

ST. JOHN'S

Cowan Heights Neighbourhood Plan

Phase 2 Engagement
What We Heard Report
June 2025



Table of Contents

Project Overview	3
Engagement Approach	4
How We Engaged	5
Key Themes	8
Public Engagement Findings	10
Vision, Objectives, & Strategies	11
Land Use	20
Mobility	23
Parks & Recreation	28
Community Activation	31
Survey Demographics	33
Interested Parties Summary	35
Indigenous Engagement	38
Next Steps	40

Project Overview

The City of St. John's is developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the community of Cowan Heights. The Neighbourhood Plan will set out a clear vision for land use, transportation, open space, and growth in the area. This plan will be shaped by the existing policies of the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan, analysis of local conditions, and engagement with the neighbourhood and wider community.

To be successful, the vision and plan for Cowan Heights must be grounded in an understanding of the unique characteristics of the community. The plan will incorporate the needs and desires of the people who live, work, and play in these neighbourhoods.

The Neighbourhood Plan for Cowan Heights is being completed at the same time as the Neighbourhood Plan for the University Area, and engagement phases are occurring at the same time. The project involves two main phases of public engagement prior to the release of a draft plan. This is the What We Heard Report for the second phase of engagement. Following this, a draft of the Neighbourhood Plan will be released publicly in fall 2025.



Figure 1. Cowan Heights Neighbourhood Plan Boundary



**Phase 1
Engagement**

Fall 2024



**Phase 2
Engagement**

Spring 2025



**Draft Plan
Release**

Fall 2025

Engagement Approach

The Phase 2 Engagement took place between April 23 and May 25, 2025. This was the second opportunity residents, businesses, and interested parties had to provide input on the Cowan Heights and the University Area Neighbourhood Plans. The focus of this engagement was to gather feedback on the emerging land use, intensification, mobility and public realm strategies and policies in each neighbourhood and providing input on neighbourhood priority action items.

In this phase, we asked for feedback on:



- A draft neighbourhood vision and objectives for Cowan Heights
- The overall Neighbourhood Strategy
- Land use direction
- Mobility direction
- Parks direction
- Community activation ideas and prioritization



How We Engaged

A variety of methods were used to promote the project and collect feedback from the public and a diverse range of interested parties. Tactics included online engagement, in-person engagement, and a range of outreach and communications tactics. The following pages provide additional details about each of these components, including the number of participants who engaged.






Online Engagement

Activity	Description	Outputs
 Online Public Survey	The online survey was available on EngageStJohns.ca from April 23 to May 25, 2025. Hardcopies were available upon request.	271 responses
 Virtual Information Session	One online information session was hosted on April 29 from 7 - 8 p.m. for Cowan Heights.	2 attendees

In-Person Engagement

Activity	Description	Outputs
 Focus Group Sessions	<p>Four Focus Group sessions were hosted jointly for both Neighbourhood Plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 6 Business Drop-in • May 7 Social & Cultural Focus Group • May 8 General Focus Group • May 13 Council Committees 	<p>1 business</p> <p>7 organizations</p> <p>3 Council Committees</p>
 Interviews	<p>One-on-one interviews were held with a range of interested parties for both Neighbourhood Plans. Some were in person and some virtual.</p>	<p>6 organizations</p>
 First Light Lunch	<p>The project team hosted a lunch with First Light staff on May 8 to discuss Indigenous perspectives on both Neighbourhood Plan areas.</p>	<p>7 First Light staff participants</p>
 Open House	<p>An open house took place on May 7, 2024 from 5-8 p.m. at École St. Matthew's School (119 Cowan Avenue) for the Cowan Heights Neighbourhood.</p>	<p>26 participants</p>
 Pop-Ups	<p>Three popup events were held for both neighbourhoods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 7, from 12 p.m. - 2 p.m. Village Shopping Centre • May 10, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the Farmers' Market • May 9, from 12 p.m. - 2 p.m. at the Memorial University Student Centre 	<p>130+ interactions</p>

Outreach & Communications

	Activity	Description	Outputs
	Project Website	EngageStJohns.ca was available for the duration of the engagement and included information about events, how to get involved, and all survey and map links. The project page also linked to the University Area project page.	1,513 page visits
	Email List	Four email updates were sent to EngageStJohns.ca subscribers to provide updates and reminders about upcoming events and survey deadlines.	<p>April 22: sent to 4126 people - open rate 63.2%</p> <p>May 5: sent to 4139 - open rate 60.2%</p> <p>May 9: sent to 4081 - open rate 57.3%</p> <p>May 14: sent to 4089 - open rate 58.7%</p>
	Coffee Sleeves	Coffee sleeves were distributed at one coffee shop in each of the two neighbourhoods with the QR code and link to the engagement website.	300+ coffee sleeves
	Media Release	A media release was shared with the local media and posted to the City's website on April 22, 2025. The release was also sent to subscribers via email.	1 release
	Social Media	The City of St. John's posted on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn throughout the engagement phase from April 23 to May 25, 2025.	<p>Link clicks: 1,213</p> <p>Impressions: 78,896</p> <p>Unique reach: 18,229</p>

Key Themes

Four main themes were identified from the feedback received across all in-person and online engagement activities, including all audiences. While all feedback received will help inform the final neighbourhood plan, these main takeaways represent the most significant findings from this phase of engagement, and are summarized below.



Upgrading Parks & Trails

Parks and Trails remain the top priority and supported part of the vision for Cowan Heights. Engagement participants highly supported upgrades to Community Parks, Trails, and Tot-lots in the Neighbourhood Strategy and wanted to see the unique existing connected network of parks retained and improved on as the neighbourhood grows. There was support for re-looking at the programming of Tot-lots and a desire for different individual spaces to serve different community and user group functions across the overall parks network.



Providing Access and Accessibility

There was generally a high level of support for proposed initiatives to improve active transportation, pedestrian experience, and transit in the community. Many participants expressed a desire to see improvements to intersections and streets that would make them safer for all users and reduce conflicts with vehicles. Of the proposed improvements, the highest level of agreement was with upgrades to trails and lighting. One of the gaps identified in the Neighbourhood Strategy was improvements to Topsail Road to make the road safer for bikes and pedestrians.

Some participants also wanted to see more direct mention of accessibility in the vision and objectives for Cowan Heights. There was a desire to see the City consider a broader range of accessibility, including for those who are visually impaired. Though not specific to just Cowan Heights, there was also an overall desire for greater frequency of transit and a re-evaluation of the existing transit routes.



Increasing Safety

Safety was one of the most frequently mentioned concerns about the future of Cowan Heights. Many participants wanted to see more done to improve safety first, prior to allowing significant additional growth and development in the community. There was significant support for developing a Sharps disposal strategy, Neighbourhood Watch, and providing more lighting throughout public spaces, trails, and streets. Additionally, participants wanted to see more enforcement and traffic calming, as well as improvements to intersections and roads, to make them safer for pedestrians and cyclists.



Retaining Livability and Managing Growth

Overall, there was a desire to ensure that with any new changes or growth in Cowan Heights, the City considers livability for existing and new residents. As described by engagement participants, livability includes affordability, walkability, access to recreation, driveability, and sense of community. There was a desire to see these factors elevated in the overall vision and objectives for Cowan Heights.

Overall there was support for Neighbourhood Strategies that enabled additional housing and mixed use, although there were some mixed perspectives on how much growth should be enabled in Cowan Heights. There was generally support for transit oriented development at the Village Shopping Centre and development along Blackmarsh Road, but there were some concerns about the impacts and pace of growth in these areas. Overall, there was a desire to ensure that future growth in Cowan Heights makes the Neighbourhood more livable and desirable for all ages and households.

Public Engagement Findings

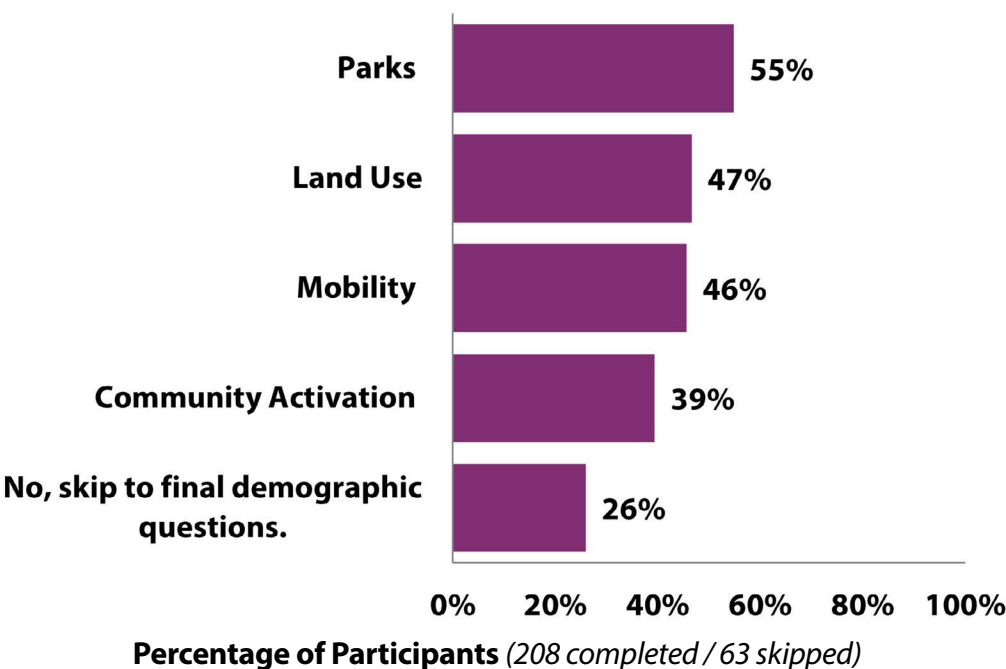
The following section provides the findings from the online survey, project website, and virtual and in-person public events. Online and in-person results have been combined in the following qualitative summaries, however the graphs and statistics reflect online survey and website responses only.

The online survey was divided into a short form and optional long form survey:

- Short form: Neighbourhood Vision, Objectives, and Neighbourhood Strategy
- Optional long form sections: Land Use, Mobility, Parks, Community Activation
- Demographics

Due to this, there are more responses for the short form than the long form sections. Quantitative questions are presented in percentage of participants per question. The total number of people who completed or skipped the question, out of the 271 total surveys, is noted below each graph.

Do you want to complete the following detailed survey sections? Select all that apply.



271
survey
responses

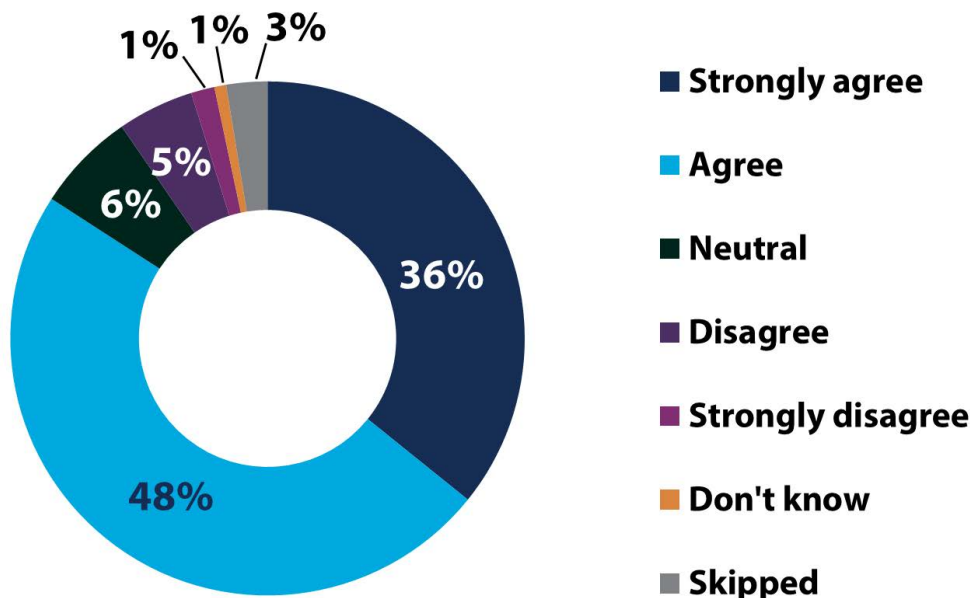
Vision, Objectives, & Strategies

A draft vision, objectives, and overall Neighbourhood Strategy map were shared during Phase 2 engagement for feedback and refinement.

