

FOUNDER'S STORY



Kevin W. Riles, Founder, President + CEO of Sightline, brings nearly four decades of professional experience and a lifetime of connection to Halifax. Born in 1964 and raised in Armdale, Halifax, Kevin has witnessed the city grow from a community of approximately 94,000 residents to more than 532,000 in 2026, with a projected population of one million by 2050. As a lifelong resident, urban planner, and business owner, he understands both the opportunities growth creates and the concerns it raises for the communities experiencing it.

His connection to development is deeply personal. Growing up on Quarry Road in Armdale, Kevin remembers walking through the woods across from his family home to swim and skate on Hail Pond, with no houses for miles. Years later, he would manage the redevelopment of those same woods into Stoneridge on the Park, a well-known 500-unit residential community. Few projects better illustrate how Halifax has changed throughout his lifetime, and how planning decisions shape the places people call home.

Humble beginnings, lasting lessons

Kevin's work ethic was shaped by his parents. His mother, Rita, grew up in Port Hawkesbury, Cape Breton, and built a career as a dietary assistant in a nursing home despite having only a Grade 5 education. His father, Gordon, came from a fishing family in La Poile, Newfoundland. Leaving home at just 13, he went on to become Chief Mechanic for Eastern Canada Towing in Halifax, overseeing tugboat maintenance across Atlantic Canada and as far as Trois-Rivières, Quebec. One of his parents' proudest moments was seeing Kevin become the first member of the Riles family to graduate from college.



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After graduating from the former Citadel High School, Kevin continued his education at Dalhousie University and the College of Geographic Sciences in Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia. A competitive athlete in baseball, hockey, basketball, and other sports, he learned early the importance of discipline, teamwork, and perseverance.

Kevin's entrepreneurial instincts emerged just as early. His first job was as a cook at the newly opened McDonald's on Quinpool Road in 1981, where his first paycheque was \$37.12 for 16 hours of work (he has it framed somewhere). He later put himself through university by cutting lawns through K + S Landscaping, a business he founded himself.

One of his most memorable lessons in business came at 19, while working as a labourer on a construction site. As the youngest member of the crew, Kevin routinely drew the toughest jobs, including crawling into sewers. When he finally asked his 6'5" foreman, Frank, why he was always the one sent underground, Frank replied: *"We have a demand for someone to go in the sewer, and you are not much in supply."*

That lesson in supply and demand stayed with Kevin far longer than any textbook. So did the realities of hard work, whether hauling 100-pound loads of potatoes in the restaurant business or cleaning rotten produce from a cooler. Those early experiences gave him a lasting appreciation for the people doing the difficult work behind every successful business.

A career built on understanding every side of development

Over nearly 40 years, Kevin has worked across municipal planning, land development, real estate, and business leadership. His experience includes serving as a Municipal Director of Planning & Development of East Hants, Vice President of one of Halifax's largest land development firms, and Executive Director of a small-town business commission. He has also worked internationally as a consultant in Australia, Toronto, and Bermuda, while founding and selling businesses in the restaurant and marketing industries.

These roles gave Kevin a perspective few planning consultants possess. He understands municipal approvals from the staff and Council side, having led a municipal department responsible for planning and development, and the financial risks, costs, and complexities of building residential communities and apartment buildings from his time in private land development. And as a business owner, he knows firsthand the pressure of meeting payroll, managing cash flow, and navigating economic downturns, including the 2008 Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic.

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From 2017 to 2021, Kevin also served as Chair of Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia, bringing his commitment to affordable housing to the forefront. The experience allowed him to work alongside others to help make homeownership possible for families facing financial challenges.

Buidling Sightline

Kevin founded KWR Approvals on his birthday, May 19, 2004 with a clear vision: to build a specialized planning, approvals, and land development firm that could help clients navigate complex projects and achieve their goals.

From developers and builders to governments, nonprofits, small businesses, First Nations, diverse communities, corporations, and individual property owners, his philosophy has remained consistent. No project is too big, no client is too small. Kevin founded this firm to work collaboratively, advocate its clients' best interests, and stay engaged through the technical challenges, regulatory hurdles, and political sensitivities that can shape a project's outcome. Kevin knows that behind every application is a real investment, a business, a family, or a community with something at stake. Having worked on every side of the development process, he understands the financial pressure, uncertainty, and responsibility clients carry. His approach is grounded in that experience: to get involved early, work through the challenges, and help clients move forward with confidence.

But then, something changed during the real estate boom following the pandemic: Kevin suddenly needed a small army to tackle the rapidly increasing market demand. After one coffee chat at Uncommon Grounds with a bright Master of Planning student at Dalhousie, he hired Jane Rideout on the spot. With his eye to scope out early talent, Kevin continued to build a team that went beyond KWR Approvals. Despite all advice to the contrary, Kevin rebranded from his name to Sightline to shine a light on something much bigger he built: his team.



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Today, that original vision continues to evolve. The Sightline has grown to 11 people, and beyond planning approvals and development consulting to also offer architecture, and real estate trading together, offering clients a more connected approach from initial feasibility through design, approvals, development, and property transactions.

Industry leadership and recognition

Throughout his career, Kevin has contributed to the planning and development industry through leadership and volunteer service. He served as Chair of the Urban Development Institute of Nova Scotia from 2004 to 2007 and UDI Canada from 2007 to 2009, and represented the development industry during the 2006 Halifax Regional Plan review. His contributions have been recognized through a Canadian Institute of Planners Award of Excellence, municipal and provincial recognition, and awards acknowledging his industry and community service.

Beyond the office

Kevin's life has been anything but predictable. After surviving six serious accidents, four involving water, he jokes that perhaps a Taurus should stay out of the water. Fortunately for his lifespan, he met Colleen, his wife of more than 30 years, and together they have built a life in Sackville.

Kevin remains an avid adventurer who enjoys sports, weightlifting, reading, chess, and travel. He is also an enthusiastic animal lover, with a soft spot for both dogs and cats (don't make him choose).

At the heart of Kevin's story is a lifelong connection to Halifax, a belief in hard work, a passion for his Sightline team, and a commitment to helping people navigate change. These values continue to shape the way he leads Sightline and the way the firm works with its clients and communities.

