



2026-2030

Strategic Plan

Growing with Purpose



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Mayor's Message

GROWING WITH PURPOSE, TOGETHER

On behalf of Gander Town Council, I am pleased to present the Town of Gander's 2026–2030 Strategic Plan: Growing with Purpose.

Gander has always been a community shaped by connection. We are connected by our history, by our role as a regional hub, by our airport and transportation links, by our service to surrounding communities, and by the people who choose to live, work, visit, and invest here.

As we look ahead, our community is facing both exciting opportunities and real pressures. Housing, recreation, transportation, tourism, economic development, service delivery, and infrastructure all require thoughtful planning and responsible decisions.

This plan sets out Council's priorities for the next four years. It is focused, practical, and grounded in what matters most: supporting quality of life, strengthening our economy, modernizing how we serve residents, and making sure our decisions are financially sustainable.

We know we cannot do everything at once. But we can be clear about where we are going, how we will measure progress, and how we will work together to get there.



Council is committed to working closely with administration, residents, businesses, community organizations, regional partners, and other levels of government to move these priorities forward.

Gander has room to grow, and this plan will help ensure we grow with purpose.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "P. Farwell".

Mayor Percy Farwell
Town of Gander

Gander's Town Council

2025-2029

Gander Town Council sets the strategic direction for the municipality and works with administration to advance the priorities outlined in this plan.



Message from the CAO

TURNING PRIORITIES INTO ACTION

The 2026–2030 Strategic Plan provides clear direction for the organization and establishes the priorities that will guide our work over the next four years.

For administration, the value of a strategic plan is in how it is implemented. This plan will be connected to departmental work plans, annual budgets, capital planning, service improvements, reporting, and performance measurement. It will help ensure that staff time, financial resources, and organizational capacity are aligned with Council's priorities.

This plan also recognizes that the Town must continue to modernize how we work. Residents expect municipal services to be accessible, responsive, and easy to understand. Council and the public expect decisions to be informed by data, financial realities, and clear reporting. Staff need the tools, structure, and support to deliver services effectively.

The Town's implementation approach includes regular priority review, budget and work plan alignment, progress updates, and annual reporting to Council. These practices will help keep the plan active, practical, and accountable throughout the full term.



This is a practical plan for a growing community. It reflects ambition, but also discipline. It recognizes the importance of partnerships, service excellence, and responsible administration.

We look forward to working with Council, staff, residents, and partners to deliver on these priorities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Hefford', written over a white background.

Brad Hefford
Chief Administrative Officer
Town of Gander

Building on Progress

HONOURING PROGRESS, SHARPENING PRIORITIES

Before developing the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan, the Town reviewed its previous strategic plan to assess progress, confirm what had been completed, and identify which priorities remained relevant for the years ahead.

That review showed that significant progress had been made. It also confirmed that many of the Town’s existing priorities continue to matter to residents, Council, and the organization. Rather than starting over with an entirely new plan, the Town chose to build on the work already underway.

To support this process, the Town engaged Municipal Management Advisors to work with Council and senior administration on a strategic plan refresh. The purpose of the refresh was to validate the Town’s existing direction, identify emerging opportunities and pressures, and develop a clear implementation roadmap for 2026–2030.

The result is a focused plan that reflects both continuity and progress. It carries forward the priorities that remain important, while sharpening the actions, timelines, and performance measures needed to guide decision-making over the next four years.



Our Direction

VISION

Gander is a welcoming, connected, and forward-looking community where people belong, opportunity grows, and quality of life is supported.

MISSION

The Town of Gander provides responsible, inclusive, and responsive municipal services that support quality of life, community pride, economic opportunity, and a safe, healthy, and welcoming environment for all our residents.

We work with residents, businesses, community organizations, and partners to plan for the future, strengthen our community, and support Gander's continued growth.



Our Values



We believe in:

ACCOUNTABILITY

We are responsible and accountable for our actions. We follow up and follow through.

INNOVATION

We maintain open minds to foster creativity and better ways of accomplishing objectives.

DIVERSITY

We value diversity and inclusion in all that we do, think and pursue.

AGILITY

We strive to engage our residents and respond in a timely manner. We are flexible to address the ever-changing priorities of our community.

