

**Municipality of the  
District of Digby**

**Digby Municipal  
Airport Municipal  
Planning Strategy**

**Municipal Planning  
Strategy  
January 7, 2009**

Ref. No. D08387

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- Appendix B — Generalized Future Land Use Plan (Schedule 'B')

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# 1 Introduction

## Preamble

This Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) for the Digby Municipal Airport lands reflects the vision that the citizens and Council of the Municipality of the District of Digby have for the future development of the airport and surrounding lands. The MPS provides a comprehensive plan for the future development of the Digby Municipal Airport.

This Strategy is a legal document, a policy document and a framework for future development. This Strategy has been prepared according to the provisions of the *Municipal Government Act, Chapter 18 of the Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1999*. The MPS will guide development within the Plan Area boundary, as illustrated on Schedule 'A', through the regulations of the Land Use By-law.

## Background

The Municipality of the District of Digby purchased the Digby Municipal Airport lands and began construction of the initial airport infrastructure in 1974. The airport was complete in 1976 with a 3,000 x 75 foot runway and in 1977 was equipped for night operations with the addition of pilot-controlled lighting. In 1979 the Municipality built the first phase of the administration building, and added a Non-Directional Beacon (NDB) and communications equipment. In 1989, the runway was improved to 3,950 feet in length. Additional airport upgrades include airfield and administration building improvements, an aviation weather reporting station, and perimeter fencing.

The Digby Municipal Airport has been identified as an important economic driver for the Municipality. In 2006, the Municipality of the District of Digby retained Jozsa Management and Economics to complete a Strategic Business Plan for the Digby Municipal Airport. The business plan contains six guiding principles for the success of the airport.

### Strategic Business Plan Guiding Principles

1. The Digby Municipal Airport is a key component of Digby and Annapolis Counties civic infrastructure.
2. Opportunities at the Digby Municipal Airport should derive from closer ties between area business and tourism agencies and transportation.
3. Levels of service to general aviation should improve, or at least remain the same.
4. The land base of the airport should be considered for a broader range of uses.
5. A practical and sustainable management approach is essential.
6. The airport may not necessarily be financially self-sufficient, especially in the short term.

The Strategic Business Plan identifies that residential, commercial and industrial development in proximity to the airport may provide a unique selling point or business advantage to the community. Developing the airport lands for both aviation and non-aviation uses are key components to the airport's future viability. The Strategic Business Plan notes that future

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land use planning for the airport should consider how fly-in activities might integrate into future airport development. This planning strategy was created to implement the recommendations of the Strategic Business Plan.

### **How this Plan was Created**

In 2008, the Municipality of the District of Digby established the Digby Municipal Airport Working Group. The mandate of the Working Group is to provide advice to Council for implementing the Strategic Business Plan. The Working Group consists of seven members, including Councillors from the Municipality of the District of Digby, the Municipality of the District of Annapolis and the Town of Digby and community representatives. These volunteers represent residents and community leaders in business, and community development.

A public working session was held on October 8, 2008 to engage community members and provide opportunity for input into how the Digby Municipal Airport should be developed. Approximately 15 community members attended the working session. Key themes identified during the Stakeholder/Public working session include:

- Concern over development encroaching on airport lands.
- Safety for pilots and visitors to the airport lands.
- Incorporating tourism components on the airport lands is an opportunity.
- A residential component on the airport lands may bring investment and infrastructure.
- Industrial space is needed and the airport lands could support more aviation focused industrial land uses.
- A glider school could be incorporated on the airport lands.
- More hangar space needed.
- Upgrading crosswind airstrip could bring more air traffic to the airport.
- Lengthening the existing runway is needed.
- Incorporating a transit stop at the airport would add value to future industrial uses.
- The existing entrance to the airport administration building cannot support tracker trailer trucks and requires upgrades.

