



Land-Lease Communities By-law Modernization Project

What We Heard Report

March 2023

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Introduction

The Land-Lease Communities (LLCs) By-law Modernization Project is a project to review and update the existing three Mobile Home Park By-laws in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The first step in the project is to write a licensing by-law updating the requirements land-lease community operators in HRM must demonstrate compliance with to receive an annual operating license.

The current by-laws are outdated, and reference legislation and requirements for the licensing of land-lease communities that no longer exist and have construction standards for new land-lease communities that are no longer up to date. To ensure the by-law is strengthened to allow HRM to regulate land-lease communities (LLCs) and ensure they are safe and healthy places to live, we conducted public engagement in January and February of 2023. To help us shape the development of the new by-law, we asked community members about their experiences living in land-lease communities. The survey was divided into three sections – with separate questions for operators of land-lease communities, residents, and a general survey for members of the public who have a connection to a land-lease community but do not fall into the resident or operator categories.

The survey questions asked respondents about their experiences with land-lease communities, with emphasis on concerns regarding the servicing in LLCs. Residents were asked questions such as what they enjoyed about living in LLCs, and both residents and operators were asked what HRM could do to improve the regulation of LLCs.

Engagement Summary

The engagement methods for this project included three (3) open houses, online information sharing, an online survey, and a memo to Councillors. The Shape Your City page included documents sharing information such as the components of a land-lease community, drinking water, current regulations for land-lease communities, a map of LLCs in HRM, and details on the project approach.

Shape Your City Website	
Total number of website views from page launch to survey close date	2,850
Views sourcing from social media	2273
Views sourcing direct from a URL	432
Views sourcing from a referral (e.g. another website sharing the URL)	43
Total number of survey respondents	384
Resident surveys	346
Owner/Operator Surveys	8
General surveys	30
Total number of document downloads	374
Social Media Posts (Facebook & Twitter)	
Total reach (number of people who saw the Facebook ad)	27,986
Link clicks from social media posts	1,293
Public Meeting Participation	
Cole Harbour Open House	7
Sackville Open House	31
Halifax Open House	8

Overview of Feedback

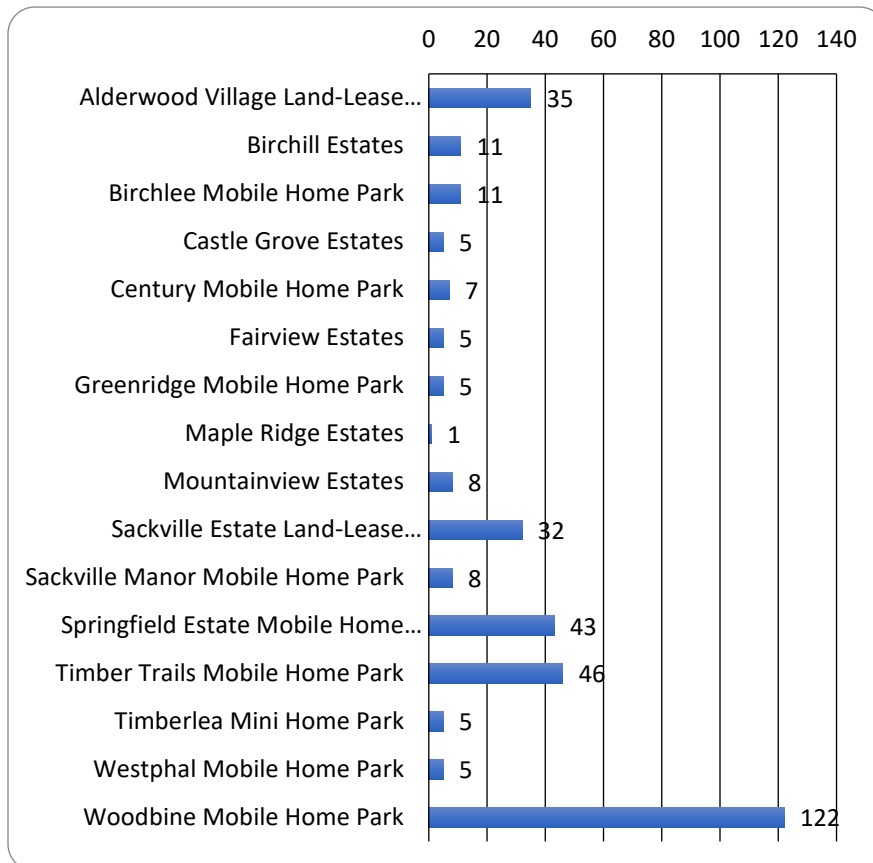
Detailed feedback was received from respondents both in the form of multiple choice and long form answers. The majority of the surveys were filled out by residents of land-lease communities. These survey responses have been categorized based on common topics. Four of the six long-form answer questions were regarding concerns in LLCs. The answers to these questions have been categorized based on the most common themes: concerns regulated by the Residential Tenancies Act, drinking water, drainage, playground & recreation space, street maintenance, streetlights, sewer systems, garbage removal, snow removal, traffic & speed, electrical systems, pests and pets, and trees. Content from the responses received from the Owner/Operator Survey (3% of total responses) and the General Survey (10% of total responses) are further detailed below.

