

Halifax Regional Municipality
Urban Forest Management Plan

Phase 1 Engagement General Public Engagement Summary



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Scope of the engagement

Halifax's current Urban Forest Master Plan was adopted in 2013 and has guided its urban forest management for the past decade. The plan has now surpassed its intended 10-year lifespan and needs to be updated to reflect community values and the current state of the urban forest. The new Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP; the plan) will guide the management of the urban forest until 2034 through a period of rapid community growth and changing climate. The plan will guide the management and growth of Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) urban forest to maximize the benefits that it provides and address both current and emerging challenges.

Engagement

The first phase of engagement for the UFMP began in the winter of 2023 and finished in the spring of 2024. It focused on creating an initial vision for the future of HRM's urban forest and identifying initial management priorities for the HRM's urban forest. The general public engagement summarized in this report included opportunities to provide input online and in person. The project page on Shape Your City hosted a survey that asked for input on urban forest concerns and aspirations and a mapping tool that allowed participants to identify important urban forest locations. Two open houses were hosted on February 21st and 22nd, 2024, to provide information about the project and gather input on the ways people connect with the urban forest and their priorities for the plan.

Two targeted technical workshops were also hosted in person and online on February 23rd and February 28th. The workshop invites targeted groups and industries that work within or are closely connected to urban forestry and HRM partner organizations.

In addition to the general public engagement described in this report, targeted engagement also focused on gathering input from historically underrepresented communities including Mi'kmaq and Urban Indigenous communities, African Canadians, newcomers, people with disabilities, and Acadian and francophone organizations. Results from the targeted engagement are provided in separate reports.

Engagement Activities

Community members, groups and industries that work within or are closely connected to urban forestry, and HRM partner organizations were invited to provide input through Shape Your City (online survey and map), two open houses, and two targeted workshops (Table 1). The Shape Your City project page kept community members informed with an overview of the UFMP project and information on upcoming engagement opportunities.

Table 1. Phase 1 summary of general public engagement activities

Date	Engagement Activity	Participants
February - May 2024	Shape Your City Survey	744
February - May 2024	Shape Your City Map	19
February 21nd, 2024 February 22nd, 2024	Open House 1 (Canada Games Centre) Open House 2 (Zatsman Sportsplex)	~45
February 23th, 2024	Targeted Workshop (In-Person)	27
February 28th, 2024	Targeted Workshop (Online)	12

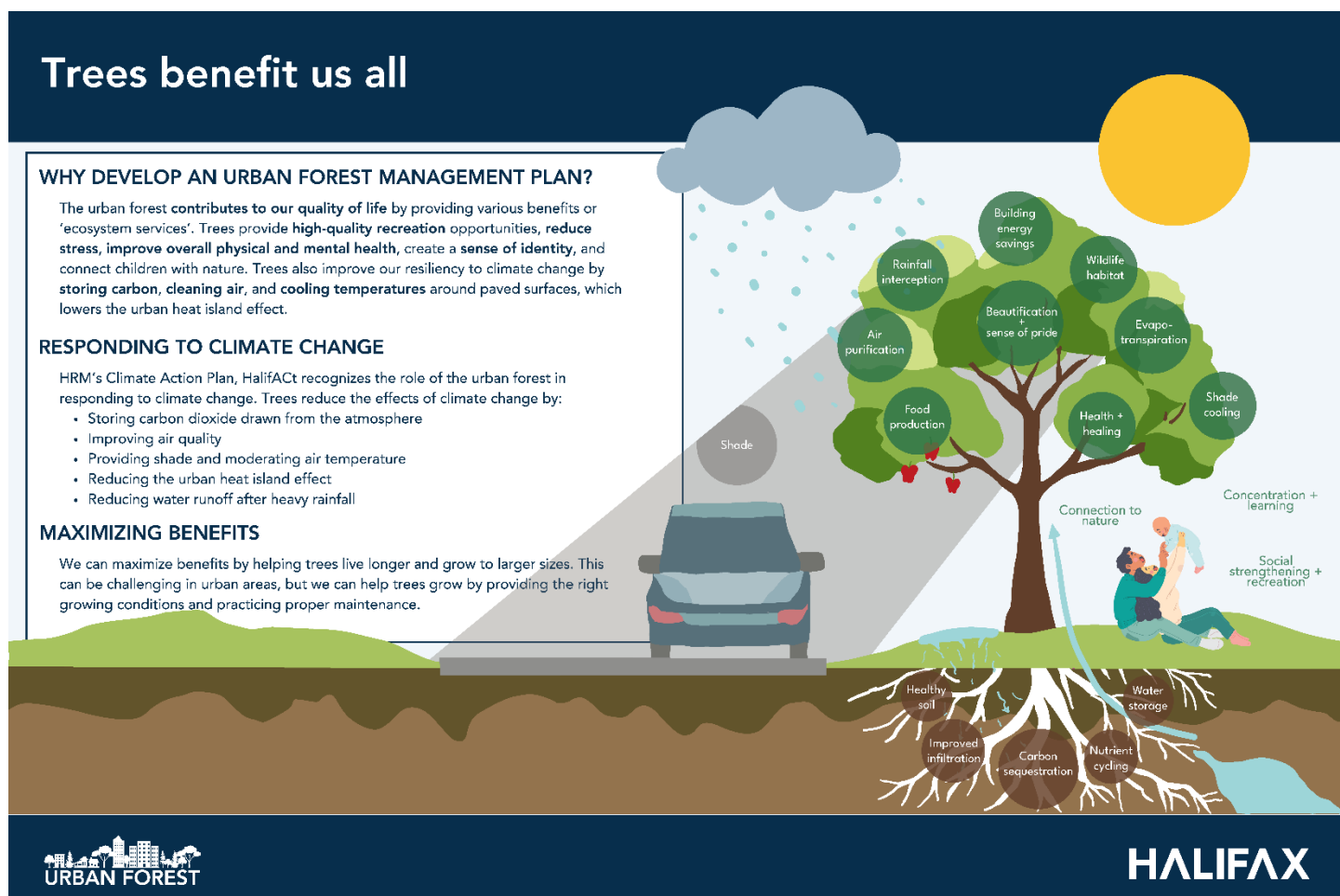


Figure 1. Example of a poster board presented at the public open houses on February 21-22nd, 2024

Who we heard from

Overall, we heard from a total of 836 respondents, including 744 survey respondents, approximately 45 open house attendees, 19 map participants on Shape Your City, and 29 attendees of the targeted workshops representing 14 organizations.

On the Shape Your City project page:

- **760 “engaged” participants** contributed to one or more feedback tools
- **446 “informed” participants** visited multiple pages or downloaded a file from the page
- **3621 “aware” participants** visited at least one page

Detailed demographics

We were able to understand the demographics of some participants based on the information they shared via the survey, mapping tool, and the workshop invitation.

Shape Your City Tool Users

Survey

Among the 744 survey respondents:

- 63% were between the age of 35 and 64 (63%), 20% or lower were above 65 or below 35 years of age (Figure 2).
- 15% of respondents had a disability, 5% identified as racially visible, and 2% identified as Aboriginal

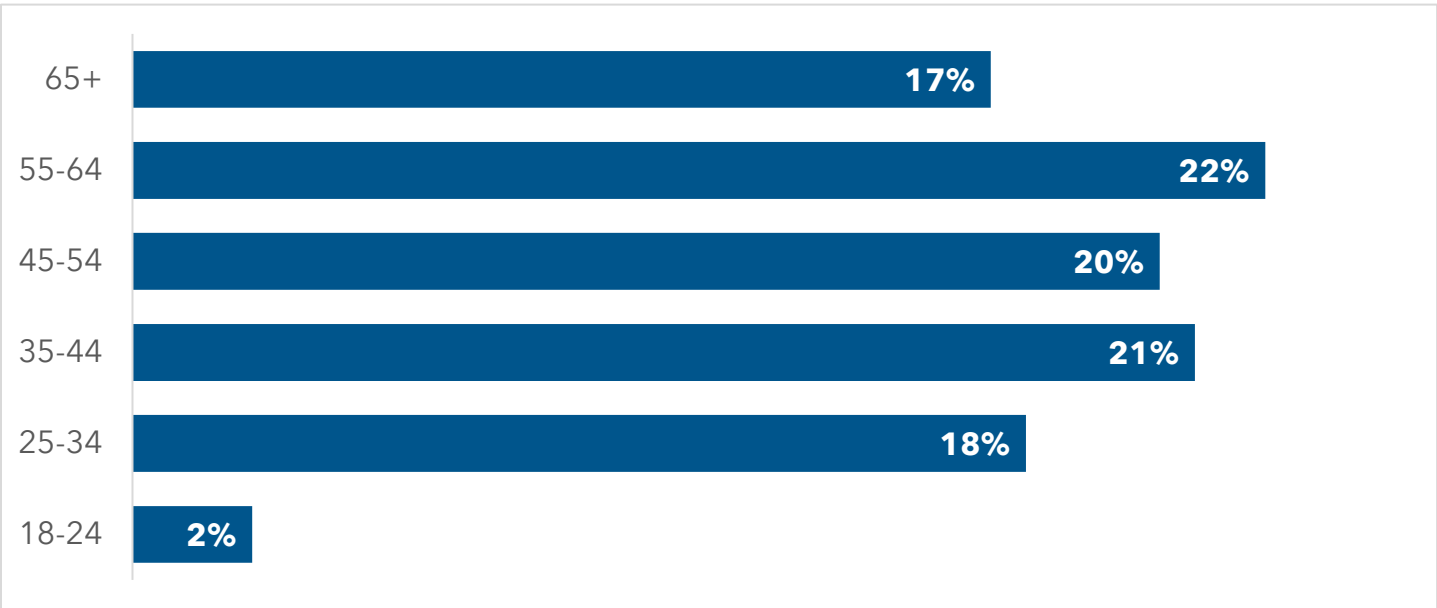


Figure 2. Age distribution of respondents (total respondents: 725)

Shape Your City Map

A total of 19 participants identified 64 urban forest places across the HRM that they either valued or thought needed of improvement. Most participants did not disclose their age or gender. Of those who did, the most common age groups were 35-44 and over 65 years old (Figure 3). None of the participants identified themselves as Aboriginal Peoples, people with a disability, or as racially visible.