INTEGRITY

We promote trust, honesty and respect in our relationships. We are consistent, empathetic and fair.

TEAMWORK

We work together as a community and engage others to maximize our strengths and pursue opportunities for growth.

Guiding Principles

These guiding principles outline the foundation for all the work we do and act as a decision making lens as we work toward our vision.



RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

We will support growth in a way that is planned, financially responsible, and aligned with Gander's long-term community needs.

RESIDENT-FOCUSED SERVICE

We will design services around the needs of residents, businesses, visitors, and community partners, making it easier to access information, complete transactions, and connect with the Town.

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

We will work with partners to advance shared priorities, improve services, and create opportunities that benefit Gander.

PRACTICAL INNOVATION

We will modernize services, use data, improve processes, and adopt new tools where they help us make data-driven decisions and serve the community better.

COMMUNITY BELONGING

We will support a welcoming, inclusive, and connected community where people feel they belong and can participate in community life.

CONNECTED DECISION-MAKING

We recognize that municipal priorities do not operate in silos. We will take a connected, cross-departmental, and partnership-based approach to planning and decision-making so that projects and services can support multiple community objectives wherever possible.

Strategic Framework

FIVE PRIORITIES TO GUIDE DECISION-MAKING FROM 2026 TO 2030

Council and senior administration identified five strategic pillars to guide municipal decision-making during the 2026–2030 period. Each pillar contains strategic priorities supported by key actions and key performance indicators to support monitoring and accountability.

Community Recreation and Wellness

Supporting a healthy, active, and connected community through recreation, wellness, facilities, programs, and partnerships.

Mobility and Transportation

Improving mobility and accessibility to better serve residents, workers, and visitors.

Economic Development and Tourism

Positioning Gander to attract and support sustainable economic activity, tourism, investment, and events.

Organizational Excellence and Strategic Advocacy

Ensuring the Town remains modern, responsive, accountable, and aligned with community priorities.

Housing Availability and Community Needs

Supporting appropriate housing development and clarifying the Town's role in housing and related community needs.

Together, these pillars provide a focused roadmap for Council and administration. They reflect community needs, emerging opportunities, organizational capacity, and the financial realities facing the Town.



Pillar 1

COMMUNITY RECREATION AND WELLNESS

Council is committed to supporting a healthy, active, and connected community by investing in recreation and wellness opportunities that enhance quality of life and contribute to economic vitality.

Strategic Priorities

CRW-01: Develop and sustain recreation and wellness programs, facilities, and services.

Develop and sustain a range of recreation and wellness programs, facilities, and services that meet the needs of residents across all ages and abilities.

CRW-02: Advance planning for major recreation infrastructure.

Advance planning and decision-making for major recreation infrastructure, including a multipurpose recreation facility, with clear milestones and financial sustainability considerations.

CRW-03: Strengthen recreation and wellness partnerships.

Strengthen partnerships with community groups, institutions, and regional organizations to maximize program delivery and shared use of facilities.

CRW-04: Align recreation and wellness investments with broader community objectives.

Align recreation and wellness investments with broader community objectives, including tourism, events, and economic development.

Key Actions

- Review the community recreation and wellness needs assessment, including programs, facilities, gaps, and demographics, to ensure it remains relevant and consistent with other Council plans.
- Advance a business case and staged decision framework for major recreation infrastructure, including capital and operating considerations for a multipurpose facility.
- Formalize shared-use agreements with schools, institutions, and community organizations.
- Coordinate recreation planning with events, tourism, and sport hosting strategies.

How We Will Measure Progress

- Percentage of residents reporting satisfaction with recreation and wellness opportunities.
- Participation rates in Town-supported recreation programs by age group.
- Number of active partnerships or shared-use agreements.
- Council decision milestones achieved for major recreation infrastructure.
- Number of sport or wellness-related events hosted annually.

Pillar 2

MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

Council will work to improve mobility and accessibility across the community to better serve residents, workers, and visitors.

Strategic Priorities

MT-01: Confirm community and user mobility needs.

Confirm community and user needs, including accessibility and equity considerations (e.g. different age groups)

MT-02: Assess the feasibility of transit and other mobility options.

Assess the feasibility of transit and other mobility options that could better serve residents, workers, and visitors.