Survey Responses

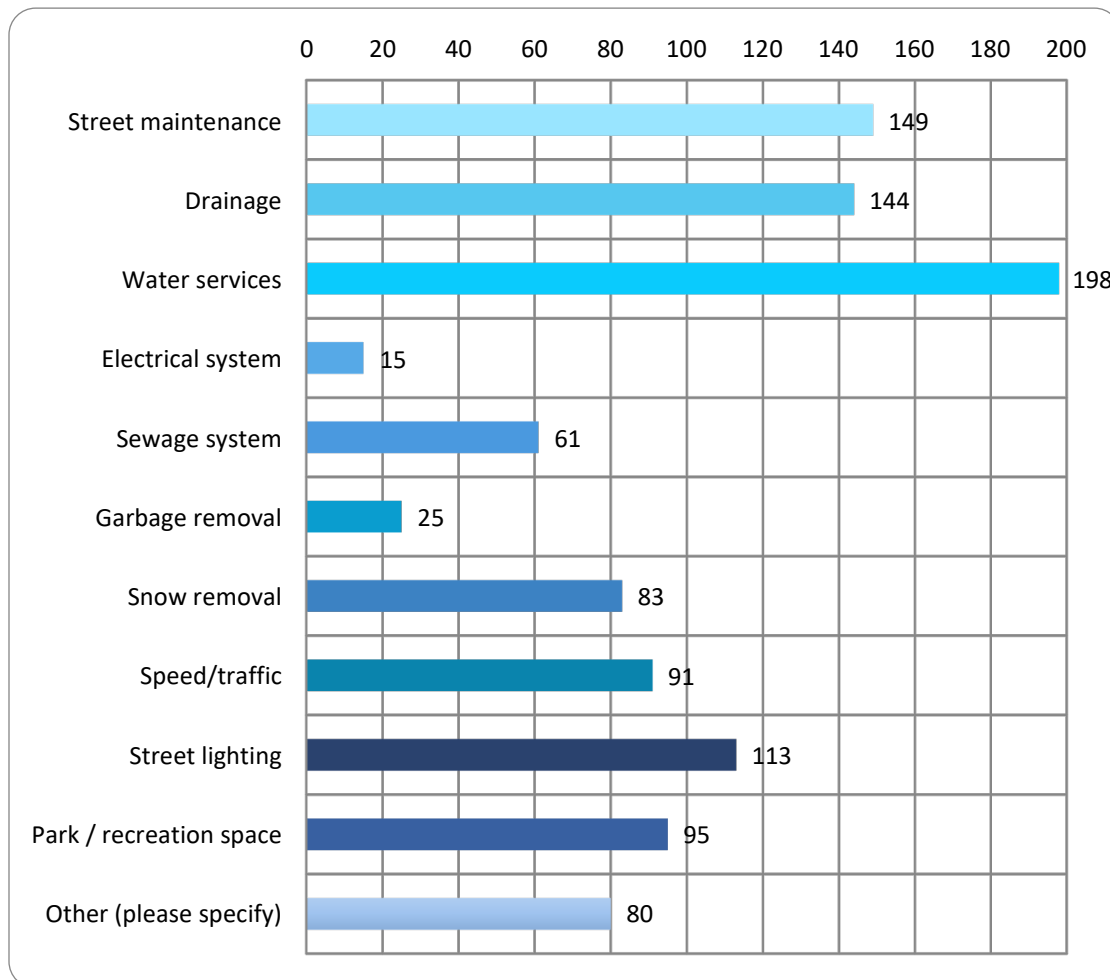
Resident Survey

The Resident Survey asked questions about the resident's concerns with their land-lease community, what they enjoy about the community they live in, and what could be done to improve the concerns they noted.