Vision

Feedback on the vision was overall positive, with 84% of participants selecting agree or strongly agree with the proposed vision and 6% selecting disagree or strongly disagree.

What is your level of agreement with the draft vision?



Percentage of Participants (264 completed/ 7 skipped)

Do you have any suggested changes to the draft vision?

Approximately 20% of the comments were “no changes” to the draft vision. There were several comments about the vision being too vague or high level to give feedback on.

Of the comments reflecting suggested changes, the main theme was safety. Several participants wrote that they did not think the wording of the vision was accurate, as they did not feel that Cowan Heights is currently safe and could not “continue to be”.

Some topics had differing viewpoints, including mixed-use development, affordable housing, and shared-use path.

85
comments

Mixed use: Some participants were opposed to more mixed use development, while others wanted to see more incorporation of mixed use throughout the neighbourhood.

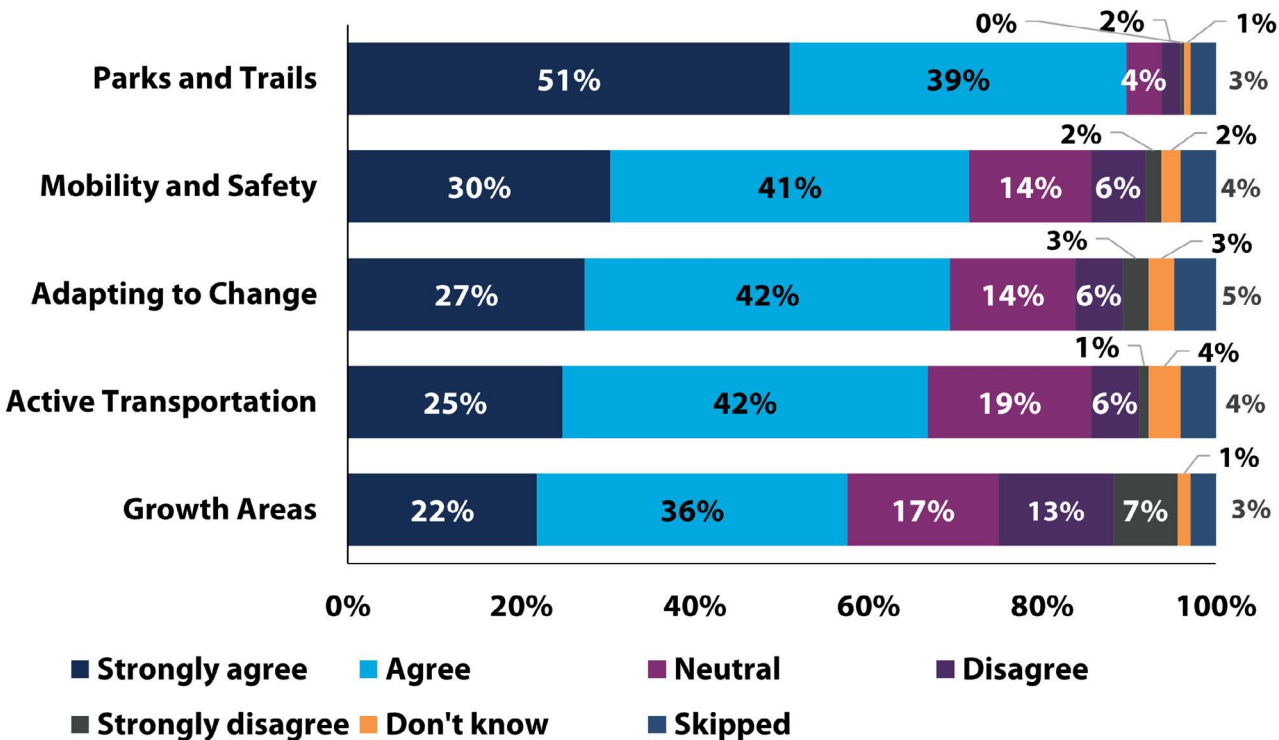
Affordable housing: Some participants wanted to see affordability more directly mentioned, while others were concerned about potential new low-income housing being added to the neighbourhood.

Shared-use paths (SUP): Some participants were concerned about existing and planned SUPs, such as Canada Drive. On the other hand, there were comments in support of more bike and active transportation infrastructure.

Objectives

All of the objectives had over 50% positive responses of agree or strongly agree. The Parks and Trails objective received the highest level of agreement, with 90% of participants strongly agreeing or agreeing. The Growth Areas objective had the lowest level of agreement with 20% of participants selecting disagree or strongly disagree.

What is your level of agreement with the following objectives?



Percentage of Participants
(271 completed, skipped included in graph)

Is there anything you would change or improve in the draft objectives?

98
comments

An overall theme in the comments was a desire to ensure that the quality of life of existing residents was considered in the Neighbourhood Plan and its objectives. Participants wanted to see improvements that were not just focused on additional growth.

Several additional themes included:

Safety: There were concerns about safety, with some participants wanting to see crime, property maintenance, and substance abuse problems addressed before enabling additional growth or density.

Growth & Density: There were some concerns about growth and density and potential impacts, such as traffic, increased noise, and loss of existing character. At the same time, several participants wanted to see more bold plans for adding density throughout the community and expanding the housing types available.

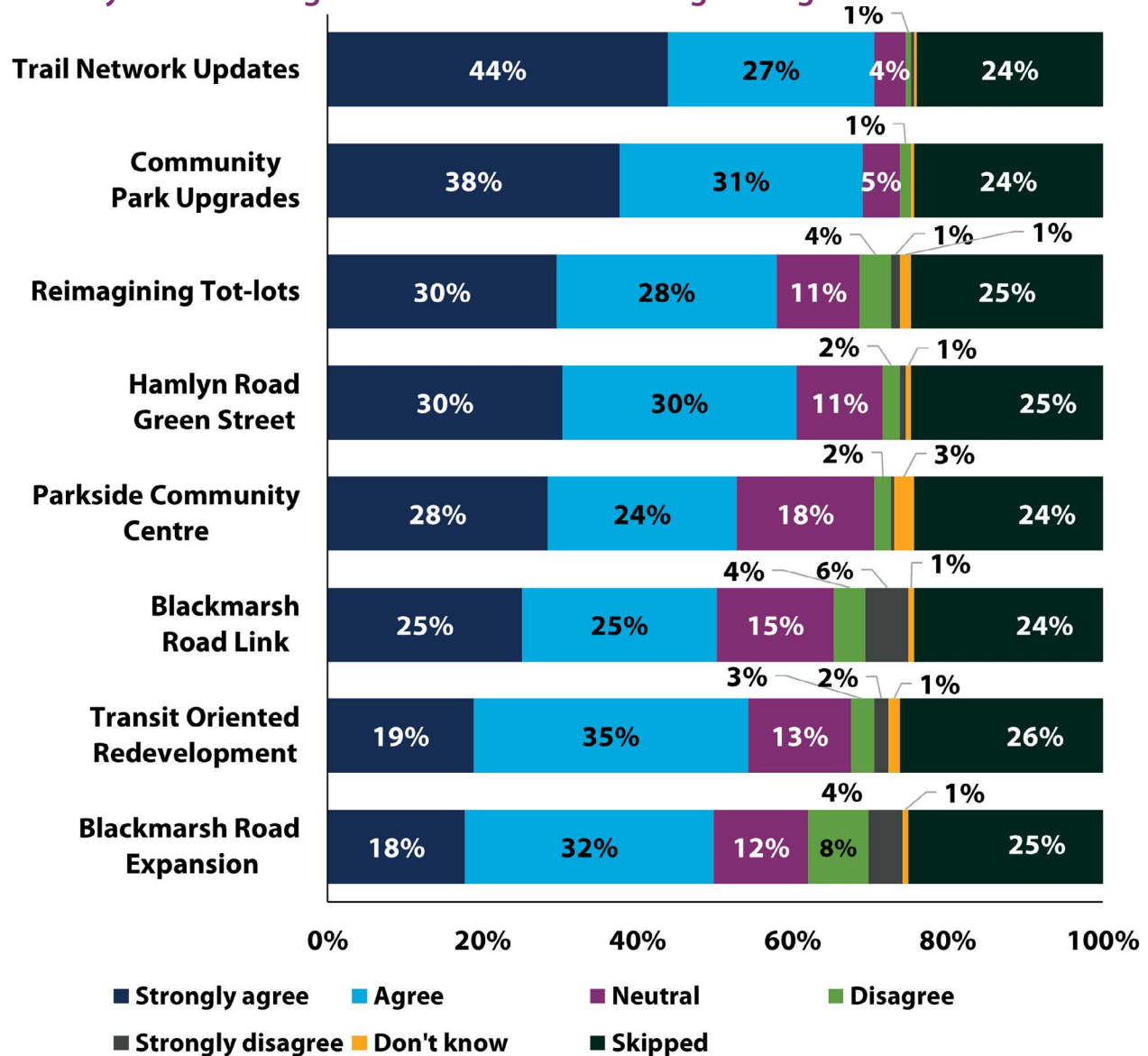
Clarity: There were comments asking for better definitions of certain terms including high density, mobility options, active transportation network, and amenities.

Neighbourhood Strategy

The Neighbourhood Strategy was the main concept engaged on in Phase 2. It was the primary information shared at the smaller in-person popup and focus group sessions. The Strategy included eight preliminary neighbourhood strategies. Approximately 25% of survey respondents skipped this question.

All of the strategies had 50% or higher agreement, with the Trail Network Updates and Community Park Upgrades receiving the highest level of agreement at 70 and 69%. The greatest disagreement was with the two Blackmarsh Road strategies with the Expansion at 12% disagreement and the Link at 10% disagreement.

