#GD-SP-001

GUIDANCE | GU-02

Advancing Equity in Infrastructure & Governance: Policy & Leadership Options for Local Councils

NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF MUNICIPALITIES

Municipal stormwater and infrastructure planning extends beyond technical engineering; it represents a core public health and social justice priority. Because historical underinvestment, discriminatory land-use planning, and land title barriers have left African Nova Scotian communities disproportionately exposed to flood risks, local councils have a vital opportunity to apply an equity lens across municipal policy, zoning, and capital budgets.

Key Insights

1 Governance Equity: Ensure Equity Representation at Decision-Making Tables

Establish formal, permanent positions for African Nova Scotian community members and knowledge leaders within municipal planning and infrastructure decision-making bodies. This includes designated advisory seats on subcommittees, joint community-municipal steering groups, and Community Benefit Agreements for major development projects.

Why? *Historically, decisions regarding land use, zoning, and public works were executed without the involvement or consent of African Nova Scotian communities. Formalizing representation shifts governance from top-down consultation to shared decision-making power, ensuring lived experience directly shapes capital planning.*

Learn More: Enabling Equitable Engagement (GU-01)

2 Allocation Equity: Prioritize Investment in Historically Underserved Communities

Direct capital infrastructure investments to historically underserved neighbourhoods using predictable, non-application provincial transfers—such as the Build Communities Strong (BCS) Fund Community Stream—and establish municipal financial incentives or grant programs for lot-level adaptation (e.g., property drainage, rain gardens, and well protections).

Why? *Standard capital budgeting often distributes resources based on property tax base or reacts to high-value commercial growth, reinforcing historic service gaps. Dedicated capital allocations and lot-level adaptation grants actively address decades of systemic underinvestment and heightened flood vulnerability.*

3 Planning & Land-Use Equity: Integrate an Equity Lens into Planning Recommendations

Adopt community-led planning blueprints—modeled after the African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning (ANSCAP) framework—to guide municipal planning strategies, boundary reviews, and land-use bylaws.

Why? *Standardized municipal zoning grids historically imposed restrictive designations on Black-owned land while permitting uphill industrial development and toxic runoff near residential cores. The ANSCAP model enables councils to enact custom bylaws that protect historic boundaries, restrict uphill contamination, and safeguard community land tenure.*

Learn More: Beechville Case Study (CS-09)

For municipal guidance on addressing systemic inequality, see:

- African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity Plan (REP)
- Nova Scotia Office of Equity and Anti-Racism (OEA) Toolkit
- HRM African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning (ANSCAP) Framework

LEARN MORE:

View the full Guidance Document at FloodAdaptNS.ca

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