

# Upper Hammonds Plains Community Action Planning is underway

On August 20, 2026 more than 50 residents gathered at the Upper Hammonds Plains Community Centre for our first Upper Hammonds Community Action Plan public engagement event.

The Upper Hammonds Plains Community Action Planning process is being led by the Halifax Regional Municipality in partnership with the Upper Hammonds Plains Visioning Committee (UHPVC). The UHPVC is composed of the Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust (UHPCLT), Emmanuel Baptist Church, the Upper Hammonds Plains Community Development Association and the Melvin Land Tract Protection Society.

Participants shared a meal together and heard presentations from UHPCLT, the Halifax Regional Municipality's African Nova Scotian Community Action Program (ANSCAP) Team, and Connor Wallace of zzap Architecture and Planning, who is engaged by the UHPCLT to support their community-led development projects.

The purpose of the event was to engage the public on proposed changes to planning rules in Upper Hammonds Plains to enable development by the UHPCLT on two community-owned sites, Taylor Lake Commons at Emmanuel Baptist Church and Little Pockwock.



These sites are being prioritized by the UHPVC as part of Part A of the Upper Hammonds Plains Plan Review process which is focused on defined new Community Nodes.

While the event focused on policy changes proposed for two community-owned sites, other concerns were also raised regarding growth and development in Upper Hammonds Plains. The top themes of feedback were:

## **1. Emergency egress and regional road connectivity**

This was the most consistently recurring theme. Residents strongly support creating an additional route out of the community for emergency evacuation and to improve connectivity.

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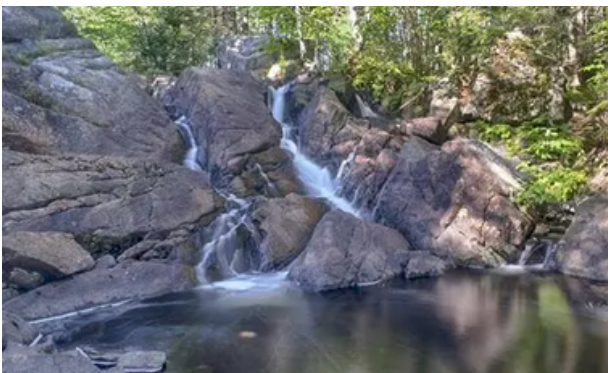
## Top themes continued

At the same time, support for an egress route came with an important condition: it should protect existing residents without opening adjacent land to additional development. Specifically, in regard to a connection between Upper Hammonds Plains and the rear of Westwood Hills, community members consistently expressed concern that a new road could: facilitate additional development on surrounding privately owned lands, increase traffic, and transform Upper Hammonds Plains from a destination community into a through-route.

While participants recognized the potential value of improved emergency access, many indicated that they would be more supportive if the connection were limited to emergency access and explicitly protected from being used to enable or justify additional private development, with adjacent development not relied upon to fund its construction.

In this context, some community members appeared more supportive of a secondary connection between White Birch Hills and Indigo Shores, connecting White Hills Run to McCabe Lake Drive through the most feasible alignment. This option was viewed as having the potential to provide additional emergency access and egress for Upper Hammonds Plains and neighbouring communities including White Birch Hills, Maplewood and Glen Arbour, while reducing development pressure and helping maintain Upper Hammonds Plains as a destination rather than a traffic thoroughfare.

**Key takeaway:** Build a functional emergency exit, but separate emergency safety improvements from development-enabling infrastructure.



Pockwock Falls photo courtesy of UHPCLT



Emmanuel Baptist Church, image courtesy of: Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust

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## 2. Subdivision of family land and multiple dwellings on a property

Eight individual responses concerned the ability of historic community members to subdivide and develop privately owned family land. This would allow historic African Nova Scotian residents to practice homesteading, which is a traditional African Nova Scotian way of life. Residents said current frontage, subdivision and zoning requirements make it difficult to provide homes for children and other relatives, even when families already own substantial parcels. Residents need more practical development and subdivision options.

Participants proposed a community-focused zoning pathway that could allow:

- multiple small, detached homes clustered on larger parcels;
- shared driveways, private lanes or internal roads; and
- subdivision based more on land area and less on individual public-road frontage.

While Part A focuses on specific community-owned parcels sites, participants consistently raised broader concerns about development opportunities on privately owned family land.

## Top themes continued

### 3. Building height and housing form

In response to the question "Does a maximum of 4 storeys feel like an appropriate height limit for the node sites?" 12 of 15 comments (80%) opposed a four-storey maximum or suggested lower height limits. Two- and three-storey buildings were the most common preference, two comments considered four-storeys acceptable if elevators were included. Reasons included compatibility with the surrounding community, limiting population and traffic and ensuring that seniors can exit buildings safely during emergencies.

**Key takeaway:** Participants favour lower-rise, lower-intensity development, with accessibility and emergency safety treated as primary design requirements.