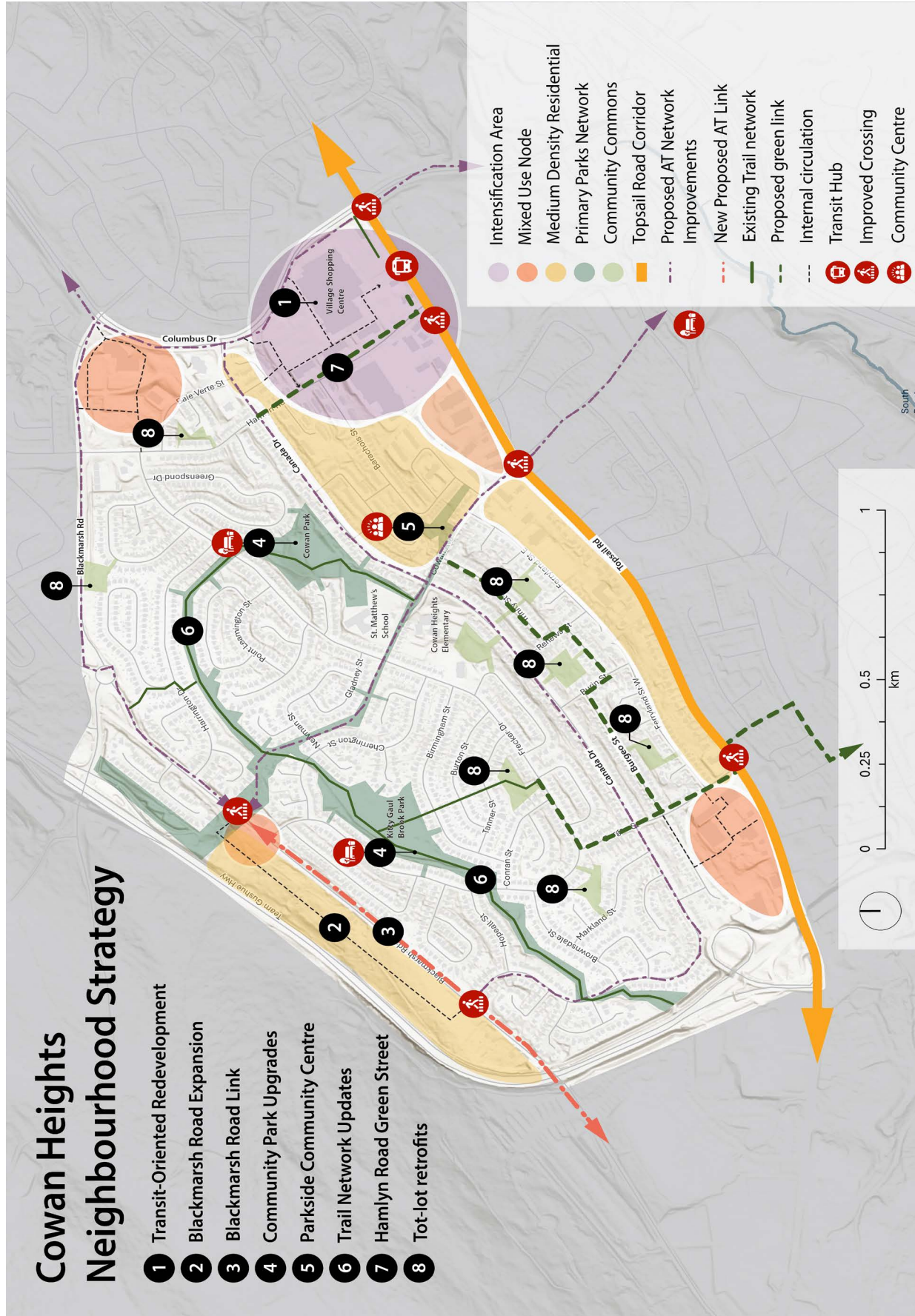
What is your level of agreement with the following strategies?



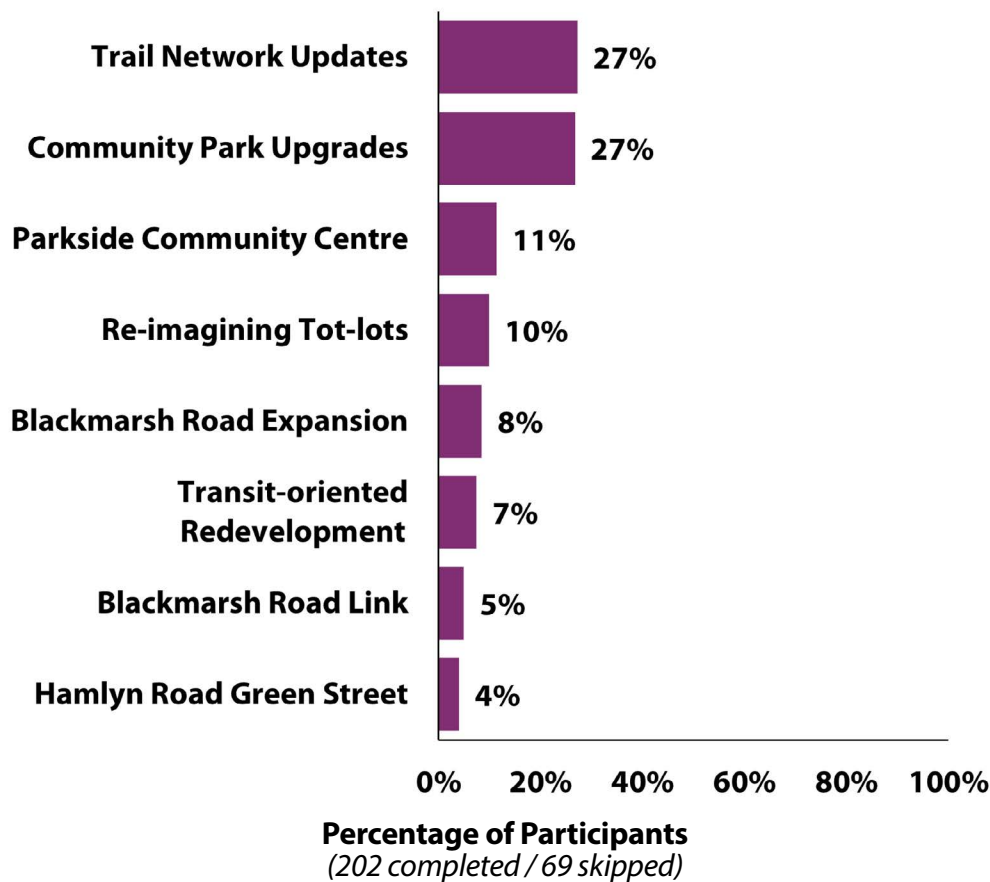
Percentage of Participants
(271 completed)

Cowan Heights Neighbourhood Strategy

- 1 Transit-Oriented Redevelopment
- 2 Blackmarsh Road Expansion
- 3 Blackmarsh Road Link
- 4 Community Park Upgrades
- 5 Parkside Community Centre
- 6 Trail Network Updates
- 7 Hamlyn Road Green Street
- 8 Tot-lot retrofits



Of these strategies, which one do you think will have the most positive impact on the neighbourhood?
Choose your top choice.



When asked about which strategy would have the most positive impact, Trail Network Updates and Community Park Upgrades were most often selected. The Hamlyn Road green street was least selected.

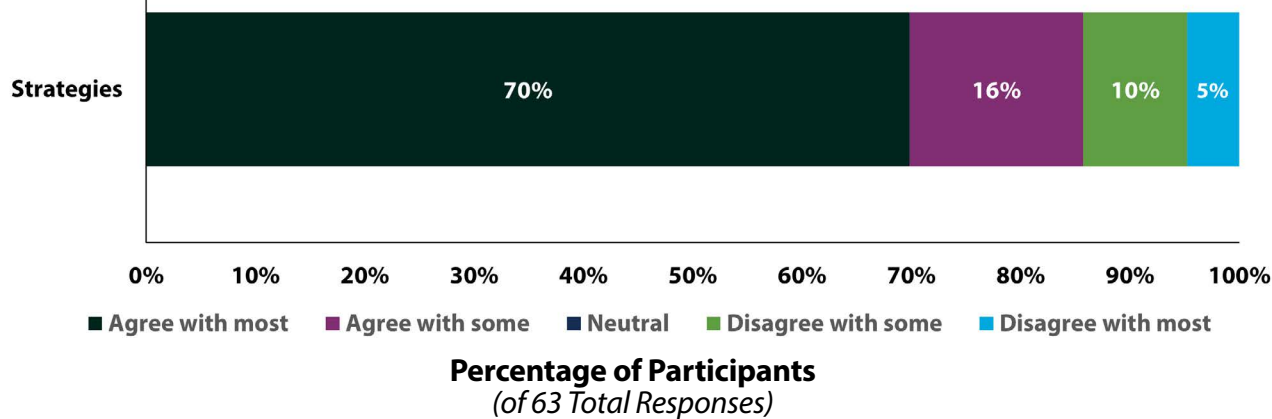
Other (11):

- Desire to see more seniors' housing in the neighbourhood
- Concerns about affordable housing on Blackmarsh Road
- Agreement with density at Village Shopping Centre
- Desire to make trails more accessible
- Desire to see opportunities for youth (programs, basketball, disc golf, etc), including Parkside Community Centre
- Desire for left turn signals getting into Cowan Heights from Columbus and Blackmarsh Roads
- Concerns about the sharp turn onto Canada Drive and loss of the turn lane

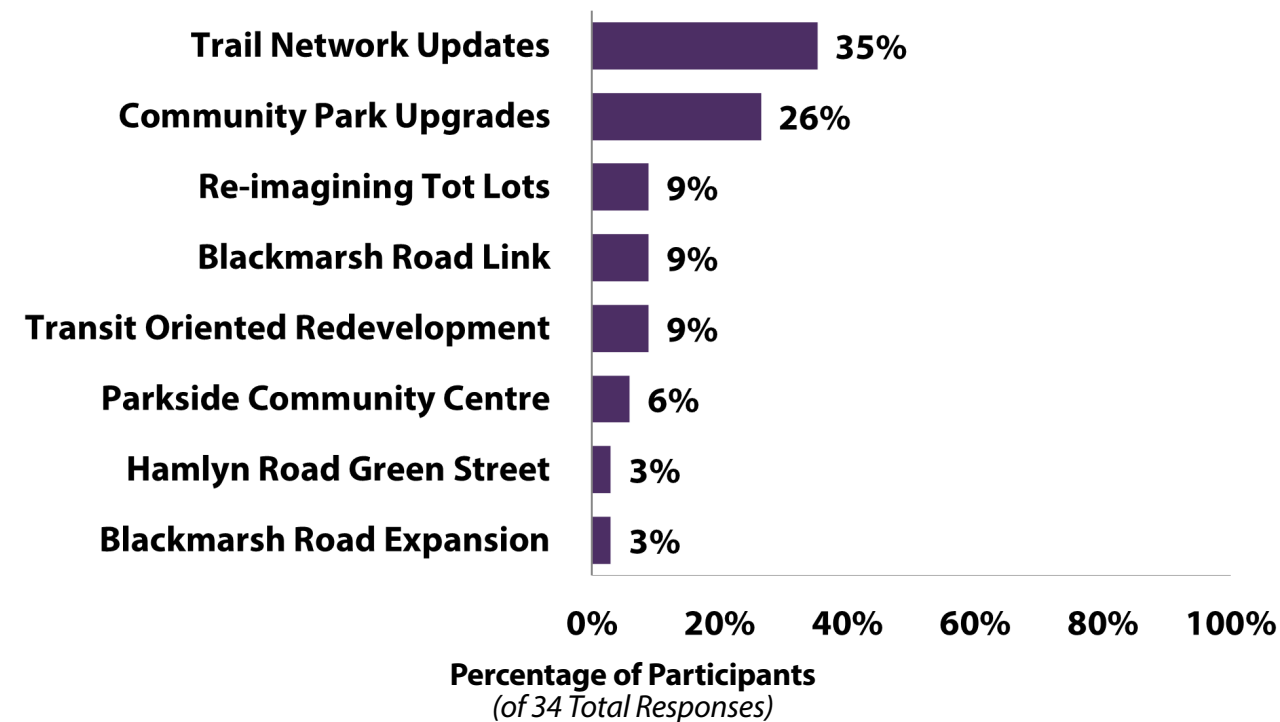
Website Quick Poll

In addition to the full online survey, three questions were posted on the project website for feedback about the Neighbourhood Strategy. The third open question about additional suggestions did not receive any comments. Similar to the survey questions responses, there was a high level of agreement with the strategies, with Trail Network and Community Park Upgrades considered the most positive.

What do you think of the key strategies proposed on the map for Cowan Heights?