MT-03: Identify sustainable funding and delivery models.

Identify sustainable funding and delivery models for future mobility improvements.

MT-04: Integrate active transportation with transit and other modes.

Integrate the active transportation system with transit and other modes of transportation.

Key Actions

- Review existing studies related to community mobility and accessibility.
- Engage a consultant to develop a feasibility study for transit in Gander.
- Guided by the consultant's report, pilot low-cost or flexible transit and mobility options, such as on-demand, seasonal, or event-based service.
- Develop a long-term active transportation and mobility integration plan.
- Identify potential regional or provincial funding partnerships for new assets or programs.
- Improve connectivity between active transportation routes and key destinations.

How We Will Measure Progress

- Completion of the review of the mobility and accessibility needs assessment.
- Engagement of the transit consultant.
- Percentage of population within walking distance of active transportation routes.
- Ridership or usage levels for pilot mobility services.
- Accessibility compliance rate for Town-owned transportation assets.
- External funding secured for mobility initiatives.
- Reduction in reported transportation barriers through survey-based feedback.

Pillar 3

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Council will position the Town to attract and support sustainable economic activity by clarifying the municipal role in economic development and using data-informed decision-making.

Strategic Priorities

EDT-01: Define the Town's role in economic development.

Clearly define the Town's role in economic development, including how it partners with business, regional agencies, and other levels of government.

EDT-02: Use data and market intelligence to support decisions.

Use data and market intelligence to inform economic development, tourism, and land-use decisions.

EDT-03: Ensure land is available to support development.

Ensure sufficient, appropriately serviced land is available to support residential, commercial, and industrial development. The Town will also identify public, private, provincial, and regional partnerships that can help advance land readiness and support future growth.

EDT-04: Leverage sports tourism, events, and major facilities.

Leverage sports tourism, events, and major facilities to attract visitors and economic activity.

EDT-05: Support retail growth and retention.

Support retail growth and retention that strengthens the local commercial base.

EDT-06: Increase hotel and accommodation usage.

Enhance strategies to increase hotel and accommodation usage, including during traditional off-season periods.

EDT-07: Prepare for emerging sector opportunities.

Prepare the Town to respond to and capitalize on potential opportunities in sectors such as mining, defence, military, and aerospace, as opportunities arise.

Key Actions

- Develop a clear economic development role statement for Council approval.
- Develop an Economic Development Strategic Plan.

- Establish an economic and tourism data dashboard, including land availability, permits, visitation, and accommodation indicators.
- Maintain a current inventory of serviced and serviceable land.
- Strengthen sports tourism and event attraction efforts aligned with facilities.
- Work with businesses to develop retail retention and attraction strategies.
- Collaborate with regional and senior governments to monitor and prepare for opportunities in mining, defence, military, and aerospace.

How We Will Measure Progress

- Council adoption of an economic development role and framework.
- Amount of serviced land available for development by category.
- Number and value of development permits issued annually.
- Hotel occupancy rates, seasonal and annual where available.
- Number of major events hosted annually.
- External investment inquiries or prospect leads.
- Tourism visitation or spending indicators, where available.

Pillar 4

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND STRATEGIC ADVOCACY

Council will ensure that the municipal organization remains modern, responsive, and aligned with community priorities.

Strategic Priorities

OESA-01: Align organizational structure and capacity with strategic priorities.

Align organizational structure and capacity with economic development, tourism, and broader strategic objectives.

OESA-02: Implement a performance management framework.

Implement a performance management framework, including mandate letters for the CAO and direct reports to the CAO.

OESA-03: Strengthen relationships with community partners.

Strengthen relationships with community partners to support shared priorities and coordinated action.

OESA-04: Advocate with other levels of government on key priorities.

Advocate with other levels of government on key priorities, including infrastructure and program funding, partnerships with local defence and military presence, improved air services,

OESA-05: Expand data-driven decision-making and appropriate technology use.

Expand the use of data-driven decision-making and emerging technologies, including AI, where appropriate.