87.6% of survey respondents were residents of land-lease communities. Of these respondents, the following graph shows a breakdown of the communities where they live:



Of 346 respondents, 79% noted they have concerns about their community in the following areas:

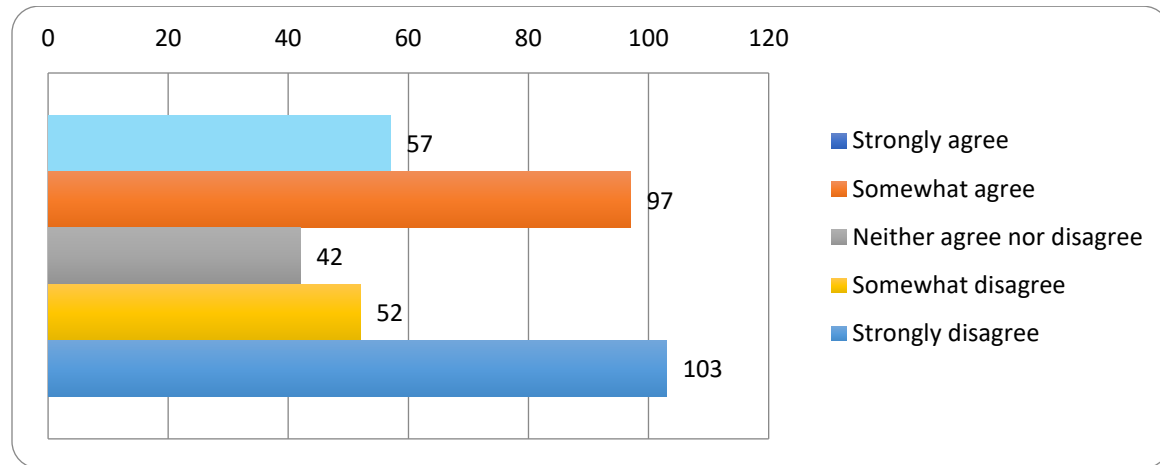


Examples of concerns noted in the 'other' category include:

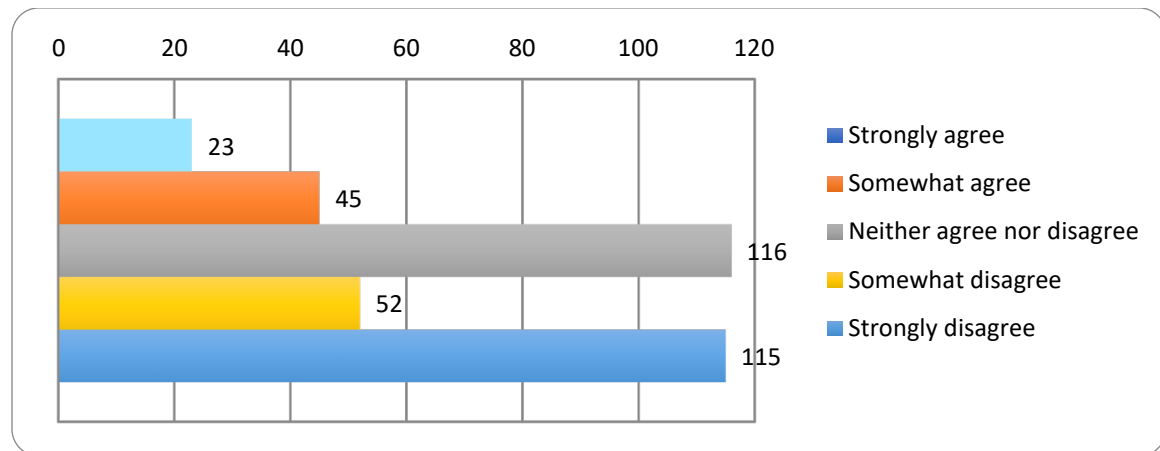
- Many concerns fall under the jurisdiction of the Residential Tenancies Act (e.g. disputes between the operators and tenants, lot rent, cost of utilities);
- New homes changing size and violating the existing by-laws;
- Concerns about accessory buildings including the size and when they're permitted;
- Lack of maintenance and enforcement in the communities;
- Tree/removal and trimming, particularly after storms;
- Maintenance concerns and lack of communication (e.g. notice of water outages); and
- Pest control.