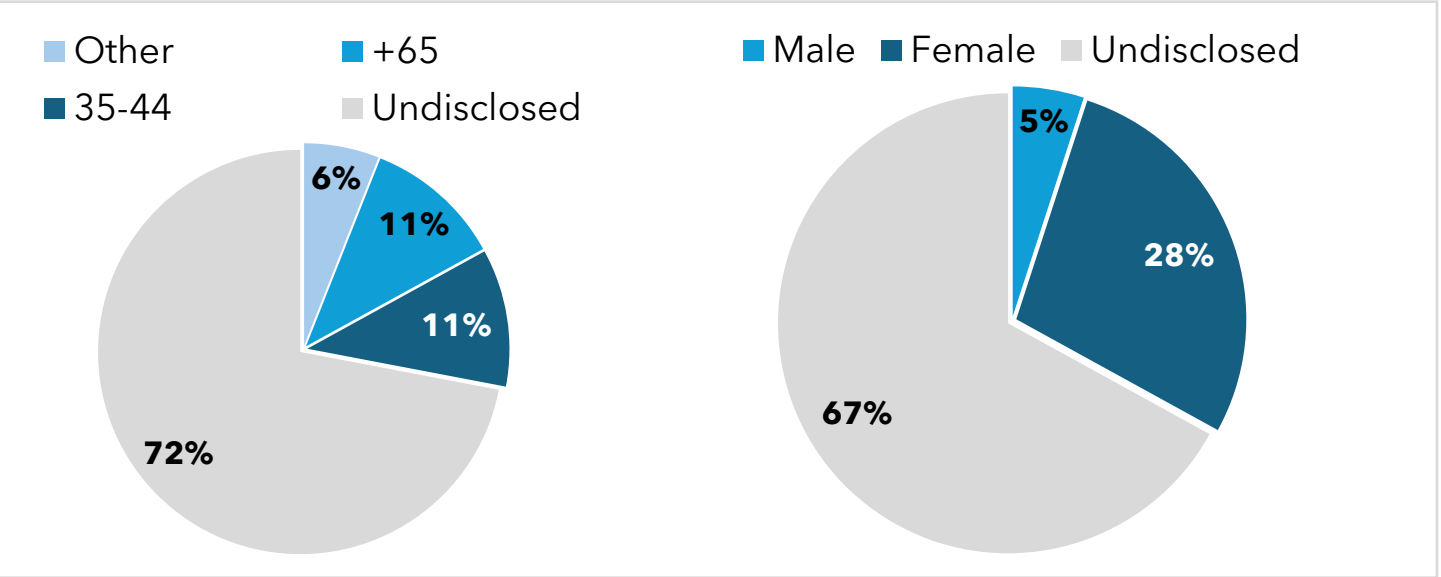


Figure 3. The age groups (left) and gender (right) of participants that used the mapping tool (total respondents: 19)

Targeted Organizations

Two workshops were hosted with groups and industries that work within or are closely connected to urban forestry and HRM partner organizations. The in-person workshop was attended by 27 people, and the online workshop by 12 people. The participants represented 14 organizations, including federal, provincial, and municipal agencies, business associations, environmental groups, and academics (Table 2).

Table 2. List of organizations whose representatives attended the online or in-person workshops

Organizations	
Government of Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia Health
Go North Halifax	East Link
Nova Scotia Power	Downtown Halifax Business Commission
Spring Garden Area Business Association	Ecology Action Centre
Trim Landscaping	Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)
Arbor Nova Scotia	Canadian Council on Invasive Species
Clean Foundation	Dalhousie University

General Public

Open House

Participants could mark urban forest places that they liked with green dots and places needing improvement with yellow dots on a map board (Figure 4). A total of 29 places were mapped, including 27 marked as places people liked and 2 as places needing improvement. Participants appreciated the wildness and nature beauty of the areas that they liked. However, more participants comments with sticky notes on improvements. They called for more protection of natural areas and urban trees from development activities. Concerns about invasive species were raised, with suggestions for more proactive maintenance.



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The most common uses of the urban forest included recreation and leisure (mentioned by 6 participants), shade and cooling in the summer (6), and observing wildlife and experiencing nature (6). Less common uses were exercising and relieving stress (3) and knowledge and learning (2). No one indicated that they harvested food or natural medicine from the urban forest.

When it comes to ways to support the urban forest, participants indicated that they had planted trees on their property (3), volunteered with a community group (3) or at a planting event (3), maintained their trees regularly (2), planted pollinator-friendly and native plants (2), and learnt about tree care and health (1). Some participants who had not yet supported the urban forest through these approaches mentioned that they would like to plant pollinator-friendly and native plants (2), volunteer (2), and learn more about tree care and health (1).

Participants highlighted several critical issues regarding natural area protection and management and the impacts of urban development on HRM's urban forest. Firstly, participants highlighted the importance of protecting the upper watersheds to prevent cumulative downstream effects. Concerns were raised about the impacts of forest clearing on wetlands, including clearcutting up to the water's edge, prompting a desire for more proactive disaster planning. They stressed the protection of unique forest areas and urban wilderness. Specific sites such as Einsner's wetland, Willow trees at the old Queen Elizabeth High School site, and Lovers Lane on Williams Lake were highlighted for their ecological significance. Participants pointed out that the previous plan did not address rural areas outside of the urban core, which meant that many wilderness areas were not adequately acknowledged or protected by the HRM.

Participants raised concerns about the removal of mature trees, for example with projects like the hospital development and clearcutting activities in some rural areas. They called for more proactive measures to prevent harmful practices like clearcutting enabled by development permits. Furthermore, many participants advocated for the establishment of active transportation corridors and greenways that connect destinations, and the enforcement of development offsets to mitigate environmental impacts. Additionally, participants emphasized the need for public education on invasive species to support natural area management.

Shape Your City Tools

Survey

The online survey focused on obtaining input on the following topics:

- Understanding of the urban forest in the HRM
- Threats to the urban forest
- Satisfaction with the current urban forest program
- Visioning the future of the urban forest
- Priorities for urban forest management
- Community stewardship of the urban forest

Understanding of the urban forest in the HRM

Most respondents (74%) had previously heard of the term urban forest, but 61% were unaware of HRM's previous Urban Forest Master Plan (Figure 5). Respondents overwhelmingly recognized the importance of HRM's urban forest, with 88% rating it as "very important." Only 1% felt that the urban forest was "not at all important".

In their comments about how they would describe an 'urban forest', 519 participants described primarily described it is a collection of trees, shrubs, and other vegetation within HRM's boundary or urban areas. Some respondents noted that the urban forest could be diverse in terms of species (e.g., native and exotic species), forms (e.g., large, forested areas and individual trees), age and structure (e.g., old and new growth). Respondents highlighted a wide range of benefits that an urban forest could provide, such as improving air quality, reducing urban heat, supporting wildlife and biodiversity, and enhancing the overall well-being of residents. The urban forest was recognized as an important component of a livable and environmentally sustainable city.

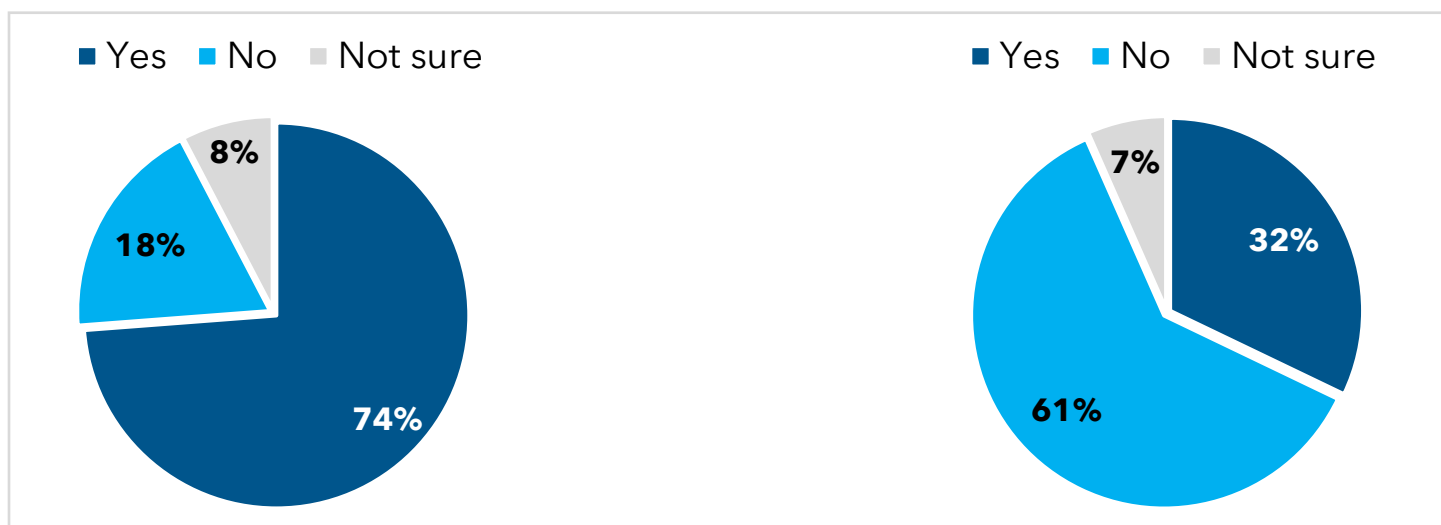


Figure 5. Proportion of respondents that have previously heard of the term 'Urban Forest' (left) and that HRM has had an UFMP since 2013 (right) (total respondents = 744)