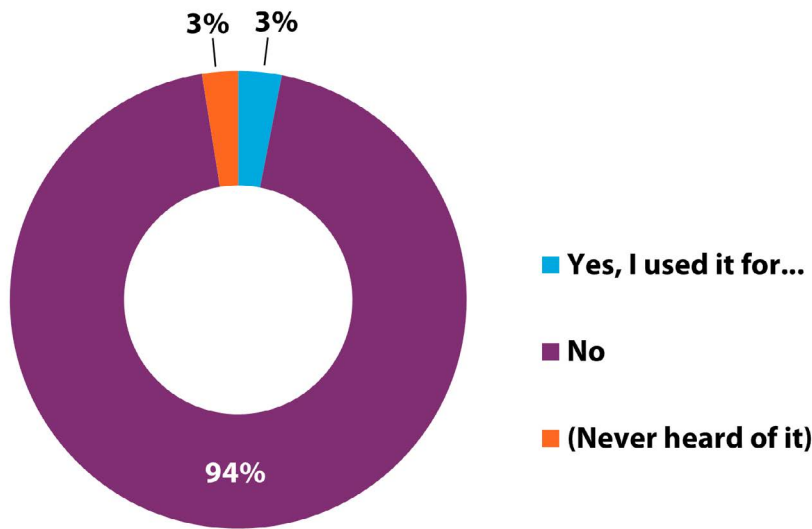


Of the strategies listed above, which one do you think would have the most positive impact on the neighbourhood?



Parkside Community Centre

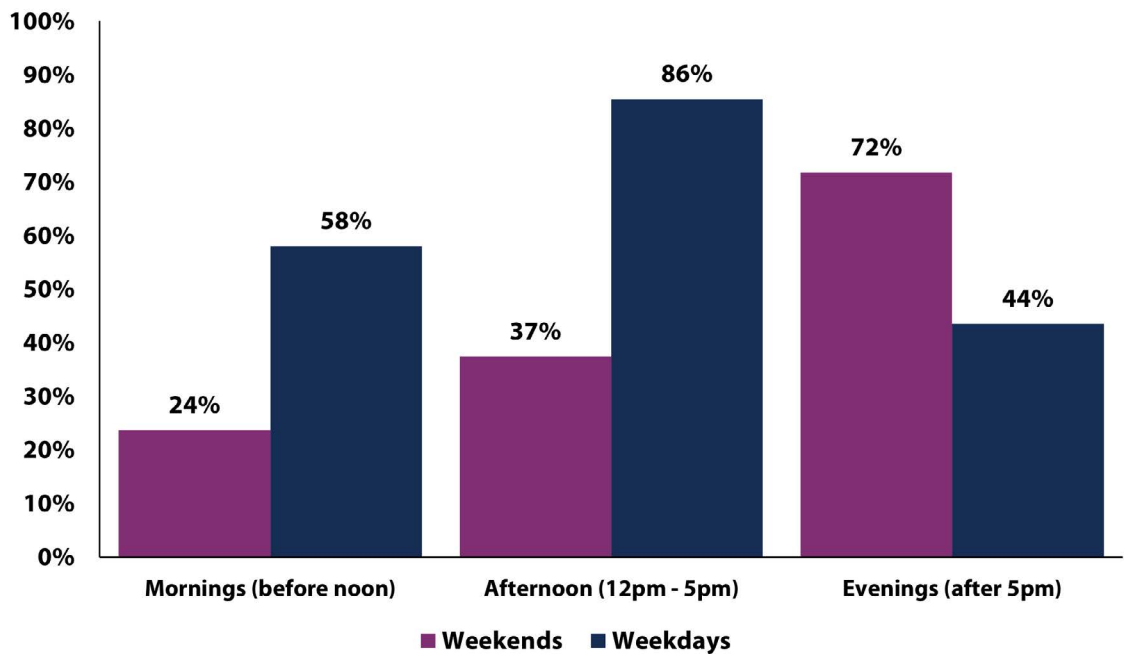
Have you ever used the Parkside Community Centre? If yes, for what purpose?



Only 3% of total participants in the question had ever used the Parkside Community Centre. The main uses were summer camps, baby/bridal showers and Christmas parties. Several comments indicated that participants had never heard of the centre before.

Percentage of Participants (196 completed / 75 skipped)

What days and times would be most convenient for you to access this space?



Percentage of Participants (141 completed / 130 skipped)

The most convenient times selected were weekday afternoons and weekend evenings.

81

comments

What types of activities/programs/ events would you like to see at Parkside Community Centre (in the building or park)?

- rent out for community, family, and cultural events
- neighbourhood block parties / gathering
- networking / fundraising events
- community garden
- dog park
- movie or paint nights
- local music / concerts, public piano
- clubs or leagues (darts, bingo)
- workshops or classes (art, gardening, biking and bike maintenance, music, cooking, crafts, quilting, languages, sewing, knitting, nature identification)
- public information sessions / Councillor update sessions / neighbourhood safety meetings
- youth programs (dances, gym/fitness)
- toddler / baby play nights
- public wifi / quiet working space
- food sharing, community kitchen, potlucks, and BBQs
- seniors programming (garden parties)
- multi-generational activities
- seasonal celebrations and events
- after school care / programming
- recreation and fitness (handball, pickleball, boxing)
- art and craft markets
- ensure the space is for everyone, from all backgrounds
- make washrooms available for use
- need cameras and security
- consider allowing liquor license for events

71

comments

How can we ensure this space is welcoming, useful and serves the diverse needs of the community?

- ensure safety / provide security / lighting
- make accessible
- better bus and bike connections
- advertise and promote use
- ask residents / provide suggestion box / annual survey
- make centre look good / keep it neutral
- keep non-political and non-religious
- LGBTQIA+ inclusive signage
- make appealing to youth
- public wifi
- chairs and tables
- accessible and universal washrooms
- electrical outlets
- not sure it can be saved
- make dog-friendly
- more green space
- provide parking nearby
- bike parking
- provide evening and weekend programming
- friendly and diverse staff
- kitchen
- natural light
- low or no cost
- temperature regulated water
- mural
- all-ages

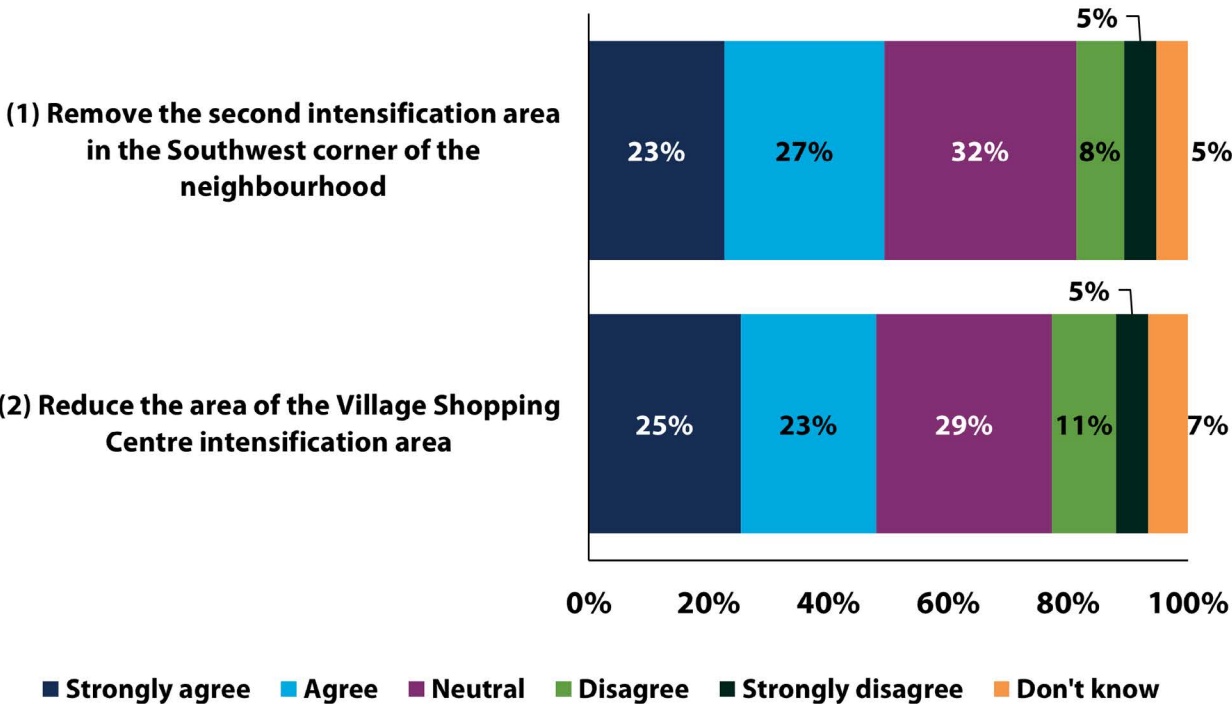
Land Use

In this optional section, participants were asked about recommendations for intensification areas and proposed zoning changes to support the proposed Neighbourhood Strategy.

Intensification Areas

There was generally more agreement than disagreement with the two intensification area recommendations, however there was a higher proportion of neutral responses to the question than other questions in the survey.

What is your level of agreement with the intensification area recommendations?



Percentage of Participants
(75 completed / 196 skipped)

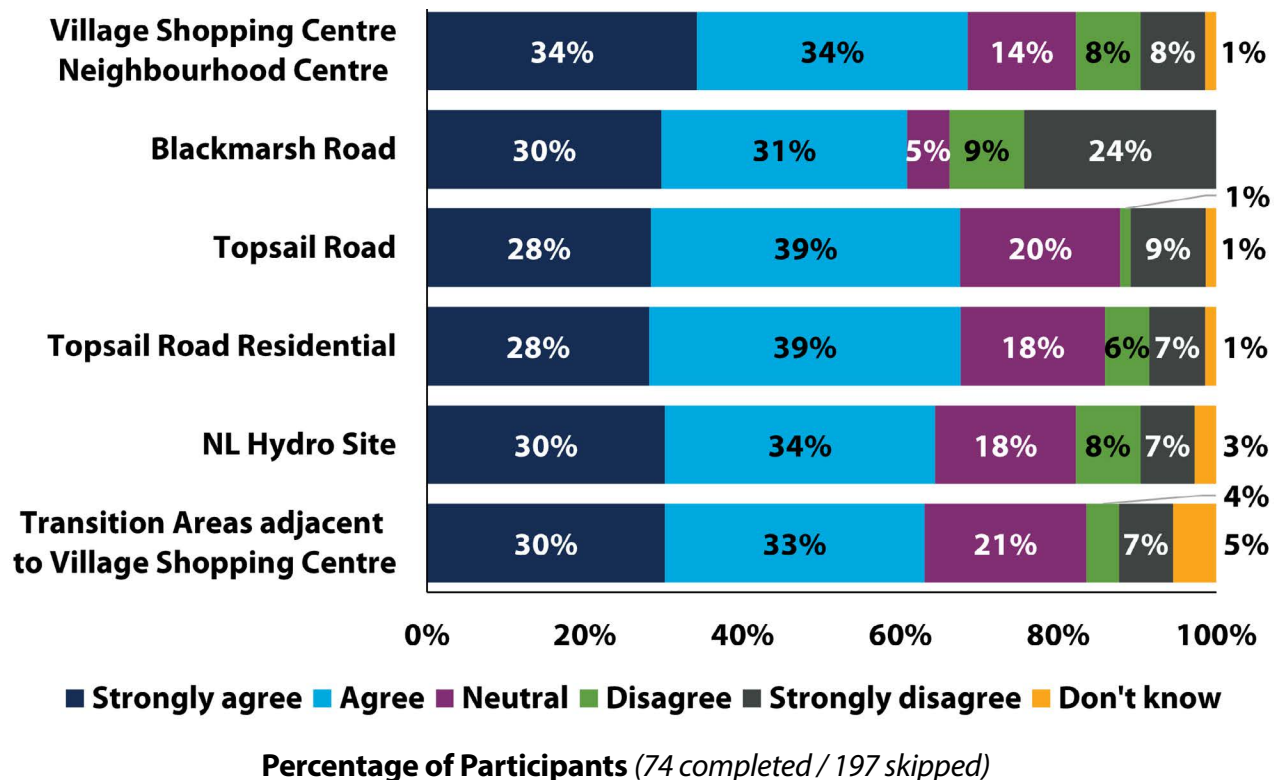
Other: (5)

- Agree with centering around transit hub
- Please explain more clearly
- Think there should be two areas
- Think Village intensification area should still include West properties

Zoning Recommendations

All of the proposed zoning changes received over 50% agree responses. Of the proposed zoning changes, the proposal to change the Village Shopping Centre to a Planned Mixed Development (PMD) district had the highest level of agreement, with combined 68% strongly agree and agree responses.