Residents noted whether or not they agreed with the following statements:

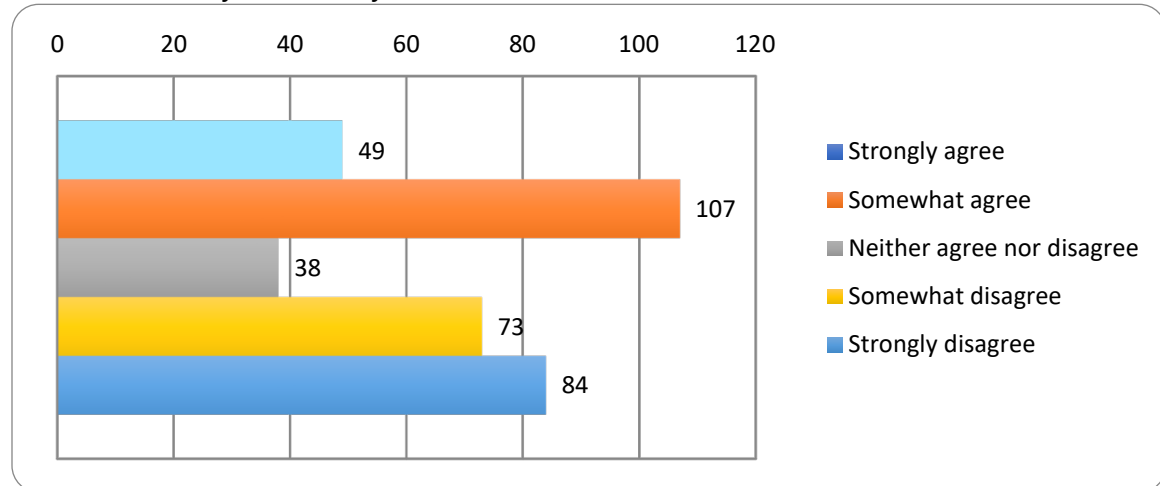
I have confidence in the quality of my drinking water:



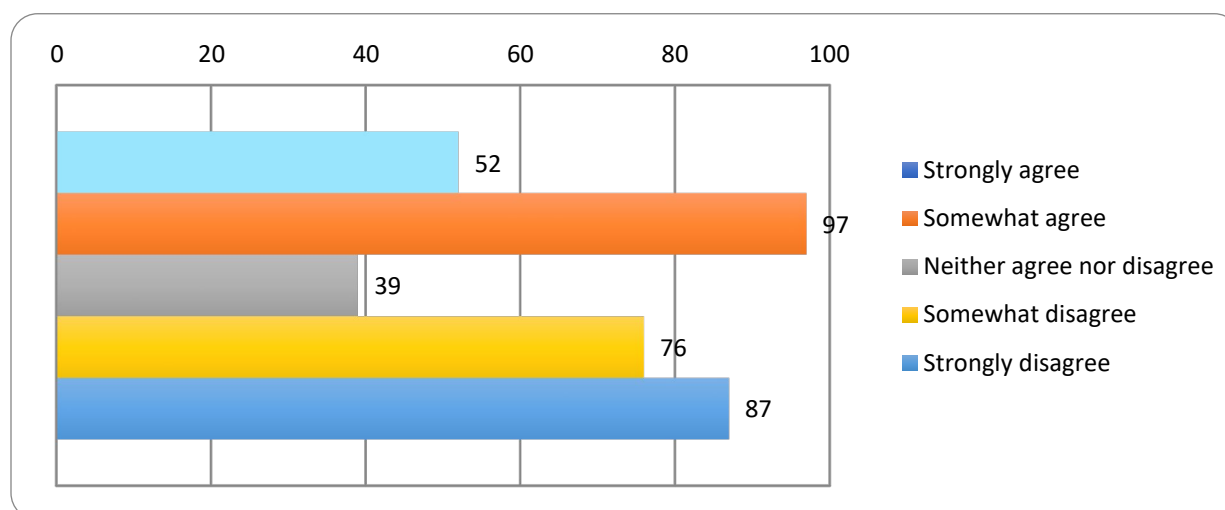
Playgrounds or other recreation spaces are well maintained.