### **Why We Need a Plan for the Digby Municipal Airport**

The overall goals of the project include reinforcing the airport as an economic driver for the Digby region and focusing on meeting the needs of the community, businesses and Digby and Annapolis Counties. This plan will:

- a. Improve protection of aviation uses at the airport.
- b. Create clarity and predictable development for the airport lands.
- c. Provide guidance to the future use of the airport lands.
- d. Encourage sustainable development practices.

### **Importance of Sustainability**

Sustainable development is a process that attempts to provide equitable standards of living, satisfy the basic needs of all peoples, results in sustainable economic growth and establish political practices that supports equitable involvement from all community members. The process also takes the steps necessary to avoid irreversible damages to the natural environment. A recent definition of sustainable development can be conceptually broken into four parts or what is known as the four pillars of sustainability: environmental, economic, social and political sustainability.

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## **Supporting Documents**

The 2006 Strategic Business Plan prepared by Jozsa Management & Economics for the Digby Municipal Airport provides a preliminary framework for elevating the Digby Municipal Airport as an economic driver for the region. The Business Plan recommended developing a Municipal Planning Strategy to identify parcels of land for a broad range of aviation and non-aviation land use development. The Digby Municipal Airport has available land that can be developed without compromising the current or future aviation capabilities of the airport.

This Plan is consistent with the intent of the Strategic Business Plan and builds on the recommendations put forth by creating land use planning direction.

### **How this Plan is Organized**

This Plan is intended as a detailed guide of the vision for the Digby Municipal Airport. It is structured in the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction
- Chapter 2 – Existing Conditions
- Chapter 3 – Plan Policies
- Chapter 4 – Implementation

## **1.1 Vision**

As stated in the 2006 Strategic Business Plan, the airport has the following recommended vision:

### **Strategic Business Plan Recommended Vision**

Digby Municipal Airport should reinforce its position as an economical and high value regional general aviation airport focused on meeting the future air transportation needs of private citizens, the community, and business in the Digby and Annapolis Counties. The airport should retain its existing traffic base, expanded with a marketing strategy designed to maximize the utilization of the airport and airport lands. The airport should be run as an economic development asset, rather than a mere public utility, with an understanding that the airport's intangible value to the region is worth supporting.

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## 2 Existing Conditions

This section describes the existing conditions of the Plan Area that require consideration when developing policies for managing and guiding development of the Digby Municipal Airport lands.

### 2.1 Plan Area Location

The Plan Area is a 228.2 hectare (563.9 acre) site located in the community of Hillgrove, approximately seven kilometres southwest of the Town of Digby. The airport is at an elevation of 150 metres making it the highest airport in Nova Scotia. The existing site is accessed via Bloomfield Road.



Figure 1. Plan Area Location

### 2.2 Brief Community Profile

Digby County has a population of 18,995 (2006 Census) and is located on the western coast of Nova Scotia. The Town is approximately 225 kilometres from Halifax via Highway 101 and a three-hour ferry ride from Saint John, New Brunswick. Digby County has historically been a successful resource based economy, and tourism also remains a strong contributor to the local economy.

### 2.3 Plan Area Infrastructure

#### Highways and Roads

Digby Municipal Airport is located south of Highway 101. Access from the Town of Digby is via Route 303, Acacia Valley Road, Ridge Road, and Bloomfield Road.

#### Transit

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Kings Transit offers public transit bus service to the Town of Digby. There are no transit stops currently located in proximity to the Digby Municipal Airport.

### **Electricity**

Nova Scotia Power services the Plan Area. The site itself has some existing power distribution infrastructure.

### **Water Quality and Quantity**

Municipal staff confirmed that water is obtained from individual wells that provide adequate quantities of good quality groundwater for the Digby Municipal Airport and surrounding lands.

### **Sewage and Wastewater**

Municipal staff confirmed that the Digby Municipal Airport and surrounding lands are serviced by individual on-site sanitary sewer systems. The central services for the Town of Digby do not extend beyond Highway 101.