What is your level of agreement with the recommended zoning changes?

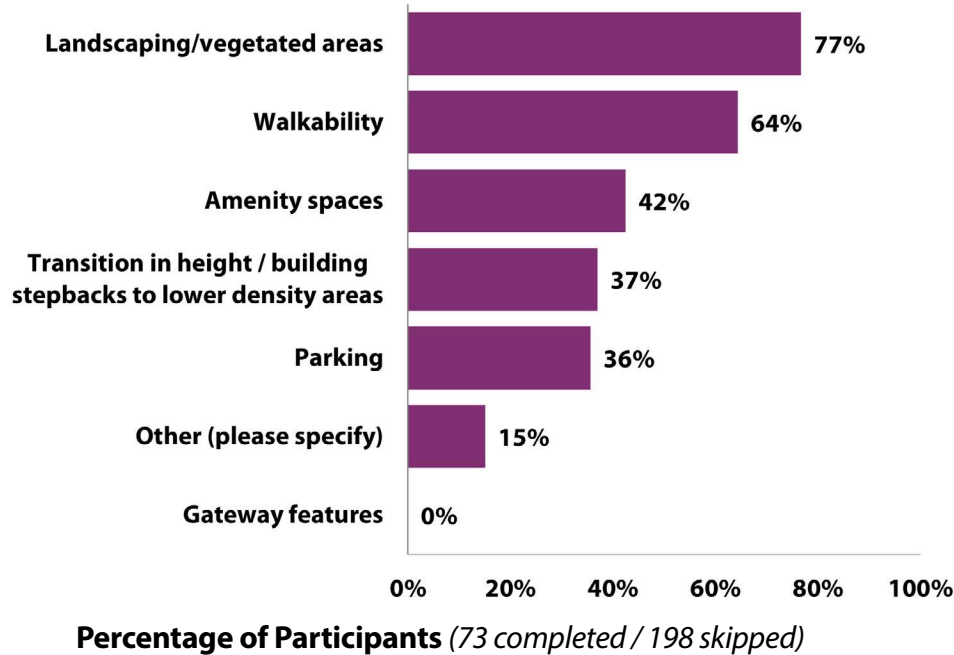


Other (9):

- Desire for single story slab on grade 2 bedroom and 1 garage units for seniors
- Desire for independent living / one storey townhouses
- Desire for commercial services to support new residents
- Concern about dumping at small meadow lot by the Team Gushue Highway
- Desire for triplexes and small apartments
- Support for redevelopment of mall area
- Suggest using abandoned houses

Tied to the recommended zoning changes, there were also two questions about design considerations for mixed use (Planned Mixed Development, Commercial Mixed, and Commercial Local) and higher density residential zones (Apartment 1, 2, and 3). Landscaping and walkability were the main two factors prioritized for both mixed use and residential zones. Gateway features were not seen as a priority in the survey for either zone types.

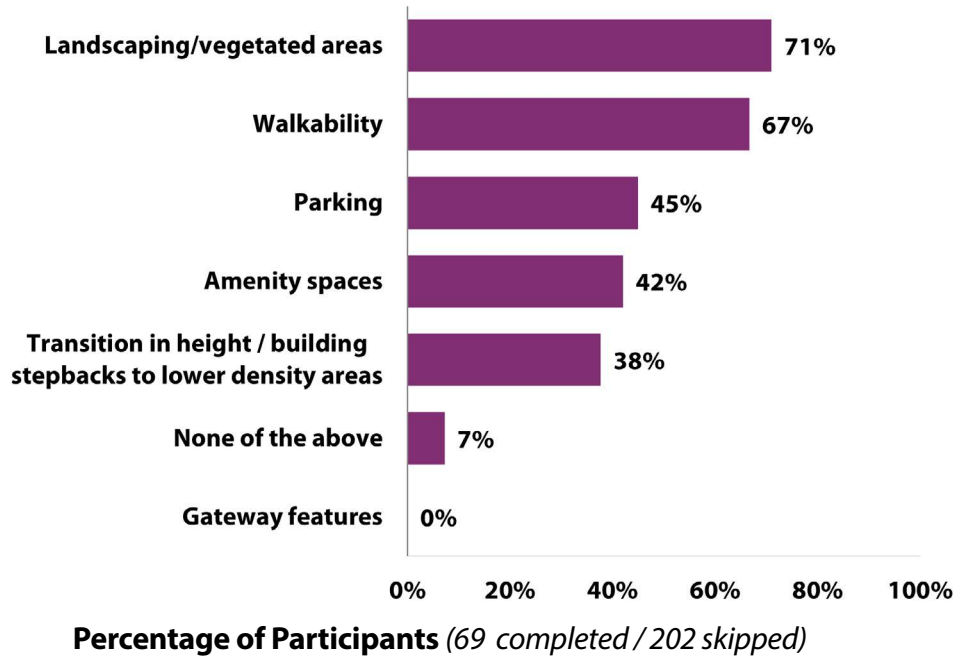
What design considerations should be prioritized for new development in the proposed mixed-use zones (PMD, CM, CL)?



Other: (11)

- physical appeal
- bike access
- bus connections
- accessibility
- traffic
- ensure moderate pace of growth / phasing
- lighting and security

What design considerations should be prioritized for new development in the proposed residential zones (A1, A2, A3)?



Other: (11)

- green space
- accessibility
- traffic
- don't want to see higher density
- standard of living
- safety, lighting, and security
- allowing single detached dwellings
- concern about residential development on Blackmarsh Road

Mobility

The mobility section focused on the prioritization of improvements at intersections, the transit hub, and along trails.

Intersections

Frecker Drive and Blackmarsh Road was the top selected intersection and Topsail Road and Burgeo Street was the least selected as a priority, however the results do not show a substantive difference in prioritization between the five intersections.

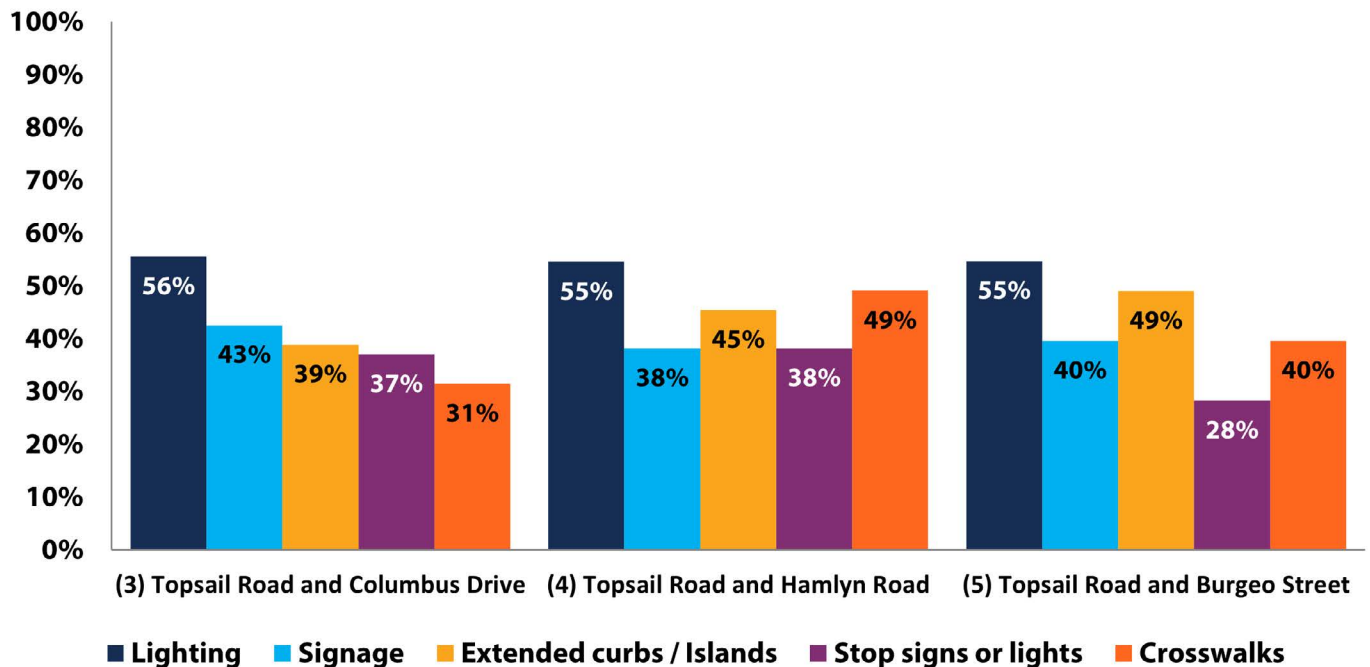
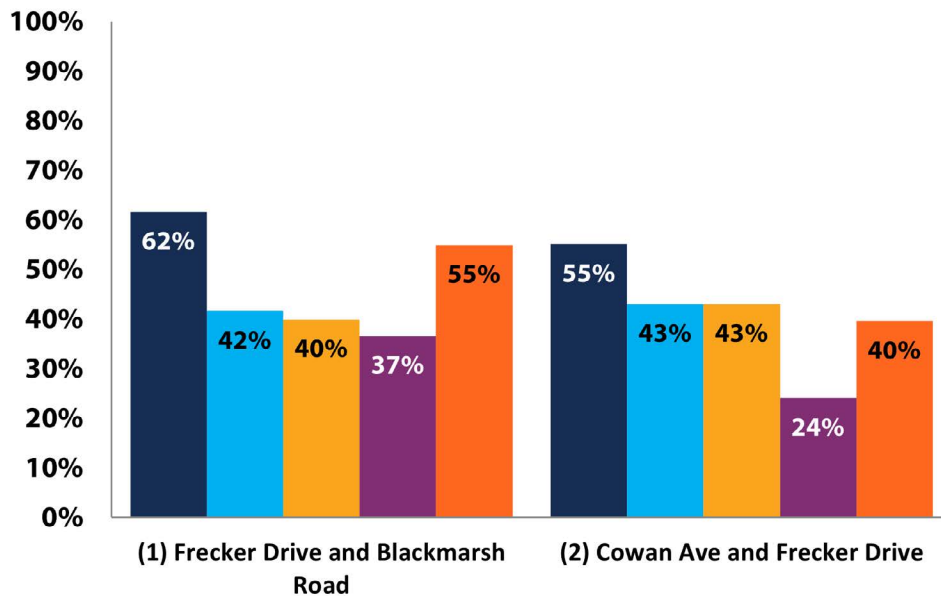
Lighting was the highest selected improvement across all five intersections. Crosswalks were a priority for Frecker Drive and Blackmarsh Road and for Topsail Road and Hamlyn Road intersections.

Which intersections should be prioritized for improvements? Rank from highest priority to lowest priority.

- | | |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1st | Frecker Drive and Blackmarsh Road |
| 2nd | Topsail Road and Hamlyn Road |
| 3rd | Cowan Ave and Frecker Drive |
| 4th | Topsail Road and Columbus Drive |
| 5th | Topsail Road and Burgeo Street |

(70 completed / 201 skipped)

At each of these intersections, what do you think needs to be improved?