The streets in my community are well lit.



The streets in my community are well maintained.



Themes

In addition to the above questions & statements, residents were asked to explain any additional comments they had relating to their concerns about the community, to explain if they disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the statements above, and to share if they had any additional comments at the end of the survey. The responses to these concern-related questions have been grouped and categorized based on theme.

In these questions, residents responded with a number of concerns and expanded on their answer to the categories that were offered in the short-form questions (street maintenance, drainage, water services, electrical system, sewage system, garbage removal, snow removal, speed/traffic, street lighting, and park/recreation space). Many of the concerns raised are issues regulated under the Residential Tenancies Act: disputes between the landlord and tenant, cost of utilities, and lot rent.

Other topics were raised such as inconsistency of maintenance within communities, removal of trees and debris, street lighting and lighting around mailboxes, and pest control. Some residents also noted the lack of fire hydrants in their communities.

Residential Tenancies Act

Of the long-form answer questions in the survey, many respondents (54%, 188 comments) noted issues that are dealt with under the provincial Residential Tenancies Program, such as landlord-tenant disputes, lot rent, cost of utilities, etc. These topics are not matters that can be addressed in a municipal by-law.

Drinking Water

Of the 346 resident surveys, 122 (35%) mentioned water quality and pressure. Many additional concerns were made about water meters and water being a utility cost, however, these comments are categorized under issues regulated by the Residential Tenancies Program.

Examples of comments received included water coming out of taps is often brown, has sediment, smells, or dries pink. Some respondents noted challenges with water main breaks,

boil water advisories, low water pressure, sediment damaging appliances in the home, and a general lack of trust in the water.

Street Maintenance

101 residents (29% of respondents) noted concerns with street maintenance, which were mainly related to poor street condition in general, potholes, and a lack of paved streets and driveways in the community. Some residents noted concerns that street maintenance is not done by professionals, and often when work is completed, it is not done so effectively.

Streetlights

89 residents (26%) noted dark streets are in an issue in their community and contribute to safety concerns. The key feedback received in this theme related to dark streets, the need for streetlights around mailboxes and on paths to recreation spaces, as well as the need for better upkeep of existing streetlights.

Playground/Recreation Space

In this category, 75 residents (22% of respondents) noted a concern with maintenance and upkeep of playgrounds and recreation spaces. Many residents noted their communities do not have recreation spaces and it is a need in their community. Some respondents noted pathways to get to recreation spaces are dark and unsafe, and there were drainage issues in park and recreation spaces.

Drainage

49 respondents of the Resident Survey (14%) made additional comments about drainage. Pooling of water, lack of safe infrastructure in the community, and the inability to use recreation spaces due to drainage issues were key concerns.

Traffic & Speed

28 residents (8% of respondents) noted concerns about traffic and speed. Many comments noted safety concerns with drivers speeding in the community and suggested the implementation of speed bumps.

Pests & Pets

25 residents (7% of respondents) noted concerns about pests and pets, with most of the comments related to rat issues. Some residents noted dogs and/or cats are a concern in their communities.

Garbage Removal

20 residents (6% of respondents) noted concerns with garbage removal. These concerns related to garbage pickup at resident's homes, as well as the lack of garbage cans and removal in common spaces like playgrounds.

Snow Removal

22 comments (6% of respondents) noted issues with snow removal, mainly regarding the frequency of snow removal and speed of service after a snow fall. Many of the 22 comments also mentioned the roads are not salted enough, and ice is often an issue.

Trees

22 residents (6% of respondents) noted that general tree maintenance, and tree and debris removal after storms are issues that are not resolved in their communities. Some residents felt there were safety concerns caused by the lack of maintenance of fallen tree branches and debris and noted concerns about the cost of the damage to their homes caused by lack of upkeep of trees.