97% of survey respondents believe that HRM's urban forest was 'Important' or 'Very Important'

Threats to the urban forest

When asked about what urban forest threats they found to be most applicable, 83% of respondents rated habitat loss due to development as the most significant threat. Following closely were climate change (rated as significant by 74%), insufficient funding for HRM's urban forestry group (53%), and invasive plants, insects, and diseases (51%; Figure 6). Sixty-eight (68) respondents commented on threats to the urban forest. Many respondents mentioned the **lack of public education and awareness** about the importance of the urban forest and **competing political priorities** when compared to development and police leading to insufficient funding and resources. **Development**, particularly leading to clear-cutting trees, was viewed as a major threat, especially when it involved removing mature trees and natural habitats. Some

respondents mentioned they felt that **poor planning and the disconnection between urban forestry and other municipal planning processes** exacerbates these threats. Other significant threats mentioned included **the use of pesticides, the sale of invasive species by retailers, and the lack of proper disposal methods for dead or diseased trees.**

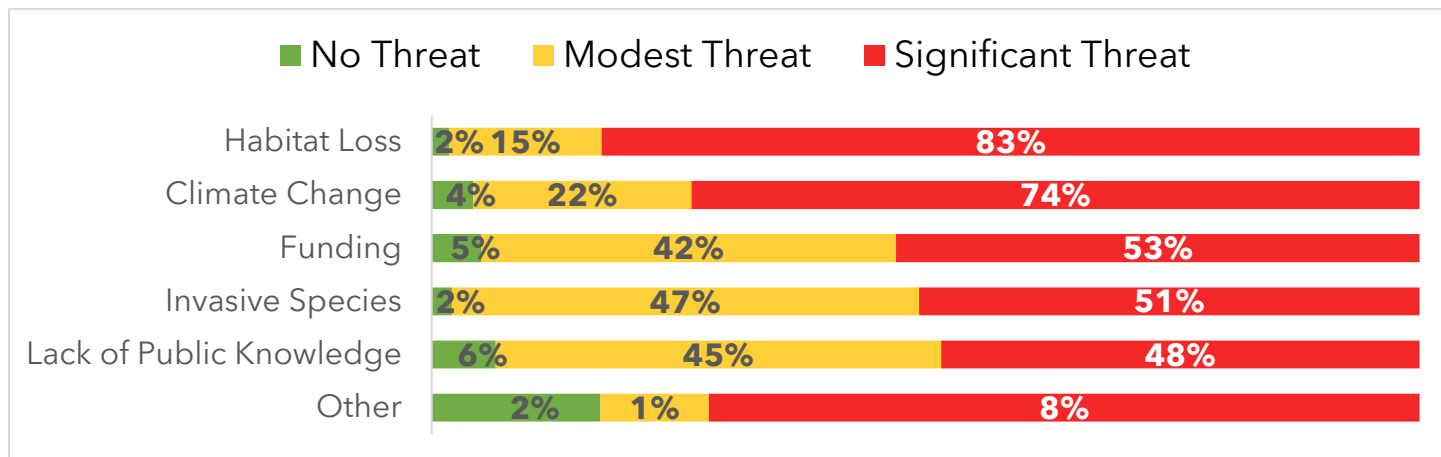


Figure 6. Respondent's perception of the most significant threats to the urban forest (total respondents: 742)

Satisfaction with urban forest management

Respondents shared their thoughts on how successful they thought the HRM urban forest management was in the last ten years, since the adoption of the Urban Forest Master Plan in 2013 (Figure 7). A large proportion of respondents perceived the urban forestry program as either unsuccessful or only partially successful overall. According to survey respondents, the program's most unsuccessful aspect was increasing community awareness and knowledge about urban forestry, with 53% deeming it not successful at all and an additional 28% considering it partially successful.

Many respondents were uncertain about evaluating success in urban management. Specifically, over half of the participants (54% and 51%, respectively) expressed uncertainty about the collaboration with diverse people and organizations and the allocation of staff and funding. On the other hand, tree protection, maintenance, and enhancement received more positive feedback, with 46% of respondents considering it partially successful and 6% successful.

In their comments about satisfaction with urban forest management in the last ten years, 407 respondents provided more details about what made them satisfied or dissatisfied. Many felt that the program had not been successful due to several key issues, including the loss of mature trees and green spaces to development, insufficient funding and enforcement of urban forest regulations, and ineffective invasive species management. Respondents called for stricter regulations and better enforcement to protect old-growth trees, as well as the creation of invasive species registries and action plans for better management outcomes. Additionally, there was a strong sentiment that more could be done to maintain biodiversity, ensure equitable access to green spaces, and integrate the urban forest with broader city planning and climate change initiatives. On the positive side, some respondents appreciated HRM's efforts to plant new trees and engage the community. However, the need for better communication and education about the urban forest program was highlighted, as many respondents felt uninformed about ongoing efforts and their impacts.

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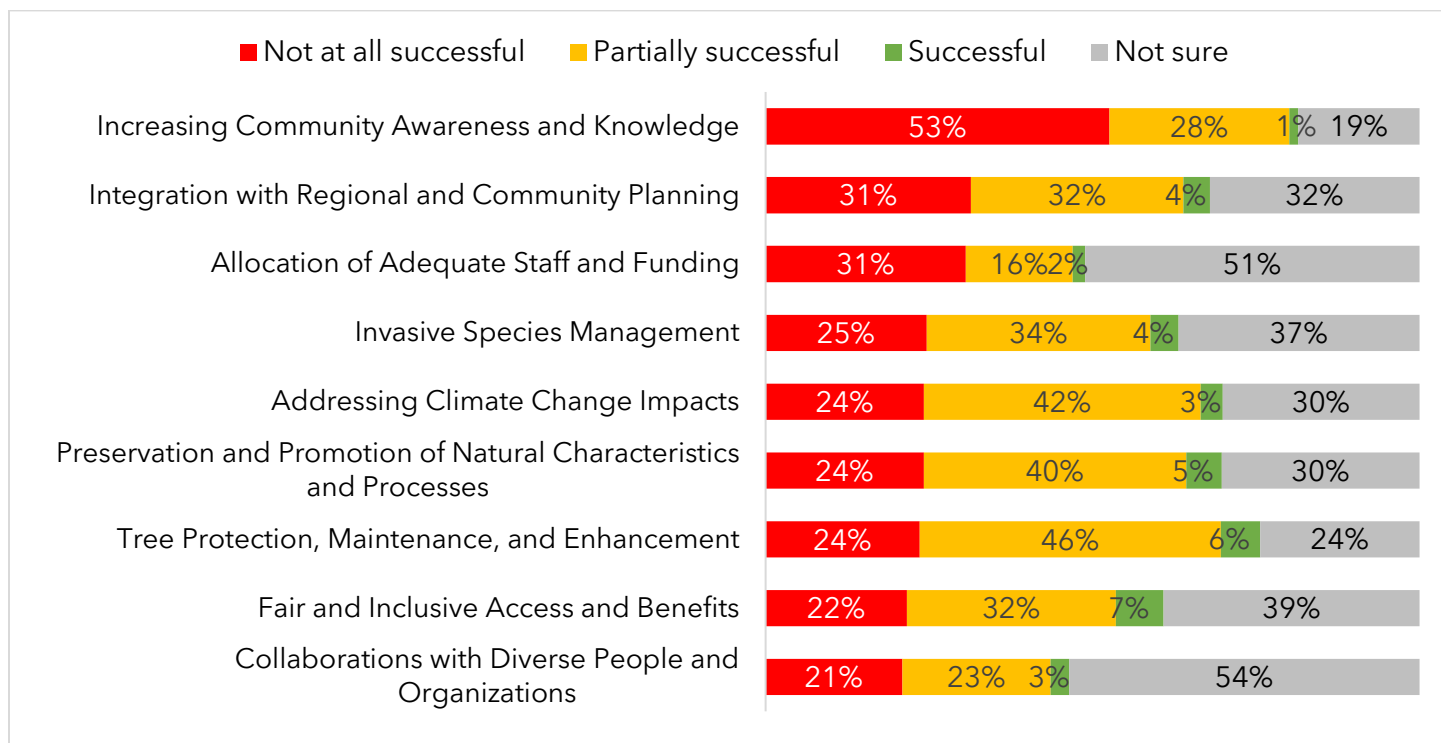


Figure 7. Respondent's perception of the performance of Halifax's urban forest management over the last ten years (total respondents: 746)

Participants were also asked to identify five aspects out of a list of ten statements that they believed would show successful management of Halifax Region's urban forest. The statements most commonly selected as good descriptors of success included the enhanced protection of trees during development (voted by 67% of respondents), increased canopy cover (by 62%), equitable access to the benefits of the urban forest (57%), higher rates of tree planting (56%) and greater species diversity and structural complexity (49%) (Figure 8). Conversely, aspects such as having fewer problems with pests and disease and having fewer falling trees and tree limbs were less frequently prioritized as successful aspects of HRM's urban forest management program.

