

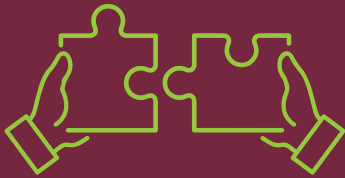
Community Identity and Potential Consolidation

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Our Community

When municipalities in Nova Scotia have merged, people and business wonder if they will lose their community's unique sense of identity.



Guiding Principles

2. Build vibrant individual communities.

6. Ensure fair representation for urban and rural residents

When are these things decided?

Community identity is not something that is decided by anyone except its residents, businesses and organizations that live in a community. A sense of place is about a lot of things, and the name or type of local government doesn't impact that perception and familiarity.

But there are things that a merged municipal government could do to ensure communities across the larger area benefit from the joint organization.

Build on Existing Strengths

Both the Town and County have activities and programs in place to support individual organizations and communities. These would be the basis for recognizing and supporting community driven initiatives in the future.

- ✔ Organizations have an opportunity each year to apply for assistance to the Town's Community Grants Policy or the County's Community Partnership Grants Policy.
- ✔ The appointment of citizens to committees such as the Planning Advisory Committee or the Accessibility Committee is an opportunity to reach out and engage community representatives.
- ✔ The County has encouraged the expansion of broadband services, most recently upgraded in the areas of Lochaber and Malignant Cove. This new infrastructure will improve opportunities to communicate with and promote local communities using websites, social media and communications partnerships.
- ✔ Both the Town and County have well established programs to support volunteer fire departments.
- ✔ The Town and County support tourism initiatives that attract people and business to the communities and build local economic activity.
- ✔ Councillors would continue to serve as critical local community advocates through a Council Agendas.
- ✔ There would be continued support for the history, culture and talent of the community.



Drawing on Other Municipal Examples

There are many examples of municipal mergers that support the identity and vibrancy of local communities. As an example, Queens Regional Municipality provided several highlights recently, taken from over twenty-five years' experience as a merged organization.

Be deliberate in spreading infrastructure projects across numerous communities.

Draw citizen appointees for municipal committees from all parts of the region.

Promote local communities with signage and tourism partnerships.

Develop a strong Community Investment Fund and policy.

Establish a single Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law with one set of rules for development.



Recommended Approach

A municipal consolidation process will not determine anyone's sense of place or community identity. If someone lives in Havre Boucher, or the Town, they will continue to see themselves as living in their home community. Your community will always be your community. We would follow the example from Queens Regional Municipality, which suggests that regional decision making should be seen as benefiting local assets and services, and enhancing overall community.

Summary: Protection of Community Identity is an important consideration in a municipal consolidation process. The form of local government has very little to do with determining one's sense of place. Both the Town and County have tools in place to support local communities, their volunteers, meeting spaces and events. It would be important to use the same tools effectively in a consolidated municipal organization.