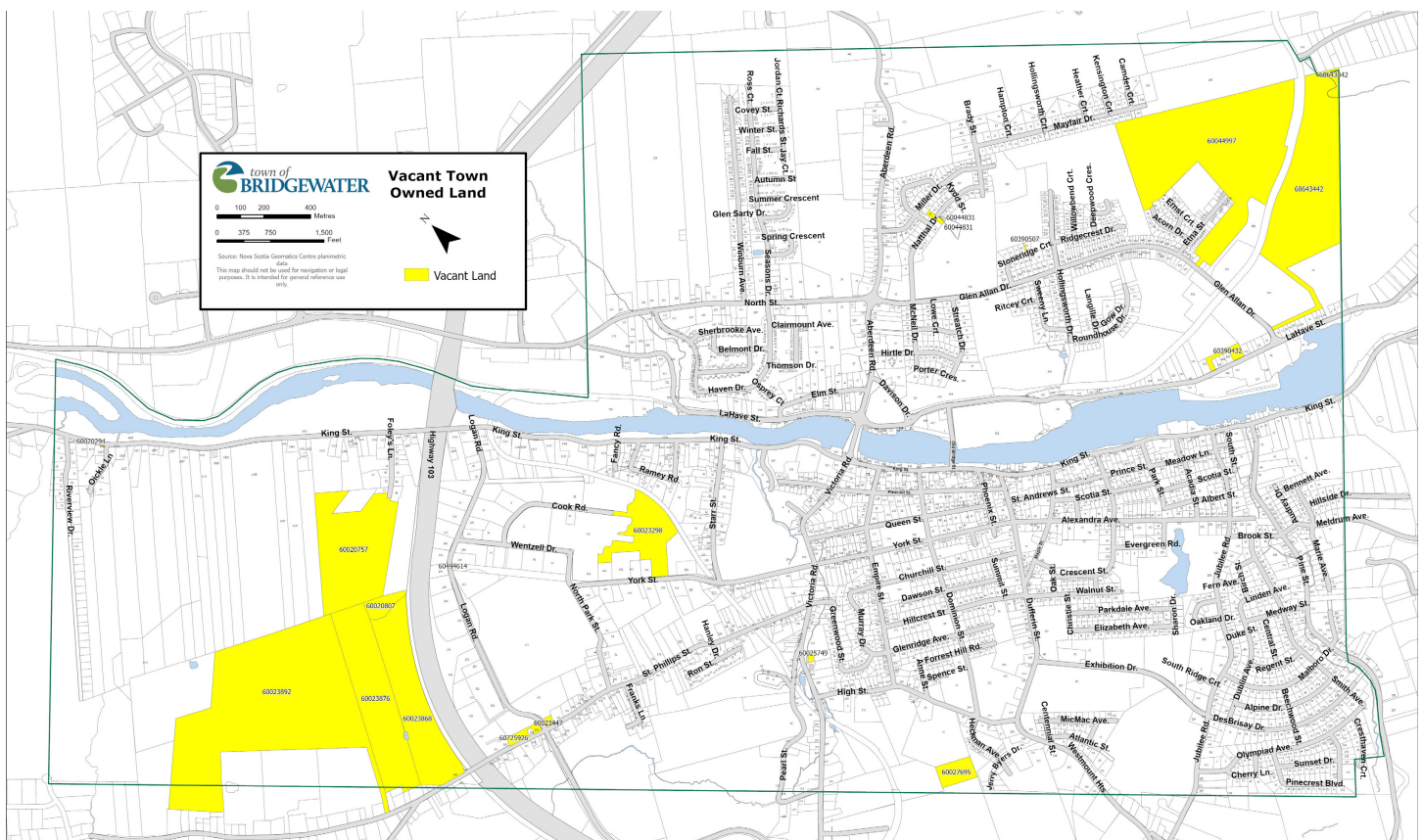
Many residents supported using Town-owned lands to help address housing challenges, especially if these lands were used for:

- Affordable housing
- Supportive or transitional housing
- Missing middle housing
- Purpose-built student housing

A few people we spoke to were adamant that Town-owned lands should only be used for non-market housing and should not be open to private market development - especially for smaller parcels.

When it came to larger parcels of undeveloped Town-owned land, people said municipal lands should help create complete, walkable communities with:

- Access to transit
- Parks, trails, and natural areas
- Shops and services nearby
- A mix of housing types



- Universal design and accessible housing options
- Sustainability as a core principle

The workshop at HB Studios Sport Centre focused on discussions about what types of housing development should be considered on the vacant Town-owned lands identified (see parcels shown in yellow on the map below). The following gives a brief summary of what we heard about specific parcels.

Exit 12A Lands

Although it was noted that these lands are primarily earmarked for business park expansion, we did hear interest in including some higher density housing development in this area. Participants in the workshop cited the proximity to Park View Education Centre as a good rationale for considering housing development in this location, as well as its adjacency to the Highway and major regional employers.

York Street/LCLC Lands

We heard support for this location for development, but participants felt that housing should be medium to higher density, be located near the existing street frontage and retain as much of the existing natural treed area as possible. Participants suggested that this location would be suitable for supportive or transitional housing, citing the proximity to the trail system, public library and transit as key reasons. Participants were adamant that trees be protected as much as possible, especially in proximity to the trail to retain the natural environment feel currently present in this location.

Nafthal Drive

We heard support for developing this property as supportive housing. The proximity to the hospital was cited as a strong reason for making this available for people who might require regular access to health services.

NSCC Lands

Participants noted that these lands would be ideal for purpose-built student housing for NSCC.

Victoria Road

The vacant land on Victoria Road is currently overflow parking for the Wile Carding Mill Museum, but participants felt this location would be a good location for a small, non-profit housing development.

LaHave Street

We heard interest from workshop participants to see this parcel developed as non-profit, affordable housing. The proximity to the downtown core, as well as its convenient location on a transit route, were seen as strong rationale.

Glen Allan Lands

The Glen Allan lands were seen as an opportunity for a future new community, but there were mixed feelings about the lands being made available for market housing. They felt that if market housing were to be developed here, there should be affordability targets and that sustainability should be a core principle in the community’s design. Participants said they would be more open to market housing if it were an innovative and forward thinking design.

Workshop participants felt that having a mix of uses, incomes densities and housing types in this area would be desirable. One respondent said “if the Town is going to build a new community, it needs to be a REAL community!” pointing out the need to include spaces for businesses and recreation. They talked about the importance of protecting some of the natural habitat within this area, especially the treed areas near the trail system. Participants felt there was an opportunity to include a large scale park within the area and it was noted that Bridgewater needs a high quality playground and this location could be suitable.

They noted that future engagement regarding the possible development of these lands will be crucial and the community should be collaborators in the future design.

As the Town plans for new housing on municipally owned land, we want to ensure the development includes spaces that benefit the whole community. Which type of community amenity would you most like to see included?

(12 responses)