### 4. Concerns about community growth and change

Comments referred to the risk of losing the community's identity and expressed a desire to protect its history, heritage parcels, family land and existing ways of life. Residents generally support local housing opportunities but distinguish strongly between family-scale or community-led housing and large commercial multi-unit or speculative development.

**Key takeaway:** Residents are not uniformly opposed to growth and change, but they want growth to remain limited, locally beneficial and compatible with the community's historical character.



Whiley Sawmill, image courtesy of: Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust

### 5. Traffic, road safety, and future development

Participants said existing transportation conditions are unsafe or constrained and want safety and road capacity addressed before additional development is approved.

**Key takeaway:** Participants requested better pedestrian infrastructure on Pockwock Road, particularly connections among the community centre, fire hall and Emmanuel Baptist Church.

### 6. Water service and fire protection

Residents asked whether municipal water would be extended to existing properties and proposed developments, how much connections would cost, and whether homeowners would receive subsidies. One landowner specifically wanted enough certainty about timing and cost to decide whether to wait for municipal water or install a well.

The community made it clear that they should not bear the financial burden of water service expansion, after being denied sufficient water service for so long due to legally recognized anti-Black racism.

Questions were also raised about fire suppression within proposed developments and the geographic coverage of planned hydrants, including whether hydrants would extend into historic areas, new streets and throughout the Taylor Lake Commons. Support for water-service expansion was closely connected to both domestic needs and wildfire or structural fire protection.

**Key message:** Residents need clear, property-level information about water availability, timing, cost-sharing, hydrant coverage and fire-protection standards.

## Top themes continued

### 7. Community involvement and local benefit

Participants called for meaningful community involvement in decisions about zoning, development, commercial activity and egress routing. Some comments suggested that apartments, commercial uses and other significant changes should require community approval.

There was also concern about who benefits financially from new infrastructure. Residents asked decision-makers to examine land ownership around proposed road corridors, particularly where developers may own adjoining parcels.

**Key message:** Residents want transparent decision-making, stronger community approval mechanisms and assurance that development benefits local people rather than outside interests.

### 8. Community services, transit and recreation

Participants identified several improvements that would enhance daily life:

- transit extending into Upper Hammonds Plains on Pockwock Road rather than remaining only on Hammonds Plains Road
- a park-and-ride facility and more direct connections to Halifax
- better pedestrian connections among key community destinations
- local health support, clinics, and physical-activity opportunities for seniors
- public access to Wrights Lake, Taylor Lake, trails, waterfalls, and a potential beach or park
- small-scale camping facilities near a lake

Some participants referred to the loss of access to Pockwock Lake and felt that replacement recreational access should be provided at Wrights Lake.

**Key message:** Infrastructure planning should go beyond facilitating development and include transit, recreation, health, pedestrian access, and amenities that directly improve residents' quality of life.

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## What Happens Next?

Municipal employees and the Upper Hammonds Plains Visioning Committee will review and revise the draft policies and regulations based on community feedback. Municipal employees will write and present a report to Regional Council recommending the adoption of draft policies and regulations, at which time there will be a public hearing with opportunity to speak or submit written feedback. This is expected to be early Spring 2027. You may also contact the ANSCAP team at any point before to the public hearing. Updates will be published on our project webpage.

After engagement on Part A: Community Node policies and regulations is complete, the municipality will begin Part B of the plan review for Upper Hammonds Plains by conducting focused engagement with UHPVC and members of the historic ANS community of UHP on:

- potential changes to zoning on the Melvin Tract Lands and
- a community vision to inform future changes to land use policies and regulations, as well as existing and future community actions.

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## Get in touch



[engagehalifax.ca/anscap/UHP](https://engagehalifax.ca/anscap/UHP)



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# Key Themes

## Upper Hammonds Plains Community Action Planning meeting Aug 20, 2026



**Emergency egress and regional road connectivity**  
Build a functional emergency exit. Ensure emergency safety improvements separate from development enabling infrastructure.



**Subdivision of family land and multiple dwellings on a property**  
Enabling family-land development or homesteading supports for intergenerational living and attainable housing, African Nova Scotian land retention, generational wealth, African Nova Scotian ways of living and continued connection to the community.



**Building height and housing form**  
Preference of lower-rise, lower-intensity development, with accessibility and emergency safety treated as primary design requirements.



**Concerns about community growth and change**  
Growth to remain limited, locally beneficial and compatible with the community's historical character.



**Traffic, road safety and future development**  
Better pedestrian infrastructure on Pockwock Road, particularly connections among the community centre, fire hall and Emmanuel Baptist Church.



**Water service and fire protection**  
Residents need clear, property-level information about water availability, timing, cost-sharing, hydrant coverage and fire protection standards.



**Community involvement and local benefit**  
Need for transparent decision-making, strong community approval process and assurance that development benefits community.



**Community services, transit and recreation**  
Infrastructure planning to go beyond facilitating development to include transit, recreation, health, pedestrian access and amenities that directly improve residents' lives.