Percentage of Participants (67 completed / 204 skipped)

Transit Hub

For the transit hub, the top three priorities were better shelters, safe waiting spaces, and better lighting. The lowest priority was washroom access. It is assumed by the project team that this may be because there is already access through the Village Shopping Centre.

How would you prioritize the following transit hub improvements? Rank from highest to lowest priority.

1st	Better shelters
2nd	Safe waiting spaces
3rd	Better lighting
4th	Better seating
5th	More security presence
6th	Better transit signage
7th	Washroom access

(69 completed / 202 skipped)

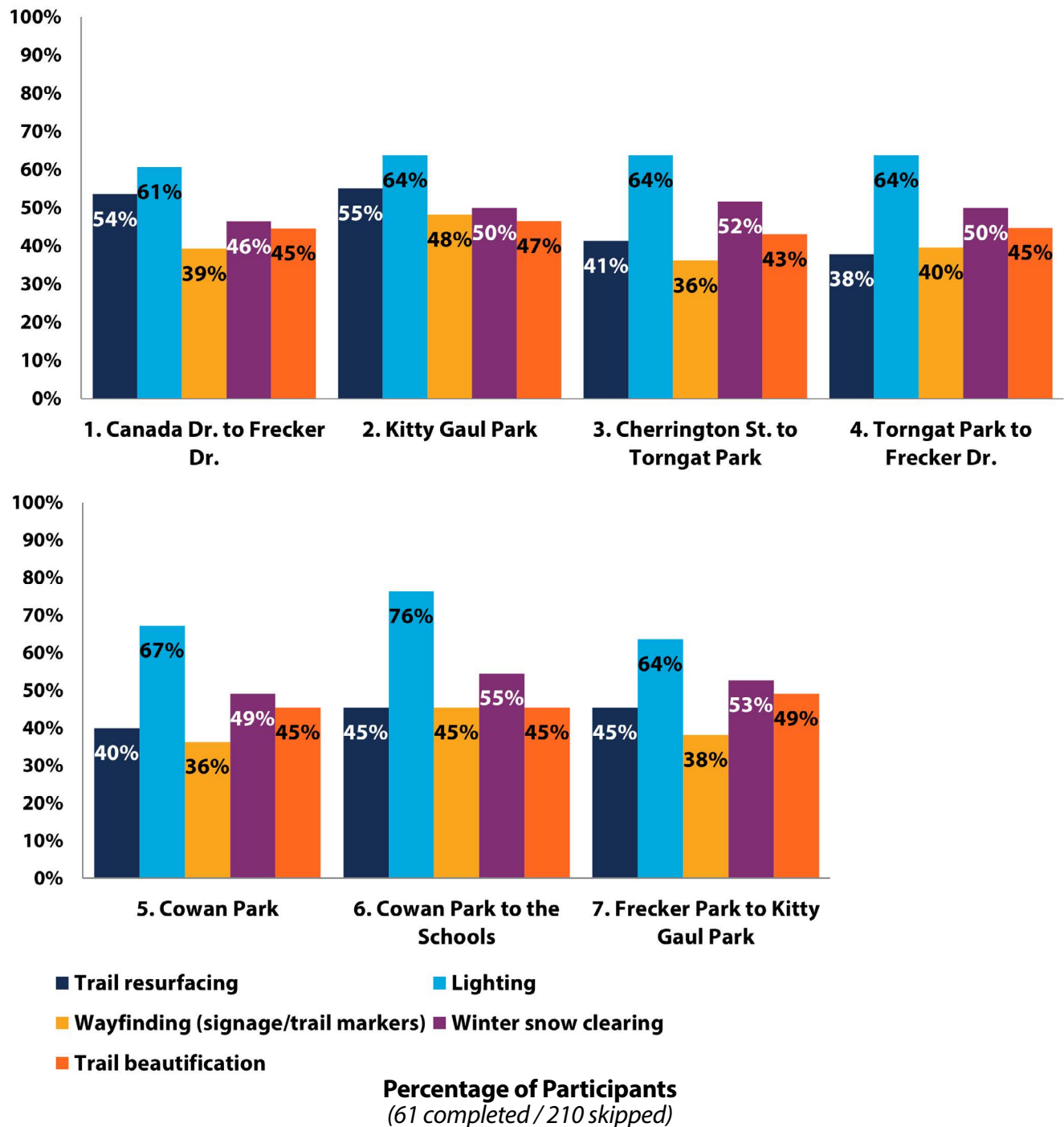
Trails

Similarly to the intersection and transit hub priorities, lighting was the top priority for trail improvements across all identified trail sections. Resurfacing was another priority for Canada Drive to Frecker Drive as well as Kitty Gaul Park. Snow clearing was the second priority for the Cowan Park to the schools trail section.

Other mobility comments (10):

- Topsail Road needs better and safer separated spaces for pedestrians and bikes
- Topsail Road and Columbus Road intersection needs to be made safer to cross
- Promote safe biking and walking routes
- Frecker Drive and Blackmarsh Road needs better active transportation infrastructure and a sidewalk
- Need speed bumps to calm traffic speeds on Frecker Drive and Canada Drive
- Need a crosswalk for the path at Cherrington
- Hamlyn Road needs another crosswalk
- Need a connection between the trail system and Marie's on Frecker Drive / Blackmarsh Road
- Connect shared-use path on Canada Drive to T'Railway
- Need easier routes up the hill
- Need better transit connections to the hospital and north-south
- Link trails to Mount Pearl trail network
- Parking becomes a challenge in winter because of snow clearing

Which trail sections are most in need of the following improvements?



Other (19):

- Bars at trail entrances to prevent ATVs / motorbikes
- More poop bags, garbage bags (winter too)
- Crosswalks at trail intersections with streets
- Maintenance, cleaning, invasives removal
- Security / enforcement
- Connect lower Cowan Heights and Canada Drive to trails
- Gravel versus asphalt surfacing

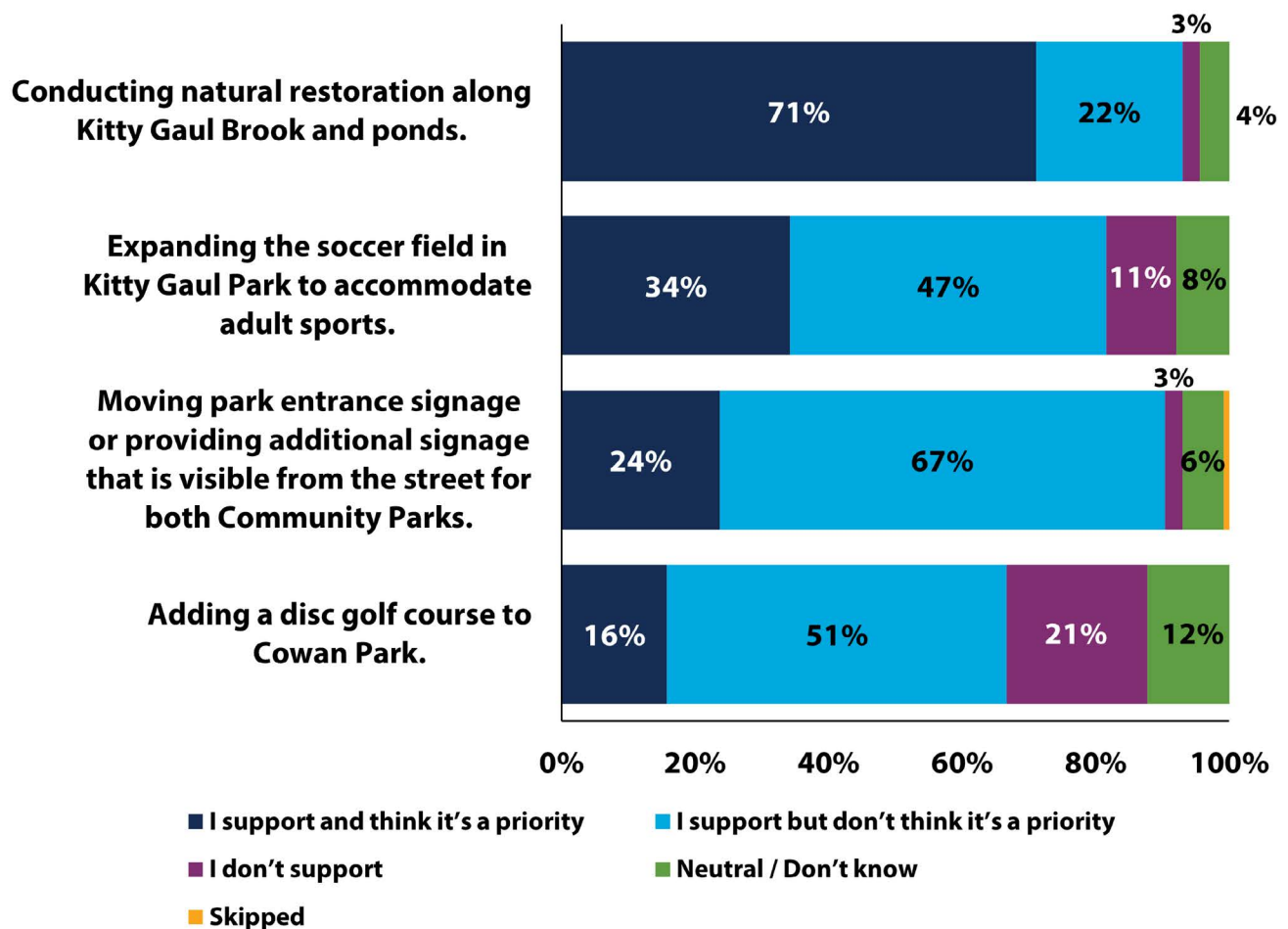
Parks & Recreation

The parks and recreation section focused on prioritizing Community Park recommendations and which Tot Lot parks should be updated first.

Community Parks

All recommendations received over 60% support overall. For Community Parks, conducting natural restoration along Kitty Gaul Brook was the highest supported and priority recommendation, with over 71% of participants saying they support and think its a priority. Adding disc golf to Cowan park was a lower priority, however 67% still supported the recommendation.

Which park improvements should be prioritized?



Percentage of Participants
(114 completed / 157 skipped)

Tot-lots

Of the twelve tot-lot parks listed, Markland Street Park, Frecker Drive Park, and Ferryland Street West Park were the highest prioritized. Gros Morne Park was ranked as the lowest priority for updates. Across all Tot-lots, naturalized areas and trees was the highest priority update.

Which park improvements should be prioritized for updates first? Rank in order of priority.