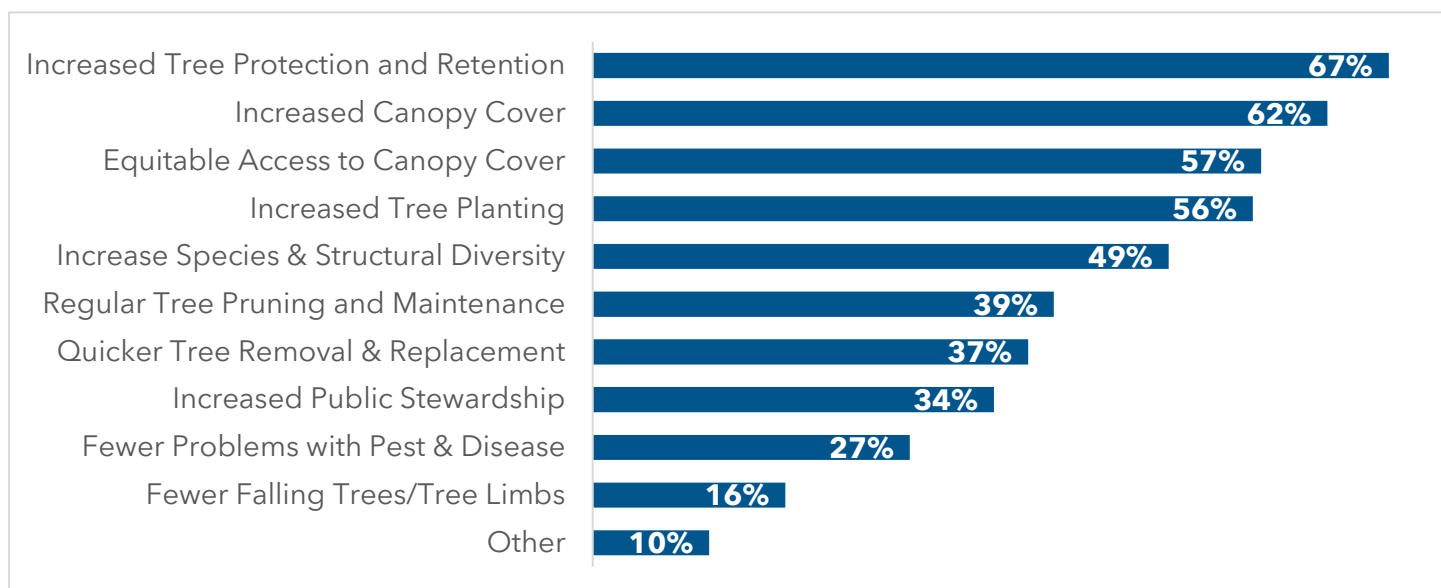


Figure 8. Respondent's perception of aspects that would best show the successful management of the HRM's urban forest (total respondents: 746)

Seventy-one (71) respondents shared more details about other things they thought would indicate that urban forest management in HRM was successful. Respondents thought that HRM could monitor the success of its program by measuring the **planting of native and diverse species**, including shrubs and ground cover, and **planting of fruit and nut trees** to promote food security.

Satisfaction with the HRM urban forest program

When it comes to people's satisfaction with the current urban forest levels of services provided by HRM, respondents generally had low levels of satisfaction (Figure 9). Many respondents were dissatisfied with the replacement of trees removed due to development and public education and awareness, with 52% and 50% of participants expressing dissatisfaction, respectively. Services with a higher level of satisfaction included tree planting (58% partially or fully satisfied), tree pruning (57%), and tree and stump removal (45%). Respondents were level certain about satisfaction with watering and pest and disease control, which respectively had 59% and 49% unsure respondents.

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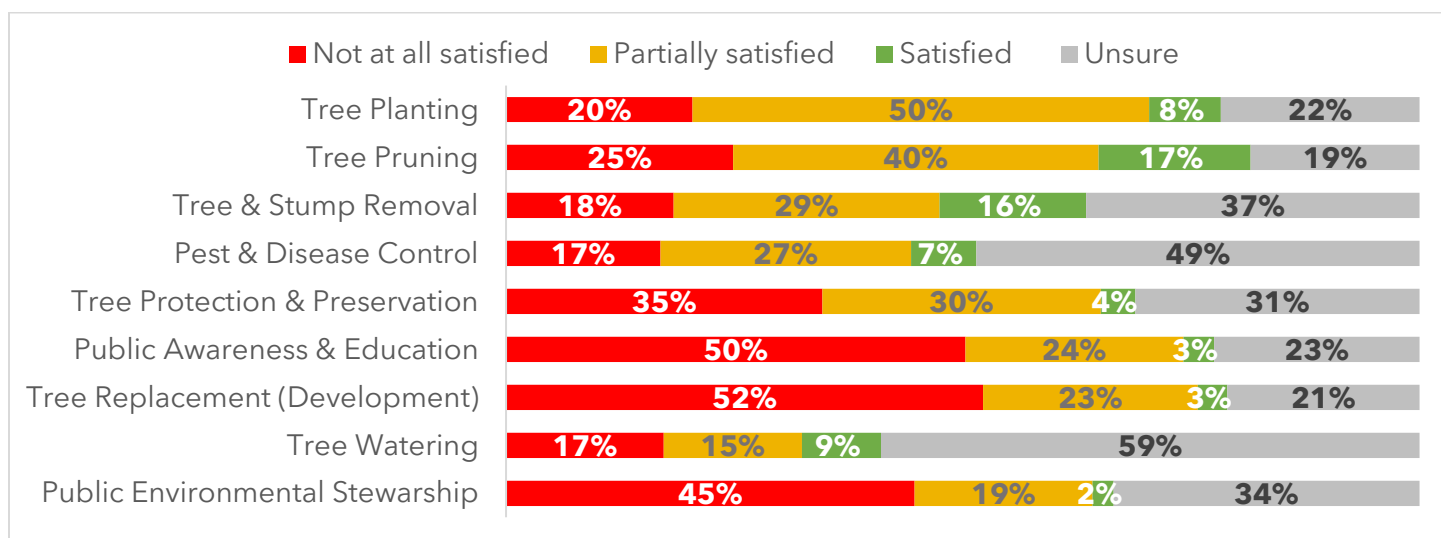


Figure 9. Respondent's satisfaction with current levels of service by service type (total respondents: 744)

A total of 528 respondents shared detailed responses about how HRM could help increase their satisfaction with the urban forest services offered. Most respondents emphasized the importance of enhancing tree protection during development and improving the enforcement of relevant policies and regulations. Some suggested more funding and staff resources for planting, maintaining, and replacing trees, especially native species. Many respondents also suggested improved maintenance of newly planted trees, stricter requirements for developers to plant/replace trees, and better integration of trees in urban planning. Some respondents called for more public education on the urban forest and invasive species and increased engagement opportunities such as adopting trees and community planting events. They also emphasized the need for enhanced communication and visibility of urban forest efforts.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents were willing to pay an additional 25-100\$ per year on property taxes to better support HRM's urban forestry program, while 16% were unwilling to contribute any additional amount (Figure 10).

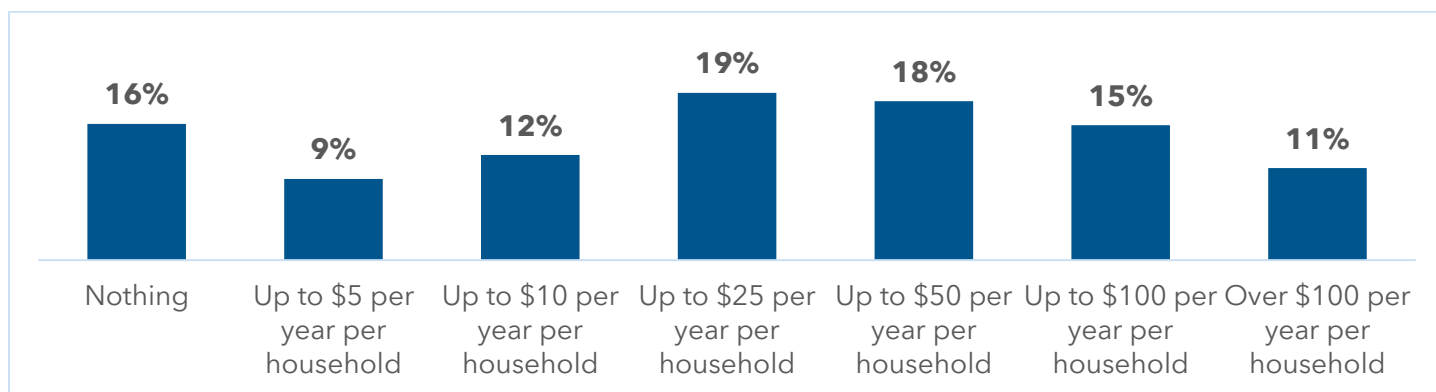


Figure 10. Willingness to pay additional property tax for improved urban forest management (total respondents: 737)

Vision for the future of the urban forest

A total of 643 respondents shared their vision of the future of Halifax’s urban forest by the year 2050. Most envisioned an urban forest that was **healthy** (noted by 73 respondents), **diverse** (by 95 respondents), **well-managed** (71), and **expanding** (227). They pictured this thriving urban forest **across parks, private yards, streets, and natural areas** in HRM, providing important **environmental** (e.g., cooling and supporting biodiversity) and **social** benefits (e.g., providing recreational space and fostering the community identity).