### **Stormwater**

The only existing stormwater systems on the Plan Area are a network of formal and informal drainage ditches.

### **Buildings**

The Municipally owned airport lands are largely undeveloped apart from the existing four buildings. Aviation activity occurs on the west side of the airport lands. The following buildings are located on the airport:

- Airport administration building
- Isles Aero Service hangar
- Two private hangars
- Municipal Dog Pound

## **2.4 Plan Area Characteristics**

### **Topography**

A hummocky terrain with a series of small rounded hills characterizes the Plan Area with a gentle slope usually never exceeding 15%. Elevations range from approximately 150-metres above sea level in the northeast corner of the Plan Area to approximately 110 metres in the northwest.

### **Geology and Soils**

The Plan Area is overlain by a thick glacial till derived from the Halifax slate. This till is overlain by thin clay till veneer. The Plan Area is characterized by well-drained Bridgewater soils derived from shaly loam glacial tills. The Canada Land Inventory (CLI) for Agriculture identifies these soils as having low capacity for agricultural purposes due to stoniness, low soil fertility and bedrock.

### **Hydrology**

No surface water bodies have been identified within the Plan Area based on a desktop survey of aerial photography and provincial mapping.

### **Vegetation**

The usually deep soils support a productive mixed forest with spruce, pine, hemlock, aspen and maple.

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## **3 Plan Policies**

### **3.1 Digby Airport Obstacle Limitation Surfaces**

Maintaining obstacle limitation surfaces (height restrictions) around the Digby Municipal Airport is paramount to maintaining airport safety. Obstacle limitation surfaces are established by Transport Canada to provide a satisfactory level of airport safety by prohibiting the erection of structures that violate any of the defined plane surfaces. The plane surfaces include the outer surface, the take-off/approach surfaces and the transitional surfaces.

The outer surface establishes protection for aircraft conducting circling procedures or manoeuvres in the vicinity of the airport. The take-off/approach surfaces are established for each runway direction intended to be used for safe take-off and landing of aircraft. The transitional surface provides safety for aircrafts flying at low altitudes displaced from the runway centre line in the approach or missed approach phase.

These surfaces are illustrated on Schedule "A".

#### **Objective**

To provide for the protection of the Digby Municipal Airport from development within the vicinity of the airport which because of height may detrimentally affect the present and future operation of the airport.

#### **Policy Statements**

To achieve the above objective, Council shall:

**Policy H-1:** Establish obstacle limitation surface requirements in the Land Use By-Law.

**Policy H-2:** Prohibit development of structures that violate any of the defined obstacle limitation surfaces.

### **3.2 Airport Lands Generalized Future Land Use Designation**

The Municipality of the District of Digby recognizes the importance of broadening and diversifying the local economic base of the region by encouraging and accommodating new development at the Digby Municipal Airport. The airport lands can accommodate a variety of airport related industrial, general industrial, residential and commercial land use mix, while maintaining and protecting current and future functional airport and aviation uses.

The Airport Lands (AL) Designation and underlying zones are used to facilitate a broad range of land uses within the planning area. The overall intent of the Airport Designation is to provide for a desirable level of airport industrial, general industrial, airport residential, commercial and airport specific uses.

Schedule "B" illustrates the Airport Lands (AL) Designation. This Designation applies to the following PIDs:

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1. 30153647
2. 30153613
3. 30153688

### **Objective**

To permit development on the airport lands in a fashion that is compatible with and complementary to the existing airport services.

### **Policy Statements**

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy AL-1:** Establish the Airport Lands (AL) designation, as illustrated on the Generalized Future Land Use Plan (Schedule "B").

**Policy AL-2:** Encourage the development of vacant lands considered desirable for residential, airport industrial, general industrial and commercial growth through appropriate zoning regulations.