Sewer Systems

11 residents (3% of respondents) noted concerns related to sewer and septic systems. These concerns noted a sewage smell in the community, and a general lack of maintenance of sewer infrastructure.

Other

38 respondents (11% of respondents) noted concerns that did not fall in the above categories. These comments included topics such as property tax, landscaping, driveways, upkeep and removal of homes, inconsistency of general maintenance within the communities, and uncertified staff repairing infrastructure in the communities. Other concerns related to issues that would be considered in part two of this project, regarding land use and built form rather than servicing and licensing requirements, such as requirements for accessory buildings, placement of homes, and parking spaces.

The responses to the other questions in the Resident Survey that were not included in the above themes were regarding what residents enjoy about the communities they live in, and what could be done to make improvements. These responses have been summarized below.

What do you enjoy about the land-lease community you live in?

In response to this question, 166 residents noted their friendly neighbours and the sense of community as something they enjoy. 65 respondents mentioned their community is quiet, 53 felt the location and proximity to amenities were a positive, and 39 respondents appreciated the affordability. 39 respondents did not have an answer to this question and instead noted concerns. 30 respondents had comments that did not fit into the above themes, such as having more autonomy than apartment living, appreciating being able to own their own home, having a smaller environmental footprint, and being happy to have a yard.

“Friendly, a very close community, sense that you belong.”

If you noted concerns, what could be done to make improvements?

Responses to this question were very similar to the concerns noted throughout the rest of the survey. The most common suggestions related to upgrades of water infrastructure, street maintenance, and issues regulated by the Residential Tenancies Act.

The suggestions received have been broken down into the following categories:

- Improve drinking water infrastructure and services and require water testing: 68 comments.
- Improve playgrounds and recreation spaces: 29 comments.
- Pave streets & improve maintenance of streets: 58 comments.
- Improve street lighting: 46 comments.
- Improve drainage: 22 comments.
- Issues regulated by the Residential Tenancies Act, such as community management and costs: 57 comments.
- Other concerns such as general community maintenance, servicing regulations, speed bumps, and conducting more frequent and detailed inspections: 29 comments.

Owner/Operator Survey

The Owner/Operator Survey asked operators of land-lease communities about challenges they have with servicing and other facilities and asked what could be done to make improvements.

7 responses from owners/operators were received. 1 of these appeared to be a duplicate but is included in the total counts of responses. Of these, 6 are serviced by municipal water services, and 1 is serviced by shared wells. No respondents noted challenges with water servicing.

Of the 7 respondents, 5 are serviced by municipal sewer services, and 2 are serviced by a private sewage treatment plant. 2 respondents noted challenges regarding the flushing of inappropriate items that damage facilities.

Regarding other services, 2 respondents noted that speed/traffic and recreation space are also a challenge. 4 respondents expanded on the 'other' option – noting dogs, lack of bus services, and stigma of 'trailer parks' being additional issues.

The next two questions in the survey were questions that had long-form answers with a variety of responses. The themes and most common answers to these questions have been summarized below.

Do you have any suggestions for what HRM could do to correct any challenges you noted above?

Respondents noted adding bus service, using proper terminology when discussing land-lease communities to reduce stigma, reducing taxes and allowing them to raise lot rents to keep up with increased servicing costs, and a lack of police enforcement within LLCs, would help correct challenges with operations and servicing.

Is there anything else you would like to share about operating a land-lease community in HRM?