Respondents also indicated how they would like the urban tree canopy to change over the long-term future. Eighty-two percent (82%) of respondents would like to see an increasing tree canopy, while 14% would like to maintain the current level of canopy, and 2% would like a declining tree canopy (Figure 11).

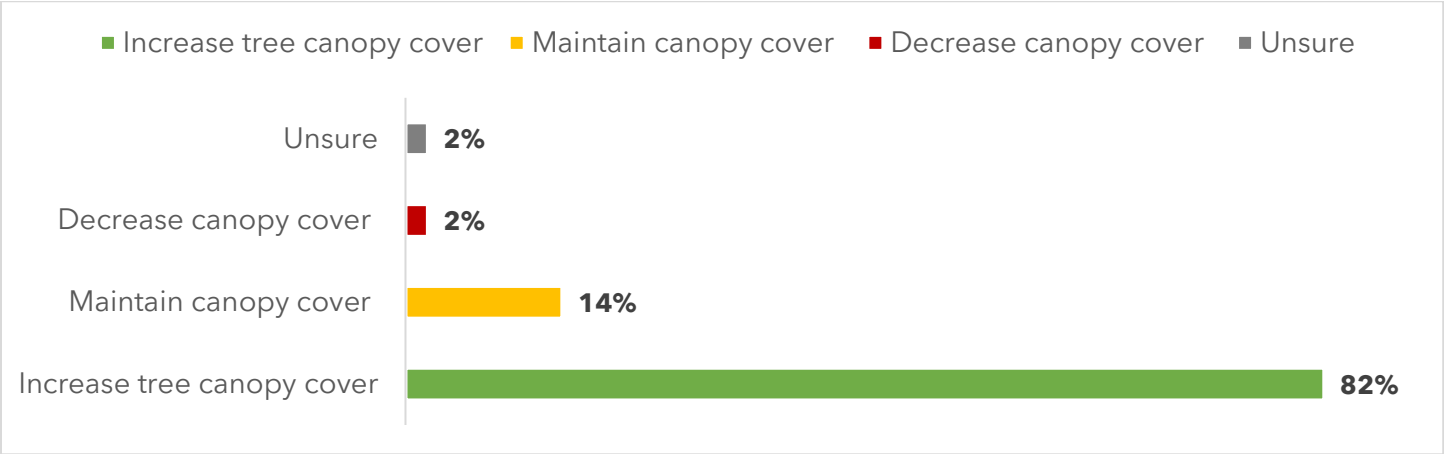


Figure 11 Respondent’s preference for canopy cover over the long term

Priorities for urban forest management

Priority of urban forest management objectives

Respondents were asked to prioritize objectives for urban forest management over the next ten years (Figure 12). The top prioritized objectives included addressing climate resilience (1st), integrating urban forest policy into regional and community planning process (2nd), and protecting, maintaining, and enhancing the urban forest (3rd). Ensuring fair and inclusive access to canopy cover and associated benefits as well as increasing community awareness and knowledge about urban forestry were considered the lowest priorities among all.

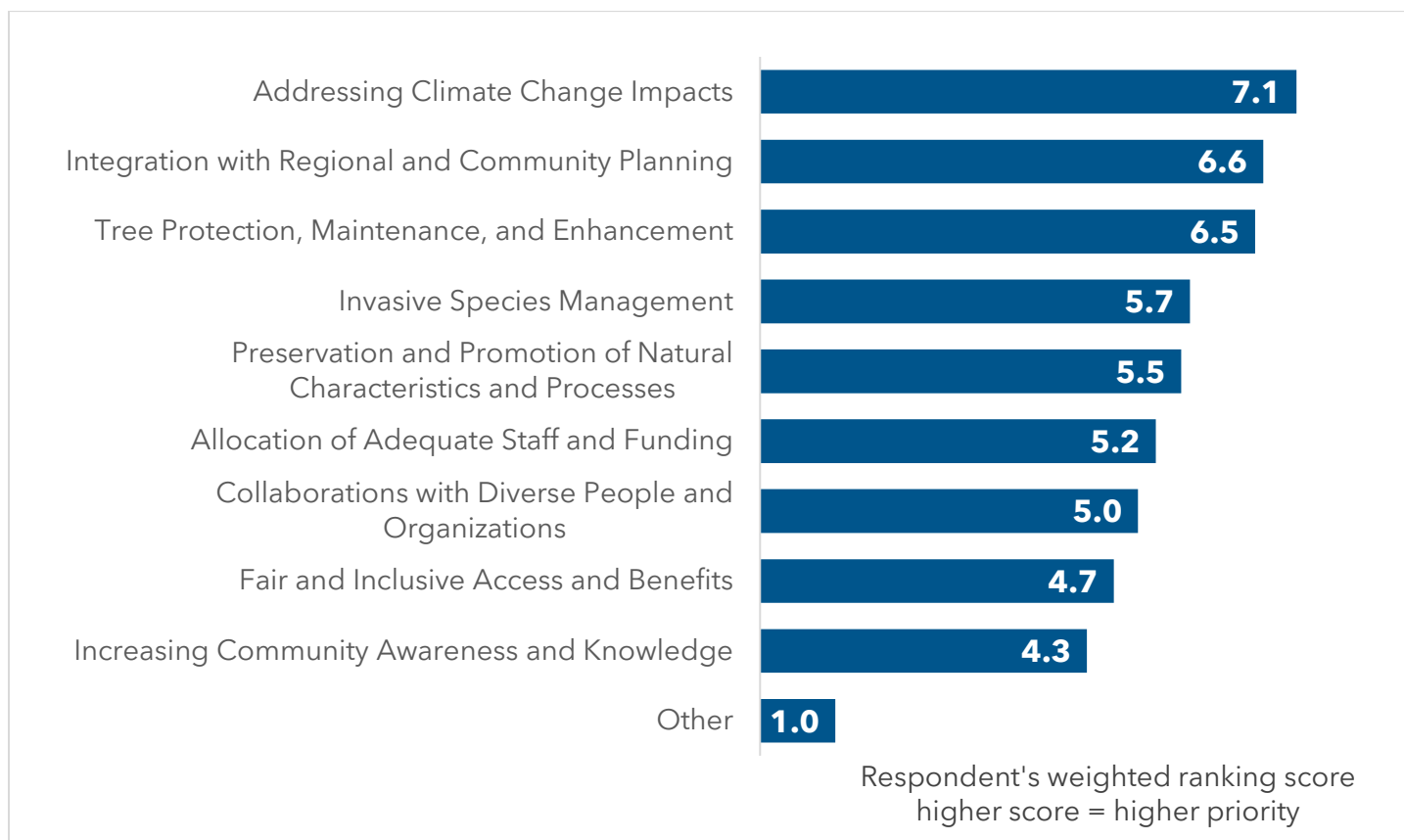


Figure 12. Respondent's ranking of the top ten priorities for urban forest management over the next ten years based on weighted averages (total respondents: 746)

A total of 186 respondents shared more insights on how HRM should prioritize urban forest management over the next ten years. Besides the priorities that were listed in the survey questions, respondents identified several other key priorities, including:

- Prioritizing **planting native species** that support local ecosystems and biodiversity. Some advocated for avoiding planting non-native species.
- Strengthening **enforcement and penalties** for unauthorized removal or damage of trees and vegetation. Respondents noted that this could include improving regulations around tree planting and maintenance, particularly in relation to power lines and other grey infrastructure.
- Creating **aesthetic and functional urban spaces** with trees and greenery, including integrating green spaces into urban planning, ensuring equitable and inclusive access, and enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal of Halifax.

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- Increasing the number of **fruit and nut trees** to promote food security and incorporating edible plants into urban planting schemes.
- Adopting **innovative approaches** like rewilding urban areas, creating wildlife corridors, and developing mini-forests adjacent to highways and in roundabouts

"Focusing on planting native trees that are resilient and support the ecosystems they grow in."

- Survey Respondent

Priority locations for tree planting

When asked where HRM should prioritize tree planting, respondents strongly prioritized new tree plantings in parks (voted as a high priority by 82% of respondents), new development projects (by 80%), schoolyards (by 70%), natural areas (by 63%), and residential streets (by 58%; Figure 13). On the other hand, more than half of respondents considered planting in residential yards (66%), parking lots (65%), industrial areas (66%), and cemeteries (77%) a medium to low priority. Cemeteries were considered the lowest priority among all locations, with 30% voting as low priority.