**Policy AL-3:** Establish the following zones within the Airport Lands (AL) Designation:

- Airport Operations (AO)
- Airport Residential (AR)
- Airport Industrial (AI)
- Airport General Industrial (AG)
- Airport Residential/Commercial (ARC)

## **3.3 Airport Operations**

Council recognizes the importance of maintaining and protecting the existing and future airport functions and aviation capacity at the airport.

### **Objective**

To protect the existing runway strip, and allow for the future expansion and enhancement of the runway and crosswind runway.

### **Policy Statements**

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy A-1:** Establish the purpose of the Airport Operations (AO) Zone to provide for continued operation of the airport strip and for future expansion of airport and aviation uses through the land use by-law including a limited scope of permitted uses.

**Policy A-2:** Require the zoning provisions of the Airport Operations (AO) Zone to protect for future expansion and extension of the existing airport runway and crosswind runway.

## **3.4 Airport Residential**

Council recognizes that there is demand for specialized residential development in proximity to the municipal airport lands with direct runway access. Lifestyle-focused residential communities are increasing gaining support and should be supported at the Digby Municipal Airport.

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## **Objective**

To enable a residential airpark community adjacent to the Digby Municipal Airport runway strip with direct runway access.

## **Policy Statements**

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy AR-1:** Establish the Airport Residential (AR) Zone, as illustrated on the Zoning Map, to provide for future fly-in residential development.

**Policy AR-2:** Require that the land use by-law provisions of the Airport Residential (AR) Zone shall enable only single unit dwelling development by implementing development standards.

## **3.5 Airport Industrial**

By focussing aviation-related industrial uses at the Digby Municipal Airport, opportunities will arise for clustering similar industries to create synergies and generate competitive advantage.

### **Objective #1**

To encourage the growth of aviation-related industrial uses with direct runway access focussed at the Digby Municipal Airport.

## **Policy Statements**

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy AI-1:** Establish the Airport Industrial (AI) Zone as illustrated on the Zoning Map.

**Policy AI-2:** Encourage establishing aviation-related industrial uses in the AI Zone, including but not limited to: Aviation engineering services, mechanics, fabrication of aircraft parts, assembly, and warehousing.

### **Objective #2**

To establish the Airport Industrial Zone with provisions to reduce any potential conflicts that may arise between industrial-based development and other land uses.

## **Policy Statements**

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy AI-3:** Establish required minimum separation distances between industrial uses and other uses within the Plan Area through the provisions of the Land Use By-Law.

## **3.6 Airport General Industrial**

Allowing a broad range of industrial uses within the Plan Area will enable the airport to utilize its land base to the greatest extent. In the AG Zone, it is Council's expectation that the general industrial uses will provide residents

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of the Municipality of the District of Digby with employment opportunities and services. The use of the nearby Digby Municipal Airport will be emphasized as a method to transport goods, employees, and clients.

**Objective**

To promote diverse industrial uses at the Digby Municipal Airport to assist with the economic development goals of the Municipality of the District of Digby.

**Policy Statements**

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy AGI-1:** Establish the Airport General Industrial (AG) Zone as illustrated on the Zoning Map.

**Policy AGI-2:** Permit general industrial uses that may or may not be associated with the aviation industry within the Airport General Industrial Zone.

**3.7 Airport Residential/Commercial**

Enabling commercial development within the Plan Area will allow new services to locate adjacent to the airport lands and service the industrial uses.

**Objective**

To provide opportunity for a broad range of commercial and residential development on the Digby Municipal Airport lands.

**Policy Statements**

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy AC-1:** Establish the Airport Residential/Commercial (ARC) Zone as illustrated on the Zoning Map.

**Policy AC-2:** Permit residential uses within the Airport Residential/Commercial Zone where the mixed use would not be obnoxious.

**3.8 Environment**

Environmental protection considerations have become an integral component of municipal planning as communities look to protect their long-term environmental health. The Council for the Municipality of the District of Digby envisions that future development of the airport land occurs in an environmentally responsible manner.

