

Information Note

Title:	Cowan Heights and University Area Neighbourhood Plans – WWH		
Date Prepared:	June 24, 2025		
Report To:	Regular Council Meeting		
Councillor and Role:	Councillor Maggie Burton, Planning		
Ward:	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4

**Issue:**  
Phase 2 engagement has concluded for Cowan Heights and the University Area Neighbourhood Plans and the attached findings are presented to Council and the public.

**Discussion – Background and Current Status:**  
In September 2024, the City retained O2, a planning consultancy firm, to prepare Cowan Heights and the University Area Neighbourhood Plan. These neighbourhood plans will form part of the Envision St. John’s Municipal Plan.

Phase 2 Engagement took place between April 23 and May 25, 2025. This was the second opportunity for residents to provide input on these neighbourhood plans. The focus of this engagement was to gather feedback on the emerging strategies for land use, intensification areas, mobility, parks, and the public realm proposed in each neighbourhood and to seek input on priority action items.

Engagement occurred online and in-person and included a range of outreach and communications tactics. The attached “Phase 2 What We Heard” documents describe the engagement activities and summarize the findings.

- In Cowan Heights, four (4) main themes arose from the feedback received:
- **Upgrading Parks & Trails:** Participants highly supported upgrades to Community Parks, Trails, and Tot-lots, and would like to see the existing trail network improved.
  - **Providing Access and Accessibility:** There was a high level of support for proposed initiatives to improve active transportation, pedestrian experience, and transit. Of the proposed improvements, upgrades to trails and lighting were a top priority. There was also a desire for the City to consider a broader range of accessibility, including for those who are visually impaired.

- **Increasing Safety:** Safety was frequently mentioned. There was significant support for developing a sharps (needles) disposal strategy, Neighbourhood Watch, and more lighting for public spaces, trails, and streets.
- **Retaining Livability and Managing Growth:** There was a desire that, with any new changes or growth, the City consider livability for existing and new residents. There was support for Neighbourhood Strategies that enabled additional housing and mixed use, although there were differing perspectives on how much growth should be enabled.

In the University Area, feedback showed the following:

- **Vision and Objectives:** While these were generally well supported, people felt that a greater emphasis should be placed on the residential neighbourhoods of the University Area rather than the institutions.
- **Strategies:** Seven (7) strategies were proposed for the University Area which were well supported. The proposed growth corridor along Elizabeth Avenue and mixed-use development along Freshwater Road were more contentious than the other strategies.
- **Land Use:** Land-use recommendations were well-supported by respondents. A change in housing types and mixed-use development along Freshwater Road and Elizabeth Avenue will require sensitivity to ensure that future growth respects the community context while providing greater residential and commercial opportunities.
- **Mobility:** The proposed shared-use path on Newtown Road was supported. Pedestrians indicated the greatest priority was improved connections to parks, while transit users identified better seating, lighting and bus shelters as a priority.
- **Parks:** Respondents are excited to see more activities and events in their parks. Nature-based activities, playgrounds, and programming for children and youth were highly regarded.
- **Community Activation:** All community activations were well-received and had substantial community buy-in. Commentary focused more on getting to work, rather than whether they were the right ideas.

This feedback will be evaluated by the consultants and incorporated into the draft Cowan Heights and University Area Neighbourhood Plans, to be released in the Fall 2025.

### **Key Considerations/Implications:**

1. Budget/Financial Implications: Not applicable.
2. Partners or Interested Parties: St. John's residents; property and business owners; all those who live, work, or visit Cowan Heights and the University Area neighbourhoods.
3. Is this a New Plan or Strategy: No
4. Alignment with Strategic Directions: A Sustainable City: Plan for land use and preserve and enhance the natural and built environment where we live.

An Effective City: Ensure accountability and good governance through transparent and open decision making.

5. Alignment with Adopted Plans: Envision St. John's Municipal Plan and Development Regulations.
6. Accessibility and Inclusion: Accessibility considerations have been included in the WWH documents.
7. Legal or Policy Implications: An amendment to the Municipal Plan will be required at a later stage.
8. Privacy Implications: Not applicable.
9. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Feedback in the What We Heard document will be evaluated for inclusion in the Cowan Heights and University Area Neighbourhood Plans.
10. Human Resource Implications: Not applicable.
11. Procurement Implications: Not applicable.
12. Information Technology Implications: Not applicable.
13. Information Management Implications: Not applicable.
14. Other Implications: Not applicable.

**Conclusion/Next Steps:**

The findings from Phase 2 engagement will inform the creation of the draft Neighbourhood Plans for Cowan Heights and the University Area. The Neighbourhood Plans will be released publicly in fall 2025.

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**Approved by: Ken O'Brien, MCIP, Chief Municipal Planner**

## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Cowan Heights and University Area Neighbourhood Plans - What We Heard (WWH).docx
Attachments:	- CowanHeights.Phase2.WWHR.2025-06-23.pdf - UniversityArea.Phase2.WWHR.2025-06-22.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jun 25, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Ken O'Brien - Jun 25, 2025 - 2:39 PM**

**Jason Sinyard - Jun 25, 2025 - 3:48 PM**