Co-operative Housing for Lunenburg County

Mahone Bay Community Land Co-operative: Our Projects and the Opportunity Ahead

Hawthorn & Kinburn, Mahone Bay | Falkland & Brook, Lunenburg

Who We Are

Founded in 2022, the Mahone Bay Community Land Co-operative (MBCLC) is a member-led, non-profit working to provide secure, healthy, permanently affordable co-operative homes in Lunenburg County.

We're building that future with our members, the future residents. They help shape our direction, what we build, and the benefits for members and the community.



MBCLC and Solterre Design Partnership at the proposed project site for Hawthorn & Kinburn. Photo by Verónica Gutiérrez

Why Co-op Housing, and Why Now

Mahone Bay and Lunenburg are wonderful places to live, and more people are seeking the quality of life these communities offer. Retirees, workers, and young families are arriving, while many long-time residents and newcomers struggle to find stable, affordable homes close to where they work, learn, and belong. For decades, governments have left much of housing provision to the private market, which has not kept pace with housing needs or delivered the affordability and community benefits residents deserve. Local housing needs are well documented and pressing.[1]

Co-operative Housing Offers a Different Path

- Permanently affordable. Co-op housing is non-profit and permanently protected from market speculation. Housing charges cover the costs of operating and maintaining the building, not generating returns for private owners.
- Member-led, member-controlled. Members elect the board, vote on major decisions and help shape their housing and communities.
- Secure. Members benefit from long-term security of tenure. They can put down roots, raise a family, age in place, build lasting connections, and plan their lives with confidence.
- Community-building. Co-ops bring together people of diverse ages, backgrounds, incomes, and household types, with shared responsibilities for their homes and common spaces that foster real neighbourly connection.
- Good for the town. Teachers, health care workers, tradespeople, service workers, families, single people and seniors can keep living in the communities they love and contribute to. Lower, stable housing costs leave households more to spend locally, supporting the services, shops and businesses that keep a small town thriving.
- Driven by values. Housing co-operatives follow the values of the international co-operative movement, including self-help, democracy, equity, solidarity, and concern for the community.[2]

A Proven Housing Model

Across the country, from big cities to rural towns, more than 2,200 housing co-operatives provide homes for over a quarter of a million Canadians, with another 10,000 co-operative homes in the pipeline.[3] A recent survey found that 73% of Canadians surveyed believe

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[1] Turner Drake & Partners Ltd. (2025, October). *Residential rental market survey & housing needs assessment updates: Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia*. Town of Lunenburg. https://townoflunenburg.ca/2169-residential-rental-market-survey-housing-needs-assessment-updates-lunenburg-county-nova-scotia/file.html

[2] International Cooperative Alliance. (n.d.). *Cooperative identity, values & principles.* https://ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity

[3] Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. (n.d.). *Facts & figures.* https://chfcanada.coop/about-housing-co-ops/facts-figures/

non-profit and co-operative housing can help solve the housing crisis, citing affordability, long-term stability, and community benefits.[4] Affordability shows in the numbers. One Canadian study found that co-operative housing charges were 25% below market rates in 2006, a gap that grew to 33% by 2021.[5]

A Partnership for This Moment

MBCLC has worked with Solterre Design since the co-op's first feasibility study in 2023. Solterre Design is one of Atlantic Canada's most experienced sustainable architecture firms and serves as Prime Consultant and design project lead. Together we use a design process that puts members at the centre. Workshops, discussion, and voting shape each project, so the finished homes reflect the people who will live in them.

Our Projects

Hawthorn & Kinburn, Mahone Bay

Our first project grew out of a partnership with the Town of Mahone Bay to advance affordable housing, alongside deep member and community engagement. A series of workshops helped shape the project from the outset, informing the preliminary site plan, density, unit mix, and shared amenities. Members strongly supported a preferred design for approximately 42 homes, inspired by Mahone Bay's gabled architectural character.

Location: At the corner of Hawthorn Road and Kinburn Street, within a short walk of downtown. The Town of Mahone Bay has agreed to convey a designated portion of this vacant lot to MBCLC for $1, subject to acceptance of a feasibility study.

Project features include:

- ~42 homes. A proposed mix of homes informed by member and community needs, with common spaces and amenities.
- Architectural character. A design inspired by Mahone Bay's gabled architectural character.
- Design in development. As the design progresses, we will explore further opportunities to embed member and community needs and values.

Status: A geotechnical assessment and environmental site assessment are complete. Pre-planning and feasibility study are underway.

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[4] Sheppard, E. (2025, February 14). *73% of Canadians say non-profit and co-op housing can help solve the housing crisis.* Abacus Data. https://abacusdata.ca/canadians-say-co-op-and-non-profit-housing-can-help-solve-the-housing-crisis/

[5] Suttor, G., Otogwu, C., & Falvo, N. (2022). *The co-op difference: Comparing co-op and market rents in five Canadian cities*. Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. https://chfcanada.coop/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/The-Co-op-Difference-report.pdf



Two founding members of MBCLC, Tom Webb and Dean Waterfield, at the proposed project site for Hawthorn & Kinburn. Photo by Verónica Gutiérrez

Falkland & Brook, Lunenburg

MBCLC has signed a Letter of Intent with Solterre Inc., the property owner, for a site on Brook Street, with a land purchase tied to an as-of-right project currently under negotiation.

Location: On Brook Street adjacent to the working waterfront, within a short walk of downtown Lunenburg.

Project features include:

- ~44 homes. A mix of studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom units informed by member and community needs.
- Energy-efficient construction. Wood-frame construction designed to keep operating costs low and reduce the environmental footprint.
- Accessibility. An elevator, wide corridors, and accessible units.
- Built in Nova Scotia. Prefabricated wood wall panels manufactured in the province.
- Common spaces. Informed by members to connect and build community.

Status: Several key steps are complete, including a zoning and servicing review, schematic design, a third-party cost estimate, and submission of a development permit application.



MBCLC and Solterre Design Partnership at the proposed project site for Falkland & Brook. Photo by Verónica Gutiérrez

Two Projects, One Vision

Hawthorn & Kinburn and Falkland & Brook strengthen each other. Delivering two projects through a shared partnership builds MBCLC's track record as a co-operative capable of repeat delivery, scale, and impact, which funders value. It also allows lessons, relationships, and design work to carry from one project to the next.

A housing portfolio approach strengthens long-term sustainability by creating opportunities to share administration, services, knowledge, and resources. Our goal is to deliver both projects and bring the benefits of co-operative living to Mahone Bay and Lunenburg alike.

What's Next

2027 will be a busy, groundbreaking year! Milestones will be shared as planning advances.

Hawthorn & Kinburn priorities include land conveyance, site plan approval, schematic design shaped by members and community, and funding development.

Falkland & Brook priorities include development permitting, design development shaped by members and community, and readiness for capital funding.

Get Involved

Co-op housing is built by its members, and you have a place.

- **Become a member** and help shape homes in Mahone Bay and Lunenburg.
- **Join a design workshop** and have your say in project design.
- **Spread the word** to friends, neighbours and local organizations who care about affordable housing.

Learn more at: mahonebayco-op.ca
Connect with us: mbclc@protonmail.com

Contact

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