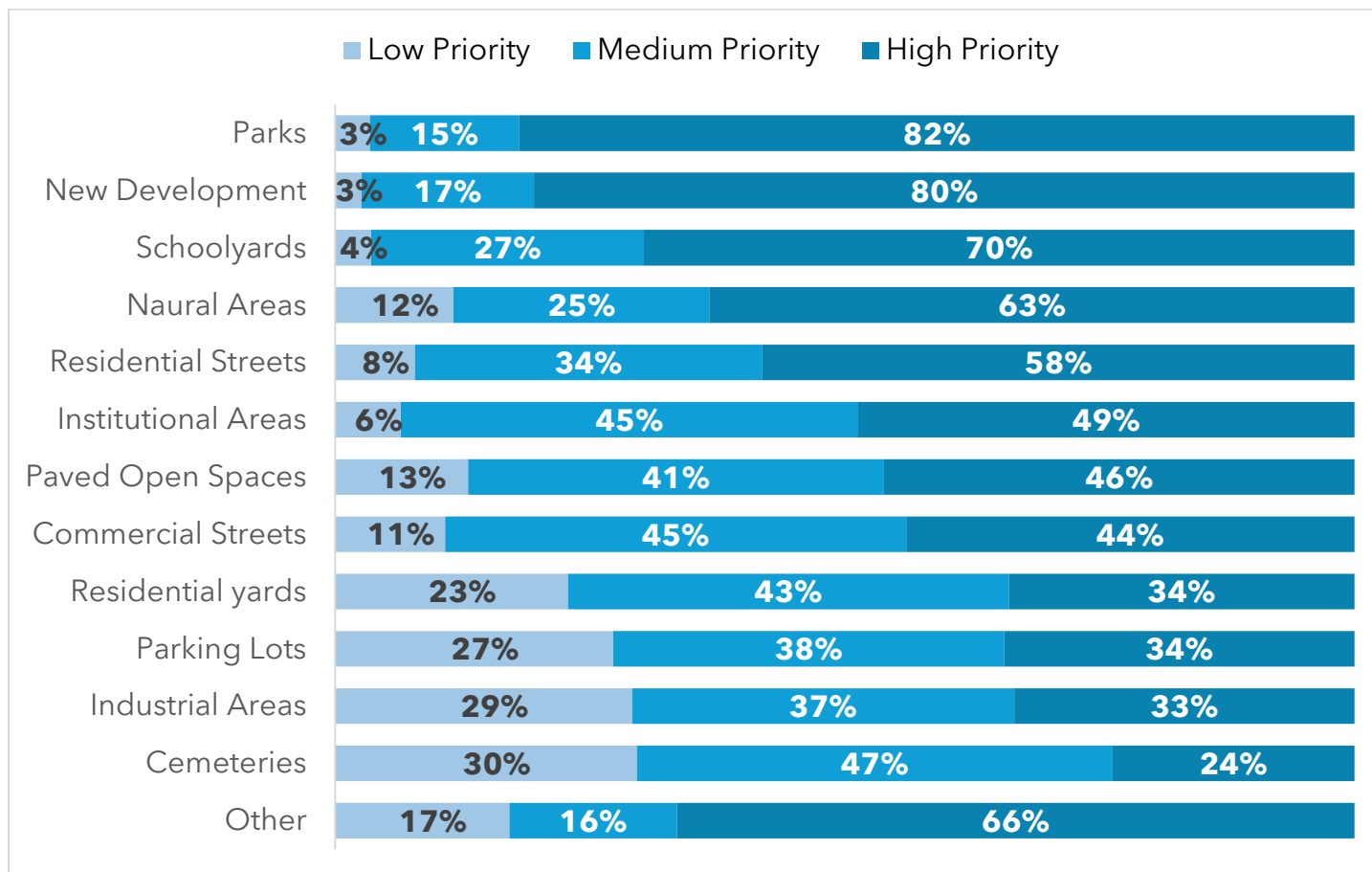


Figure 13. Respondent's preference for suitable tree planting locations (total respondents: 734)

Sixty-six percent (66%) of respondents felt that ‘other’ areas should be prioritized for planting, and 127 respondents proposed other locations for tree planting. As had been identified in the multiple-choice question, most respondents preferred more tree planting **along streets, bikeways, and sidewalks**, and indicated a higher priority for planting in downtown core and other densely built areas with significant asphalt and concrete surface. Another preferred location for planting was **community and recreational spaces**, including schoolyards, playgrounds, community gardens, and other recreational areas such as Halifax Common and Citadel Hill. Respondents also highlighted the importance of planting in **areas that connect existing green space** and support wildlife and people, as well as **in special areas and facilities**, such as coastal areas, hospitals, medical centers, and areas adjacent to provincial highways and bus stops.

Priority of urban forest actions on municipal property

Participants were asked to identify their priority for activities that HRM could undertake on its properties. The highest priority actions identified were improving species selection guidelines to ensure trees were appropriate for the planting sites (fully supported by 66%), constructing new tree planting spaces to accommodate more trees (by 65%), and planting more trees along streets and in parks (by 63%; Figure 14).

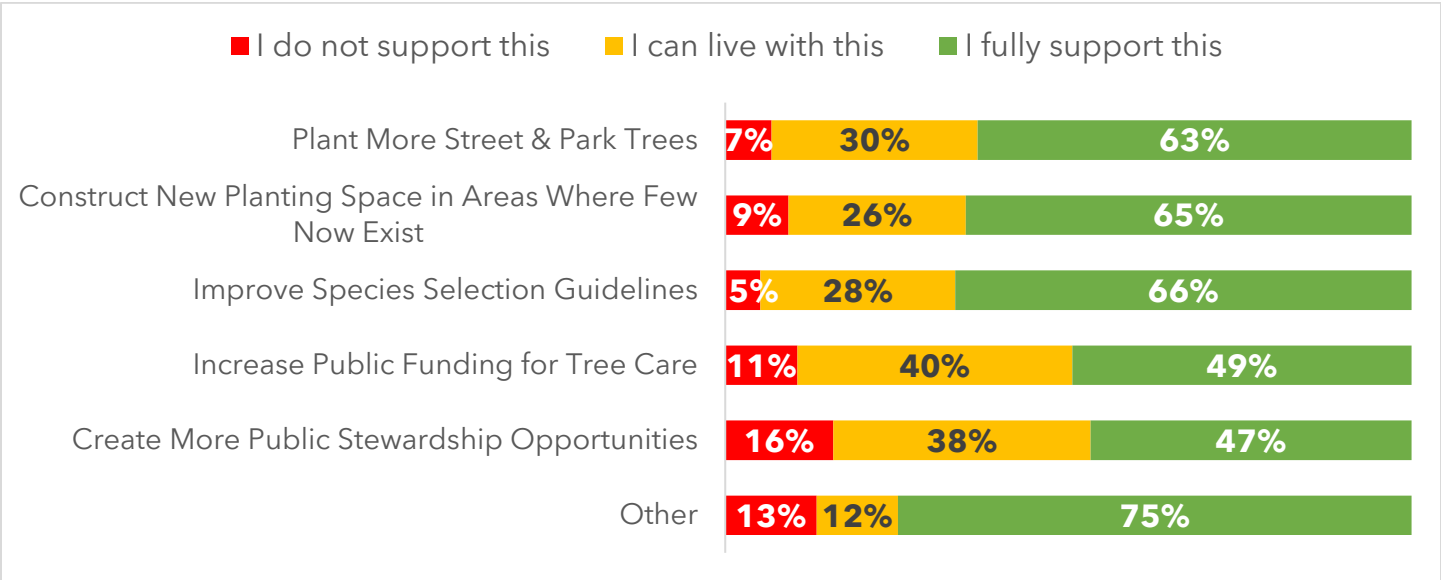


Figure 14. Respondent’s support for urban forest activities on municipal property (total respondents: 734)

Among the 130 respondents who provided detailed feedback, many emphasized the importance of **engaging local groups**, such as youth groups and school children, through community events and public educational programs. When it comes to planting, participants stressed the importance of **using native species to increase biodiversity**, and **planting in currently barren and underutilized areas**, such as planting medians and areas with limited tree canopy. They also highlighted the need for **regular pruning, watering, and removals of deadwood and invasive species** with **increased funding**. The **implementation and enforcement** of policies to protect trees and promote best practices were considered as priorities for the HRM.

"All of the above actions are equally important and should be integrated in a well thought out UFMP."

- Survey Respondent

"I think allocating planting spaces where none previously existed is ideal and will make up for some of the lost built heritage."

- Survey Respondent

Priority of urban forest actions on private property

Survey respondents were also asked about their level of support for HRM actions on private property., more respondents showed a higher support for activities on private property than for those on municipal land. The most supported activities included requiring tree planting with development sites for rainwater management and shade provision (fully supported by 91% of respondents), increasing tree planting requirements in development areas (by 86%), enhanced tree protection during construction (86%), retaining more trees in development areas (83%) (Figure 15). Fewer participants fully supported a tree by-law regulating trees on private property, with 45% indicating full support and 22% indicating they did not support it.