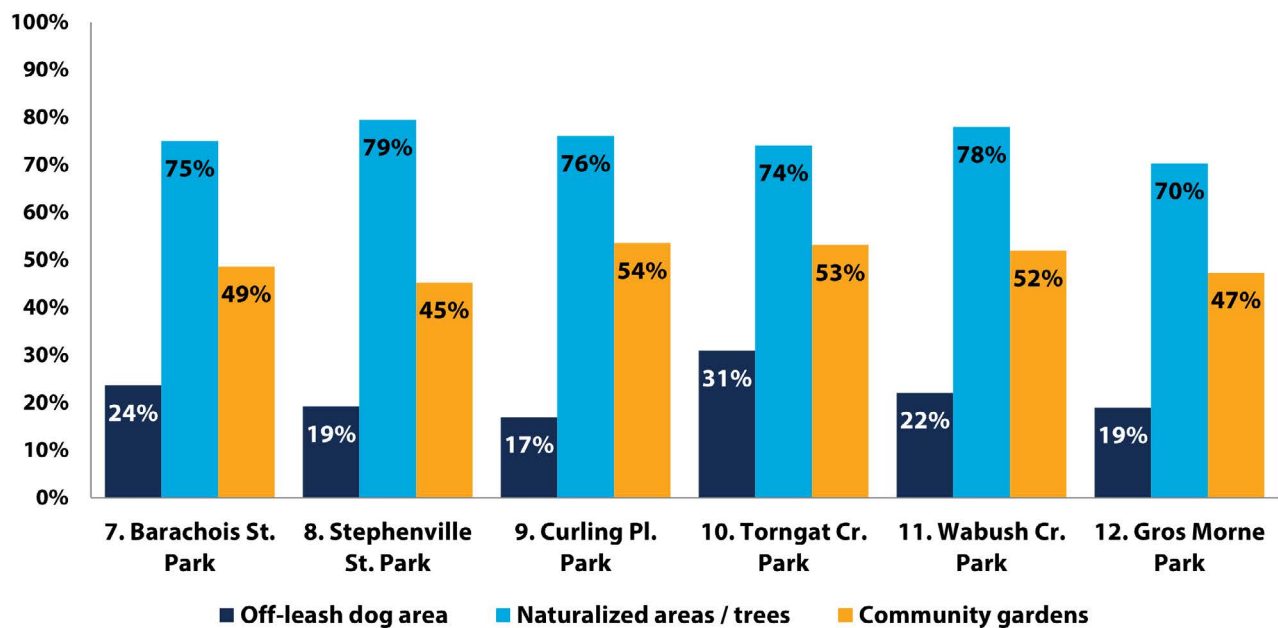
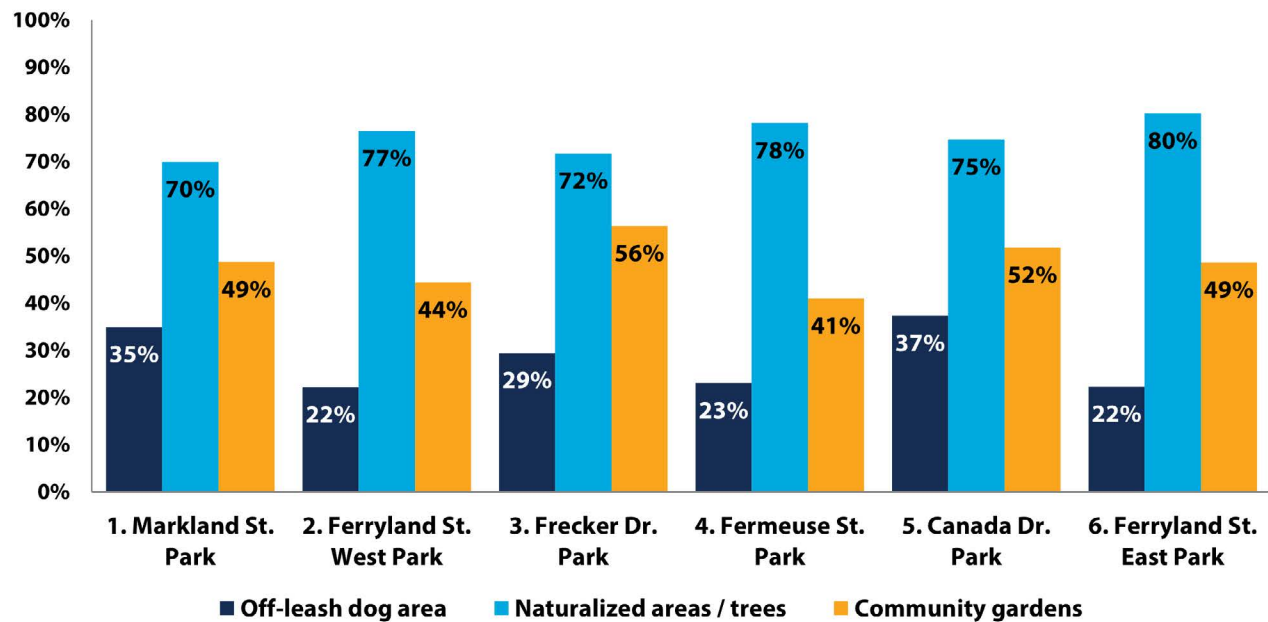
1st	Markland St. Park	7th	Barachois St. Park
2nd	Frecker Dr. Park	8th	Stephenville St. Park
3rd	Ferryland St. West Park	9th	Torngat Cr. Park
4th	Canada Dr. Park	10th	Curling Pl. Park
5th	Fermeuse St. Park	11th	Wabush Cr. Park
6th	Ferryland St. East Park	12th	Gros Morne Park

(95 completed / 176 skipped)

Other (39):

- Concerned about safety and Sharps in parks
- Love community gardens idea
- Keep the playground but add signage about new additions
- Need interpretive signage about the River in Bowring Park
- Add more basketball half courts
- Need a disc golf course
- Suggest working with the Church to do more community programming
- More picnic tables and seating in Tot Lots
- Add pickleball and shuffleboard
- Add washrooms to Kitty Gaul Park
- More lighting in parks
- Provide outdoor fitness equipment like a pull up bar

Which park improvements should be prioritized for updates first? Rank in order of priority.



Percentage of Participants (99 completed / 172 skipped)

Community Activation

19
comments

Ten community activation ideas were presented for feedback. Additionally, participants were encouraged to provide their own ideas. All ten proposed activations received over 83% support responses, however participation in the question was only 23% of the total survey participants.

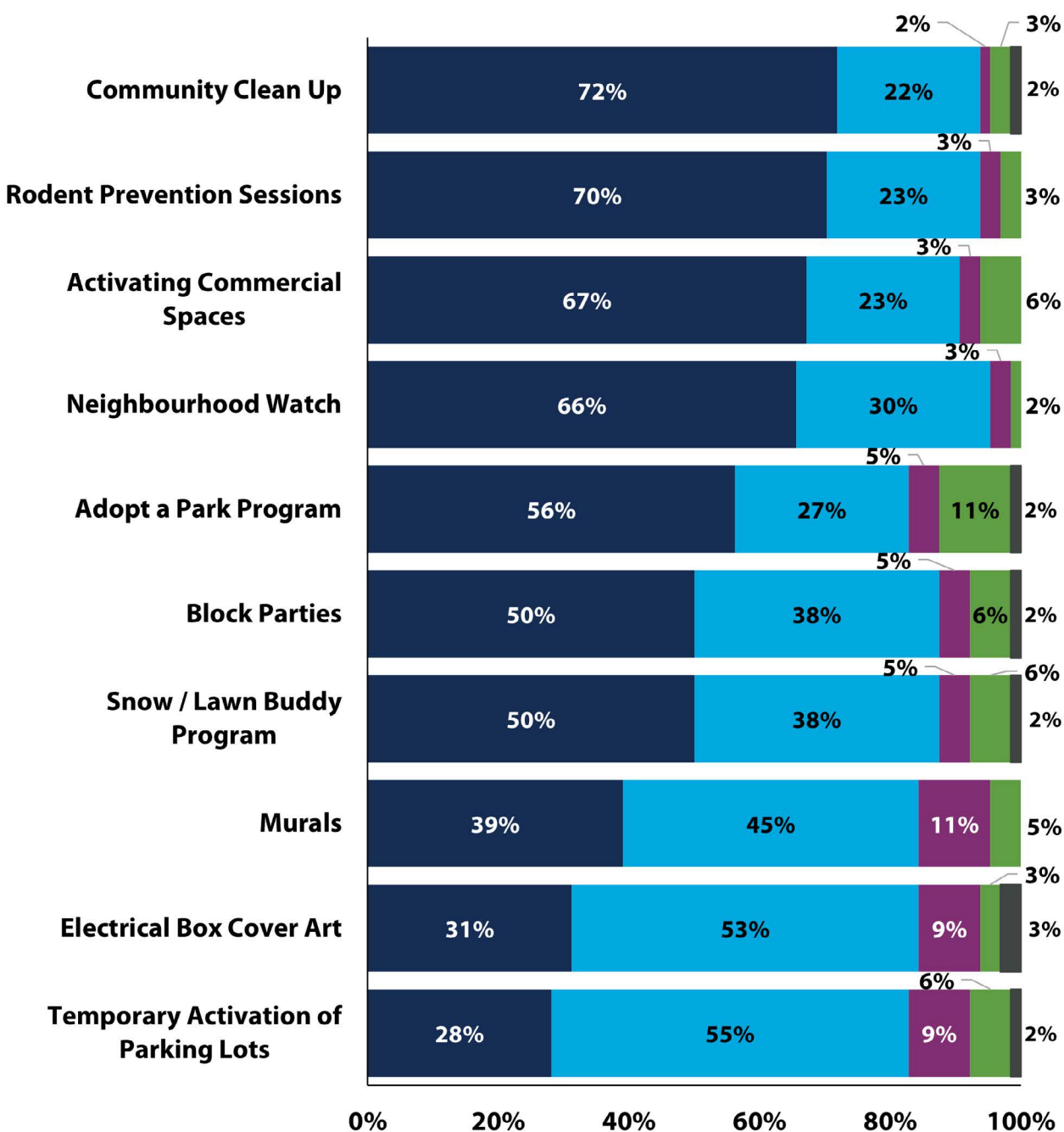
Of the ten proposed activations, the top priorities were community cleanup and rodent prevention sessions, suggesting that participants were most interested in activities that promote community cleanliness. The lowest priority was temporary activation of parking lots.

Additional ideas:

- community gardening workshops and volunteer events
- partnering with non-profit organizations / YMCA / the library on programming
- local pub / cafe
- open park days
- adding an amphitheater in Cowan Park
- trail snow clearance
- little free libraries
- more public art / murals or graffiti wall
- incubator spaces for startup businesses
- need Sharp disposal/strategy and safe injection site.
- affordable food program
- bike repair station and racks at L'Ecole St Matthews
- empower locals
- walk the trails program like Mount Pearl

There was one concern about the adopt a park program being a City responsibility rather than something volunteers should do and a concern about liability insurance for block parties.

What is your level of support for the following community activation ideas?



■ I support and think it's a priority

■ I support but don't think it's a priority

■ I don't support

■ I have no opinion / don't know

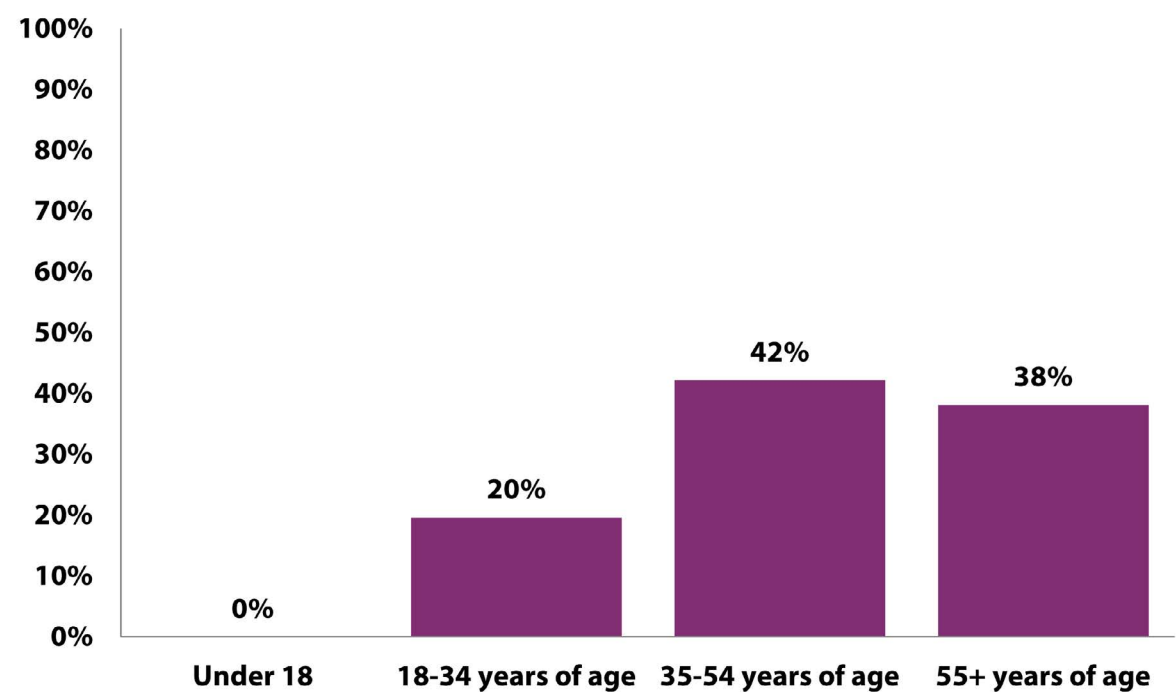
■ Skipped

Percentage of Participants (64 completed / 207 skipped)

Survey Demographics

The following demographics information is drawn from the survey results. Respondents were asked to share their demographic information if they were willing. Demographic data helps the project team to better understand who respondents were and to ensure the voices of the whole community are being reflected in engagement.