Key Actions

- Regularly update Council on the status of the Strategic Plan.
- Review and align organizational structure and resources with strategic priorities.
- Implement a mandate letter from Council to the CAO to establish annual expectations.
- Implement annual mandate letters for direct reports to the CAO.
- Establish a formal advocacy agenda approved by Council.
- Strengthen relationships with provincial and federal departments, local defence and military leadership, airport partners, and transportation stakeholders.
- Expand the use of data, dashboards, and appropriate AI tools to support decision-making.
- Create developmental assignments for staff as a way to complete special assignments and provide growth opportunities for employees.

• How We Will Measure Progress

- Annual Council mandate letter for the CAO completed and reviewed.
 - Annual mandate letters for senior leadership completed.
 - Percentage of strategic initiatives with assigned accountability.
 - Number of formal advocacy meetings with senior governments.
 - External funding secured annually.
 - Staff engagement and retention indicators.
 - Number of decisions supported by data or performance reporting.
 - Reduction in time to complete key internal processes.
 - Number of developmental assignments.
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Pillar 5

HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

Council will support appropriate housing development and clarify the Town's role in addressing housing challenges in partnership with other governments and organizations.

Strategic Priorities

HACN-01: Define the Town's role in housing and related community needs.

Clearly define the Town's role in housing and related social issues, including affordable housing, within its legislative authority and financial capacity.

HACN-02: Address barriers that affect housing development.

Identify and address regulatory, servicing, and process-related barriers that affect housing development.

HACN-03: Work with partners on housing programs and funding.

Work collaboratively with federal, provincial, and non-profit partners to optimize access to housing programs and funding.

HACN-04: Ensure land is available to support a range of housing types.

Ensure sufficient and appropriately planned land is available to support a range of housing types.

Key Actions

- Develop a Council-approved statement defining the Town's role in housing and social issues.
- Review planning, zoning, and approval processes to remove unnecessary barriers.
- Maintain an up-to-date housing and land capacity inventory.
- Actively partner with provincial, federal, and non-profit organizations.
- Align housing enablement efforts with workforce and economic development needs.

How We Will Measure Progress

- Council adoption of a housing and community role statement.
 - Number of housing units approved and constructed annually by type.
 - Average development approval timelines.
 - Amount of senior government housing funding accessed.
 - Percentage of residential land serviced or serviceable.
 - Workforce-related housing gaps identified and addressed over time.
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Performance Monitoring Framework

TRACKING PROGRESS AND STAYING ACCOUNTABLE

Implementation progress will be tracked through a combination of Key Performance Indicators and Key Outcome Indicators. Progress will be monitored through annual departmental work plans, quarterly internal progress reviews, and annual strategic progress reports to Council.

How Progress Will Be Monitored

Annual Departmental Work Plans

Departments will align work plans with the strategic pillars, key actions, and annual budget.

Quarterly Internal Progress Reviews

Administration will review progress, identify risks, and adjust work as needed.

Annual Strategic Progress Reports to Council

Council will receive an annual update on implementation progress, performance indicators, completed actions, challenges, and next steps.

The Town will track strategic progress using a dashboard framework. This will help Council, administration, and the public understand the status of major initiatives over the life of the plan.

Next Steps

KEEPING THE PLAN ACTIVE

Following adoption of the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, the Town will focus on implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

Immediate Next Steps

- Integrate priorities into departmental work plans.
- Align priorities with the Town's annual budget and capital planning process.
- Implement the performance monitoring framework.
- Report progress to Council on an annual basis.

This approach will help ensure the Strategic Plan remains practical, visible, and connected to the work of the organization.

Closing

The 2026–2030 Strategic Plan provides a practical roadmap for Gander’s next four years.

It recognizes that Gander is growing, and that growth must be guided by clear priorities, responsible decision-making, and a strong understanding of community needs. Through five strategic pillars; community recreation and wellness, mobility and transportation, economic development and tourism, organizational excellence and strategic advocacy, and housing availability and community needs, the plan sets a focused direction for Council and administration.

This plan connects priorities to action. It links strategic direction with work plans, budgets, capital planning, partnerships, performance measures, and annual reporting.

Most importantly, it is intended to remain active and visible. It will guide the decisions, investments, relationships, and service improvements that shape Gander from 2026 to 2030.

Gander has a strong foundation, a powerful story, and significant opportunity ahead.

This plan is about building on that foundation and working together to ensure Gander continues to grow with purpose.





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