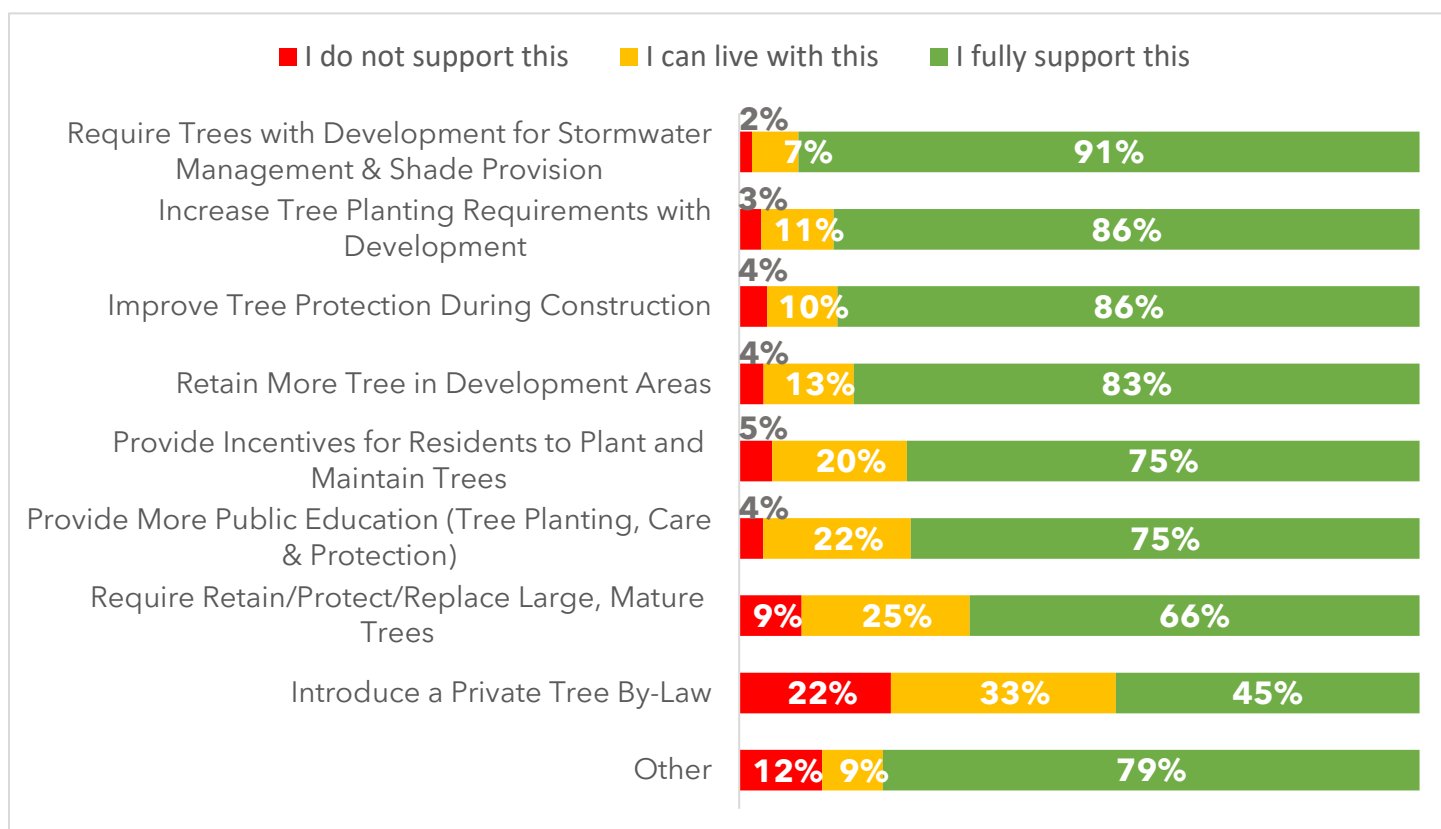


Figure 15. Respondent's support for urban forest activities on private property (total respondents: 735)

A total of 118 respondents shared more about their views on ‘other’ actions to improve the urban forest on private property. They expressed strong support for the protection of mature trees during development via relevant bylaws and banning the sale of invasive species. Additionally, education and engagement related actions to enhance awareness and participation in tree planting and care programs were well supported among participants. This included providing educational materials, offering incentive programs (e.g., financial incentives for low-income households, and incentive for planting fruit-bearing native trees), and hosting community events (e.g., community tree giveaway program). Respondents emphasized the need to enforce regulations to retain existing trees while allowing flexibility for necessary removals.

Community stewardship of the urban forest

Barriers to tree planting and maintenance on private property

When asked about what barriers prevent them from planting or maintaining trees on their property, the most significant barriers included cost (23% of respondents identified this as a barrier), utility line obstructions (23%), and property constraints (do not own or manage the property) (23%). Time constraints (3%), lack of interest (do not want a new tree; 5%), physical effort (7%) and space (11%) were less of a concern to most respondents.

A total of 188 respondents shared more details about the barrier for them to plant or maintain trees on their properties. **Cost** was one of the most significant barriers, with many citing high expenses for purchasing, planting, and maintaining trees. **Space limitations**, especially for those living in high-density areas, also posed a challenge. On the other hand, many already well-treed properties lacked room for more trees. Some homeowners were concerned about **potential damage** to water and sewer lines from tree roots and other risks due to wildfire and windstorms. Other prioritized sunlight for gardens or solar panels, making additional tree planting less desirable. **Site conditions** such as **rocky or thin soil layers** and **deer eating young trees** were also cited as common issues. **Physical limitations** hindered some people from planting or maintaining trees. Some respondents expressed a need for **better guidance on species selection and tree care**.

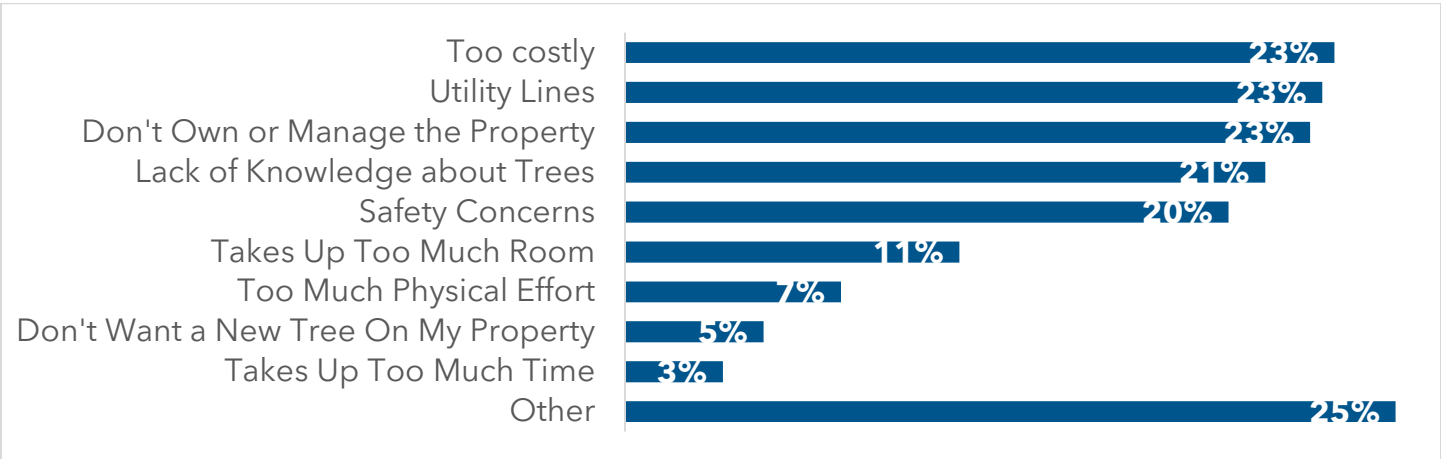


Figure 16. Public perception of the barriers preventing tree planting and maintenance on private property (total respondents: 735)

Approaches to encourage tree planting on private property

To encourage tree planting on private property, 53% of respondents thought that the most effective approach would be to provide additional subsidies and tax credits, such as tree planting subsidy, utility tax, or property tax credits. Respondents hoped for training and guidance on tree planting and care, including learning about choosing the right trees for their yards (cited by 49% of respondents), learning what trees were suitable for the region (by 38%), and training on tree planting and maintenance (by 37%). Only 6% of respondents thought nothing could encourage them to plant or care for trees on their property.