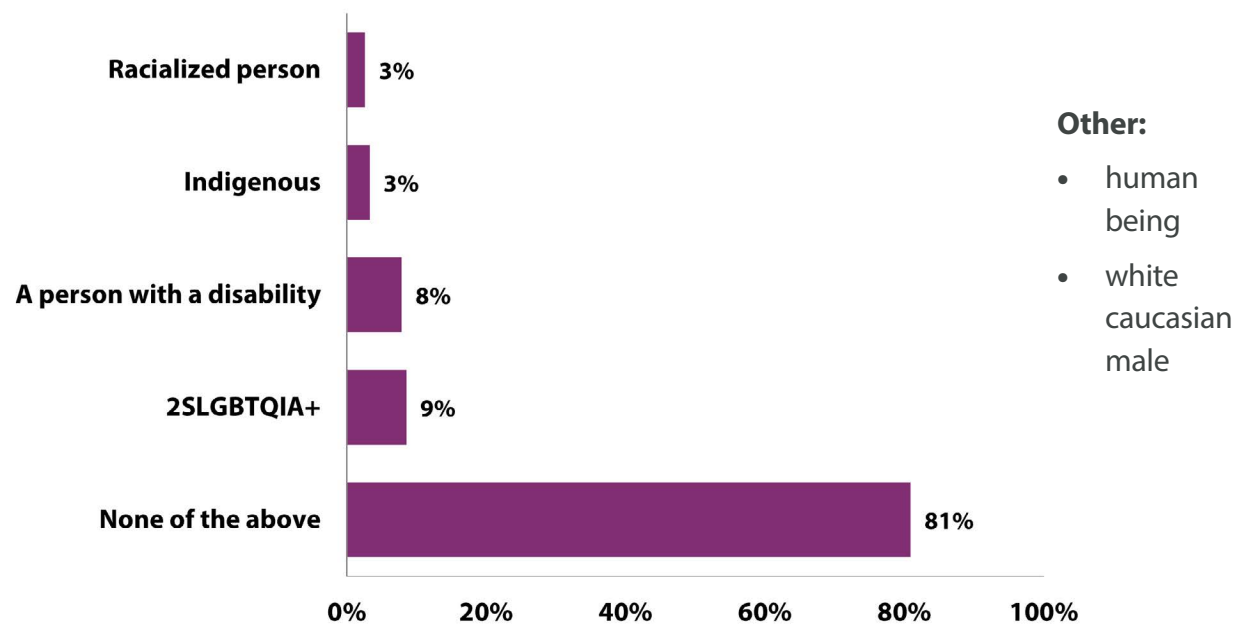
What is your age bracket?



Percentage of Participants (171 completed / 100 skipped)

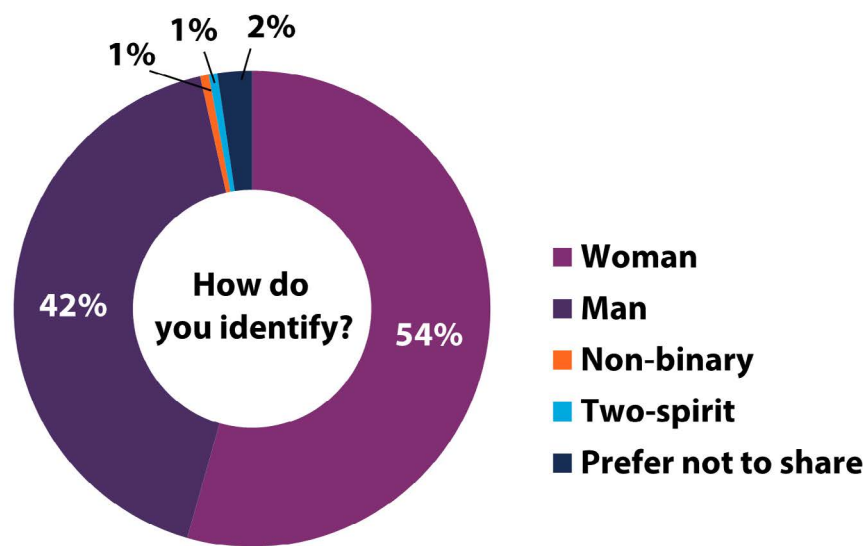
Most survey participants were over the age of 34 with an almost even split between 35-54 and 55+ age groups. There was no representation from anyone who was under 18 years old in the survey.

Do you identify as any of the following?



Percentage of Participants (152 completed / 119 skipped)

How do you identify?



There were more female survey participants than any other gender identified.

Percentage of Participants (171 completed / 100 skipped)

Interested Parties Summary

In addition to the broad public engagement opportunities, the project team met with various community organizations and groups representing different interests in both the Cowan Heights and University areas. A general overview presentation was provided to groups about the proposed Neighbourhood Strategy for each Neighbourhood, then participants were asked to provide feedback on the recommendations from their organization's perspective. The following groups participated in Phase 2 engagement:

Council Committees	Organizations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustainable & Active Mobility Advisory Committee• Building Safer Communities Steering Committee• Seniors' Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Royal Newfoundland Constabulary• Pickleball NL• NL Hydro• NL Health Services• Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries• Memorial University• Newfoundland and Labrador Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• C.A. Pippy Park Commission• Metrobus• St. John's Women's Centre• Ordinary Spokes• St. John's Farmers' Market• St. James United Church

The following summary provides an overview of the key themes across all of the focus groups and interviews.

Safety

Several safety concerns and considerations were discussed in the focus groups and interviews. There were concerns about increasing crime and particularly the impacts of drug use in the community. Several participants suggested the need for more Sharps disposal and increased security in certain areas of the neighbourhood, such as at the transit hub, near the Parkside Community Centre, and near the schools.

Traffic safety was another concern, particularly with student crossings at the elementary and high schools. Additional traffic calming on Canada

Drive was proposed and better crossings at Topsail Road.

To address some of the safety concerns and perceptions in the neighbourhood, several participants suggested additional lighting in public spaces and at intersections as well as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) when planning any new development or public spaces.

Density and Housing

Generally, most participants were supportive of the overall neighbourhood strategy and particularly the transit-oriented redevelopment proposed at Village Shopping Centre. Adding additional residents to that area was seen to help support businesses and several organization initiatives, such as the library (which is planning to move into the mall), NL Health Service's proposed new urgent care facility on Topsail Road, and supportive housing provision.

There was a desire from several participants to see additional medium density and more affordable smaller unit housing incorporated into the neighbourhood to support seniors' downsizing and also residents moving from temporary to more permanent housing.

Mobility

There was general support for mobility improvements to the neighbourhood, particularly to support residents who do not have access to a private car. Some specific improvements that were discussed included support for upgrades to Blackmarsh Road, including road resurfacing and the provision of a separated sidewalk and active transportation link, as well as the need for better crosswalks and more trees on Hamlyn Road to create a better connection to commercial areas. There was also a desire for improvements on Topsail Road, such as protected bike lanes on both sides of the road, and extending the active transportation corridor along Columbus Drive.

Transit was also discussed by various groups. There are currently plans to upgrade the existing bus shelters at the Village Shopping Centre transit hub. Some additional requested improvements to the transit hub were increased lighting and security. There have also been some initiatives to

increase seniors' use of transit, but there has not been significant uptake.

Parks and Community Activation

One of the key suggestions from participants was to provide better wayfinding for existing amenities, particularly park entrances and the Parkside Community Centre.

There was support for reactivating the Community Centre and interest from several groups to participate in programming the space for activities like community meals, summer camps, and popup events. Several groups did not know about the Community Centre.

There were some conversations about specific amenities in parks. One flag raised about Tot-lots was the need to ensure play spaces and seniors' areas are separate from off leash dog areas. There is also a growing need for more informal field spaces for adult programming, such as half size soccer fields, which could fit in a Tot-lot space.

There was a desire to see follow-through on the conversion of the existing Cowan Park tennis courts into pickleball courts. Another idea was the incorporation of community BBQ spaces for outdoor gatherings.

Indigenous Engagement

The project team met for a second time with staff members from First Light to share a meal and reflect on learnings from the first conversation and how they have been incorporated into the draft Neighbourhood Strategies. The session started with a brief overview of the Neighbourhood Strategy for each neighbourhood, then led into a discussion about the proposed recommendations and if they respond to Indigenous Community needs effectively.

The key themes from the conversation were about the value of Indigenous representation in public spaces, opportunities for additional recreation and programming, and housing and mobility needs.

The project team committed to having an ongoing dialogue with First Light staff as the Neighbourhood Plans are finalized.

Indigenous Representation

The project team heard from First Light staff that there is currently very little representation of Indigenous culture in the Province. Other places and cities do this much better through public art and naming. There are many opportunities within neighbourhoods to increase representation, especially through public art and naming.

Parkside Community Centre

First Light staff were excited about the opportunities presented by the reactivation of the Parkside Community Centre. This space could become a great place for Indigenous art, learning, and representation as well as other community services that would benefit Indigenous community members, such as food drop-in programs.

Parks and Play

Parks are important spaces in Cowan Heights, not just for fitness and activity, but for mindfulness and healing. Several opportunities were discussed for programming park spaces, such as dog parks, exercise equipment, community gardens, medicinal or reconciliation gardens, and mindfulness spaces (like the labyrinth in Bowring Park). It was suggested that there are more opportunities for outdoor play needed in the area, for

youth and also adults. Some ideas were skate parks, a splash pad, and adult play equipment. Additionally there are opportunities to incorporate more native and medicinal plants into landscaping.

First Light staff also brought up the need to consider different functions for different parts of the overall parks network. Some of First Light's clients and other community members cannot be near a school or a playground. There need to be safe spaces for both.

Housing

Overall, the project team heard that there needs to be more housing and that the housing needs to be affordable. There is a need in the community for small units like studio apartments and tiny homes. In general, First Light Staff were supportive of the Neighbourhood Strategies to increase housing and density at the Village Shopping Centre and along Blackmarsh Road.

Mobility and Transit

Accessible transportation and better access to transit were key mobility themes in the discussion with First Light staff. There was a desire to see better street and sidewalk cleaning and more attention to accessibility along sidewalks and paths.

There were several suggested improvements to the existing transit hub proposed, including a Sharps disposal, additional security, better bus shelters, public lockers, a park and ride, and more seating. Additionally, the team heard that the buses do not currently go far enough for a lot of First Light clients. A lot of housing is just outside of bus service or is not frequent enough and taxis are too expensive. First Light staff suggested re-assessing transit connections, including to Conception Bay South.

Next Steps

Thank you everyone who participated in this engagement. The findings from this phase of engagement will inform the creation of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan will be released publicly in fall 2025 prior to being presented to Council.

Project updates and information will continue to be posted to the project website at engagestjohns.ca/cowan-heights-neighbourhood-plan.



**Help us plan the future
of Cowan Heights**

Learn more and have your say!





ST. JOHN'S