Airport developments are not normally considered as models for sustainable development given the large impermeable hard surfaces required for runway strips and the inherent requirement of large quantities of fuel storage.

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Council recognizes that taking a balanced approach to environmental protection and development is key to an environmentally and economically sustainable future.

### **Objective**

To encourage protecting the natural environment at the Digby Municipal Airport by promoting sustainable development practices.

### **Policy Statements**

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy E-1:** Encourage sustainable development practices that take into consideration environmental, social and economic factors.

**Policy E-2:** Develop sustainable development guidelines for the Airport Lands.

**Policy E-3:** Require that all proposed developments within the Digby Municipal Airport lands receive a copy of sustainable development guidelines.

## **3.9 Transportation**

The primary objective of the Municipality's transportation policies is to provide safe, efficient and convenient movement of aircrafts, people, and vehicles. Creating functional and attractive runways, taxiways, and roadways within the Digby Municipal Airport lands is essential in planning and designing transportation infrastructure. The policy statements are intended to reflect these objectives.

The existing runway at the Digby Municipal Airport is 1,204 metres (3,950 feet) in length and 23 metres (75 feet) in width. This Strategy has been developed to protect some Municipal lands to enable future expansion of the runway. The existing Digby Airport has been classified by Transport Canada as follows:

1. Wingspan up to but not including 36 metres
2. Outer main gear wheel span up to but not including 9 metres
3. Aeroplane reference field length 1,200 m up to but not including 1,800 m

The taxiway network should conform to aerodrome standards for 3-C service to accommodate future expansion of the runway.

### **Objective**

To provide safe and efficient modes of transportation by applying the safety standards of Transport Canada according to the Aerodrome Standards and Recommended Practices manual (TP312).

### **Policy Statements**

To achieve the above objective, Council shall:

**Policy T-1:** Apply the safety standards of Transport Canada according to the Aerodrome Standards and Recommended Practices manual (TP312).

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**Policy T-2:** Establish that taxiways be provided to permit the safe and expeditious surface movement of aircrafts.

**Policy T-3:** Require that the taxiway network shall conform to aerodrome standards for 3-C airport classification service level.

## 4 Implementation

The Municipal Planning Strategy for the Digby Municipal Airport lands is intended as the primary policy document providing a framework to Council for future growth and development of the airport lands. Development within the Plan Area will refer to the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law for guidance.

The Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law are implemented within the scope and authority of the powers transferred from the Province to municipal governments and their Councils through the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)* and other Provincial statutes as applicable. In accordance with the provisions of the *MGA*, this strategy may be revised when either the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations or the Council of the Municipality of the District of Digby deem it necessary, but in any case shall be reviewed not later than five years from its coming into force or from its last review.

In accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*, by adopting this strategy Council is not committed to undertaking any of the projects or actions outlined above; however, Council cannot undertake any action that is inconsistent, or contradictory with the intent of this Strategy.

Implementation tools are provided to clarify and illustrate Council's intent regarding various policy statements. These tools include:

1. Obstacle Limitation Surfaces Map (Schedule "A")
2. Generalized Future Land Use Map (Schedule "B")
3. Zoning Map (Schedule "C")

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The purpose of this section is to establish a framework by which Council's intent towards land use development can be routinely administered. This section specifies procedures for Council to consider when Municipal Planning Strategy or Land Use By-Law amendments are proposed.

#### **4.1 The Land Use By-Law**

The Land Use By-Law (LUB) is the principal tool by which the intent and policy statements of this strategy are implemented. It sets out the obstacle limitation surfaces, specific zones, permitted uses, general provisions, and development standards that reflect the policies of this Strategy pursuant to the provisions of the *Municipal Government Act*. The Land Use By-Law (Zoning) Map illustrates specific areas to which the provisions of the individual zones apply.

##### **Land Use By-Law Amendments**

Re-zonings and other amendments to the LUB are considered where appropriate to meet community needs. Specific policy criteria are outlined in this section to create a standard and uniform approach in responding to amendment requests.