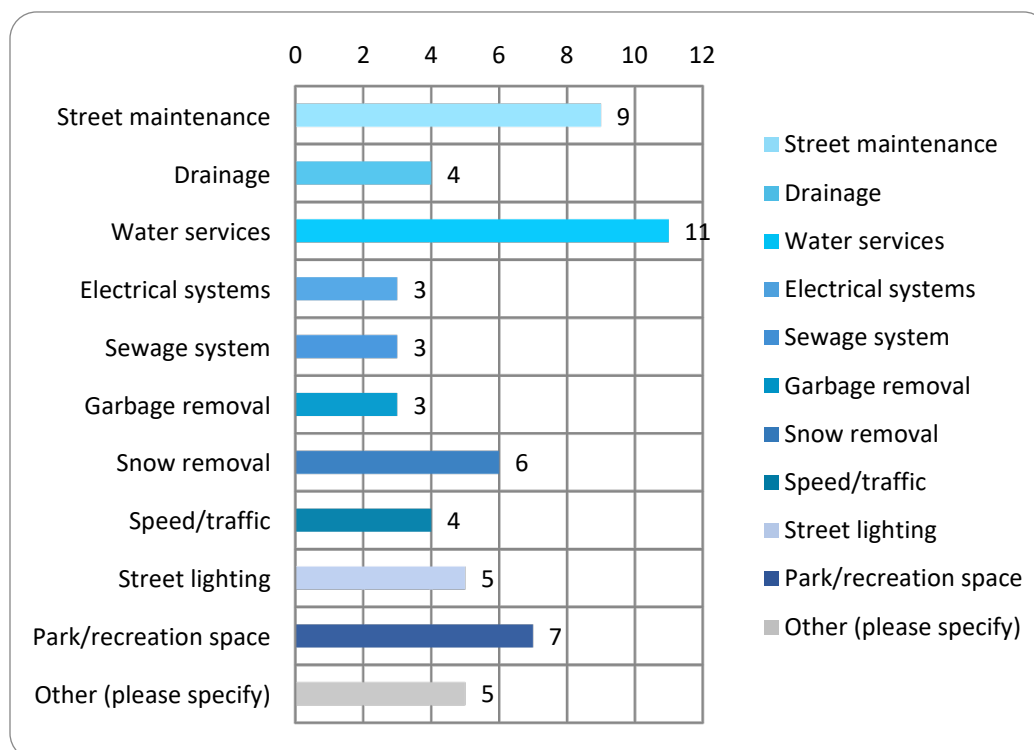
Respondents to this question noted land-lease communities should be encouraged as an affordable housing option and should be expanded within HRM. Other respondents mentioned the current regulations are restrictive when considering expansion, and construction costs to meet requirements are too high. One respondent noted the increased costs of servicing have become too costly and lot rents can't keep up.

General Survey

30 people filled out the third version of the survey, which was written for anyone who felt they had a connection to a land-lease community. These people noted their connection to land-lease communities as neighbours, family members of residents, previous residents who have since moved, etc. Of the 30 respondents, 9 were friends or family of current land-lease community residents, 7 were past residents of a land-lease community. Other respondents varied, such as neighbours, people with interest in developing a land-lease community, mini home manufactures, or prospective residents.

Do you have any concerns about the community? If yes, please select all that apply.

In response to this question, 17 respondents noted concerns. These concerns varied, with the most common being water services.



Respondents who noted 'other', referenced concerns such as building standards, lack of consistent enforcement of rules and regulations across home spaces, noise and light pollution,

and noted effort for grey water recycling and community gardens should be included in the requirements.

The next three questions in the survey were questions that had long-form answers with a variety of responses. The themes and most common answers to these questions have been summarized below.

Do you have any additional comments?

The responses to this question varied, with 5 comments relating to matters dealt with by the Residential Tenancies Program, such as costs of utilities and landlord-tenant disputes. 7 comments related to the lack of clean drinking water. 3 comments noted positive experiences about land-lease communities. The remaining comments varied with topics such as the costs to buy a home and live in a land-lease community are too high, there should be more land-lease communities in HRM, and reducing restrictions on manufactured housing.

If you noted concerns in the above questions, what could be done to make improvements?

Answers to this question included improving service delivery, stronger regulation of services and community maintenance, encouraging more land-lease communities in HRM, and repairing streets.

Is there anything else you would like us to know? Please provide any additional concerns or comments you may have.

Answers to this question varied. Responses included a need for stronger regulation and enforcement, a desire to have tiny homes included in the new regulations, requiring land-lease communities to be owner occupied, the potential for LLCs to create a more affordable path to home ownership, as well as the need for these options to be more available for people, including financing opportunities.

Next Steps

Thank you to everyone who filled out the survey, attended the open houses, and shared their feedback. This feedback helps us understand the experience of living in and operating land-lease communities and is informing the work to create a new by-law with updated regulations. The feedback received will ensure the regulations applied to LLCs reflect these experiences and take multiple perspectives into account.

When a new by-law is prepared, it will be presented to Regional Council for consideration. Up-to-date information on the project will continue to be shared on the [project website](#).

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with us!