##### **Objective**

To establish the Land Use By-Law as the principal implementing mechanism used by Council in the planning and development of land use activities and to provide some flexibility as a progressive tool.

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## **Policy Statements**

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy I-1:** Adopt the Obstacle Limitation Surfaces map for the Digby Municipal Airport as illustrated on Schedule "A".

**Policy I-2:** Adopt the Generalized Future Land Use map for the Digby Municipal Airport as illustrated on Schedule "B".

**Policy I-3:** Adopt the Land Use By-Law, which shall include provisions relating but not limited to permitted uses, general provisions, and development standards.

**Policy I-4:** Adopt the Zoning Map for Land Use By-Law for the Digby Municipal Airport lands as illustrated on Schedule "C".

**Policy I-5:** In considering amendments to the Land Use By-Law, in addition to all other criteria as set out in the policies of this Strategy, have regards to the following matters:

- The proposed development is in conformance to the intent of this Strategy and with all other municipal by-laws

**Policy I-6:** Consider a request for a Land Use By-Law amendment to zone any area immediately adjacent to a given zone on the Zoning Map to a zone permitted in the adjacent zone without requiring a Land Use By-Law amendment, provided that all policies of this Strategy are satisfied.

## **4.2 Relationship to Other Plans**

The intent of this Strategy is to provide a framework for future development of the Digby Municipal Airport. Consideration must be given to other Federal, Provincial and municipal planning documents and how this Strategy fits within the overall hierarchy of planning documents for the Municipality of the District of Digby. To date, one other planning strategy applies to the airport lands – the Draft Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law for the Regulation of Wind Turbine Development in the Municipality of the District of Digby. According to that strategy, this plan shall be considered a Secondary Planning Strategy and shall take precedence over planning matters within the Plan Area.

All proposed developments must comply with Transport Canada regulations.

## **4.3 Other Implementation Mechanisms**

In addition to the Land Use By-Law, the *Municipal Government Act* gives Council the authority to utilize various tools and mechanisms to guide development.

One key tool is the amendment of this Planning Strategy, also commonly referred to as a plan amendment, that provides for amending existing policies or creating new policies. Council shall only consider such amendments in response to changing goals and objectives that are in the best interests of the Municipality.

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### 4.3.1 Plan Amendments

#### Objective

Council's intent is to outline where consideration of amendments to this Strategy is appropriate.

#### Policy Statements

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy I-7:** Consider amendments to the policies and Zoning map of this Strategy under the following circumstances:

- Where the boundaries of the Plan Area are altered;
- Housekeeping amendments

### 4.3.2 Variance and Non-Conforming Use

#### Objective

To provide for limited flexibility through available planning tools in situations where prescribed LUB standards cannot be satisfied.

#### Policy Statements

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy I-8:** Where circumstances warrant and applicable criteria are satisfied, permit development to take place where strict compliance to the provisions of the Land Use By-Law would represent an inappropriate burden to the landowner and where the general intent of this Strategy is upheld.

**Policy I-9:** Permit the Development Officer to grant a variance in accordance with Sections 235 and 236 of the *Municipal Government Act*.

**Policy I-10:** Approach non-conforming uses in accordance with Sections 238 through 241 of the *Municipal Government Act*.

### 4.4 Implementation and Administration Provisions

#### Objective

To provide an administrative framework within which planning and development services are routinely administered.

#### Policy Statements

To achieve this objective, Council shall:

**Policy I-11:** In accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*, appoint a Municipal Development Officer whose primary function and responsibility is to administer the Land Use By-Law and grant development permits in accordance with the Land Use By-Law.

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## **Appendix A**

OBSTACLE LIMITATION SURFACES - SCHEDULE 'A'

## **Appendix B**

GENERALIZED FUTURE LAND USE PLAN - SCHEDULE 'B'