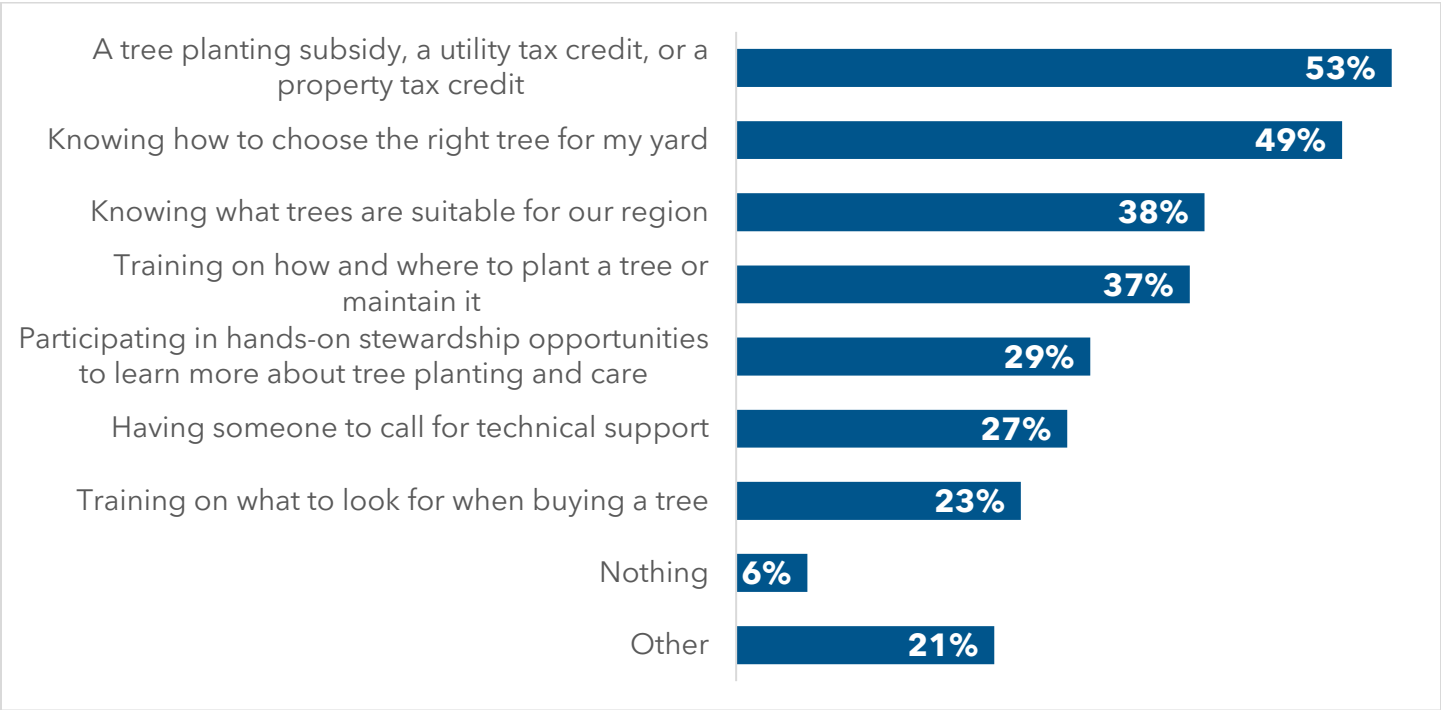


Figure 17. Respondent’s perception of ways to encourage tree planting and maintenance on private property (total respondents: 735)

A total of 155 respondents explained further about what could encourage them to plant trees on their properties. Many respondents who did not own a property or have limited space indicated that **a program providing trees for renters or those in shared housing** would be beneficial. **Offering subsidies, tax benefits, or other financial incentives for planting native or fruit-bearing trees** (e.g., covering tree delivery and planting) would alleviate financial and logistical burdens. **Physical assistance**, especially for seniors or those with limitations, and community programs where enterprises sponsor tree planting in neighbourhoods would foster a collective planting effort. Some respondents thought that **addressing concerns about existing invasive species** and offering support for their removal, as well as **offering guidance on species selection, tree planting and care**, could further motivate tree planting. They also suggested **public awareness campaigns, educational workshops, and free/subsidized landscape designs or consultations for new homeowners** to promote tree planting.

Shape Your City Map: Important Urban Forest Places

The online map allowed community members to share urban forest locations they valued or thought needed improvement. They could provide comments explaining their submissions further. Out of 64

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locations identified by 19 respondents, 27 (42%) were places of value, and 37 (58%) were identified as needing improvements.

Places of Value

Places of value (27) were concentrated around the Bedford Basin and Halifax Harbour in Halifax, Bedford, and Dartmouth. The highest concentration of valued places was found in Shaw Wilderness Park (8 mentions) around Williams Lake and Colpitt Lake. Sandy Lake Regional Park (2) and a forested stand in Clayton Park West near Layton Rd (3) were also mentioned. A full list of the places of value can be found in Table 3 (below), and their locations are mapped in Figure 18.

Respondents valued these areas because they provided habitat for wildlife and improved the health of streams, lakes, and watersheds through cooling and erosion control (14 mentions). They also mentioned the peace and tranquility of these spaces (1). Respondents further highlighted the importance of canopy cover (24), plant diversity (23), and scenic beauty (18) made accessible by walking paths and trails (14). On the other hand, respondents were worried that development around valued urban forest areas could lead to the removal of important trees and forested areas (9). They suggested to strengthen protection measures of these areas, plant more trees, and add amenities, such as picnic tables and signage.

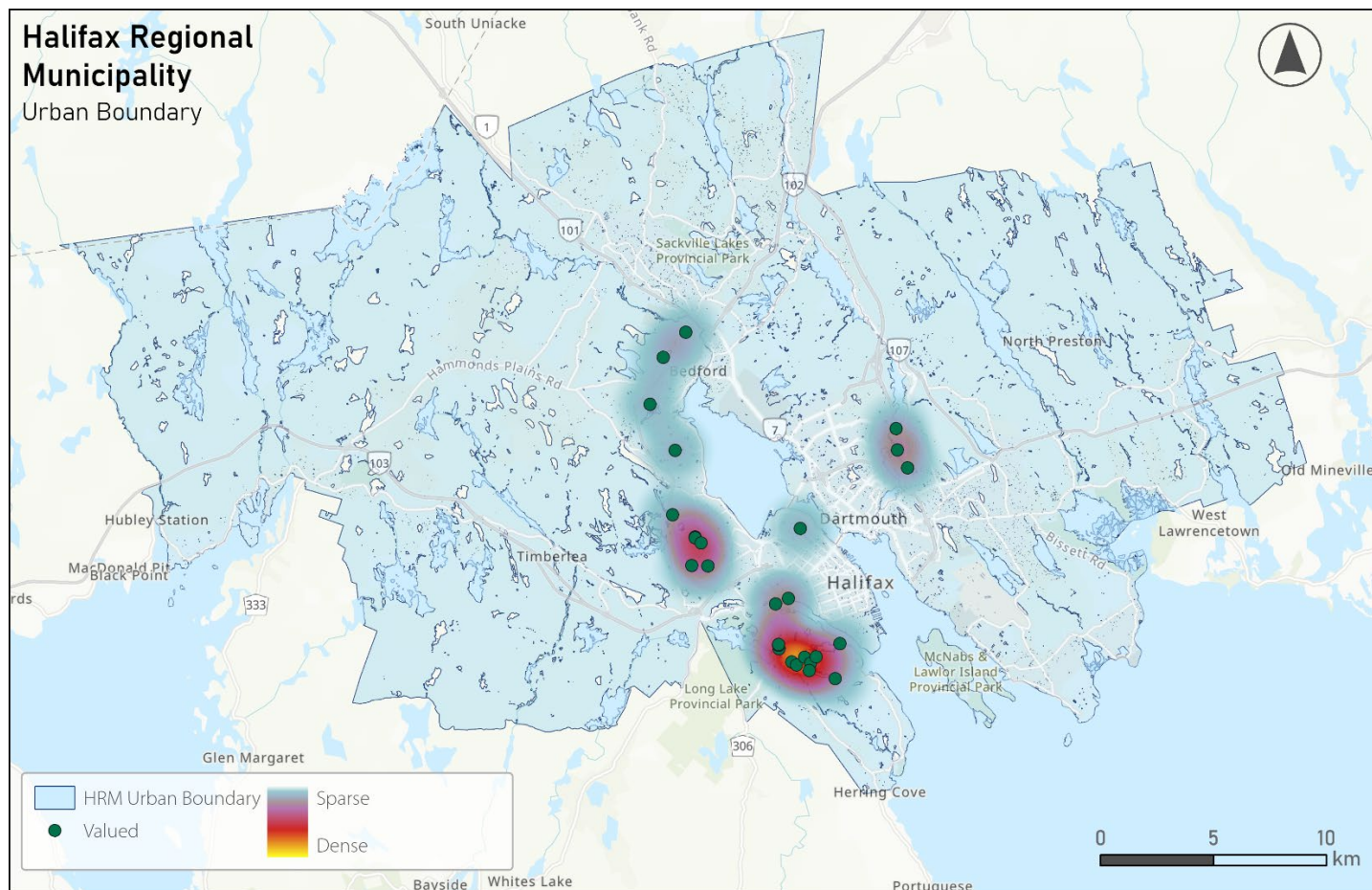


Figure 18. The locations of valued urban forest places within the HRM urban boundary based on the online mapping tool (total respondents:= 27)

Table 3. List of valued urban forest places mentioned in online mapping tool comments (total respondents: 27)

Locations added as valued urban forest places	
Williams Lake	Purcells Cover Backlands
Sandy Lake Regional Park	DND Bedford Rifle Range
Colpitt Lake	Novalea
Dartmouth's Entrance	Governor's Brook
West Park	Paper Mill Lake
Lacewood Dr Park	Fleetwod Trail
Paper Mill Lake	Chains of Lakes Watershed

Places Needing Improvement

Places needing improvement (37) were concentrated in Clayton Park West, or along roadways and in parks scattered throughout Halifax, Bedford, and Dartmouth (Figure 19 and Table 4). The most suggested improvements were to increase canopy or shade cover (15 mentions), restore and maintain greenspaces or trails (13), and mitigate hazards along paths (7). Specifically, people suggested planting trees along roads to serve as wildlife corridors, privacy screens, and sound barriers (5). Other suggestions included increasing connectivity between trails and parks (4), preventing materials dumping (4), and traffic calming (3).

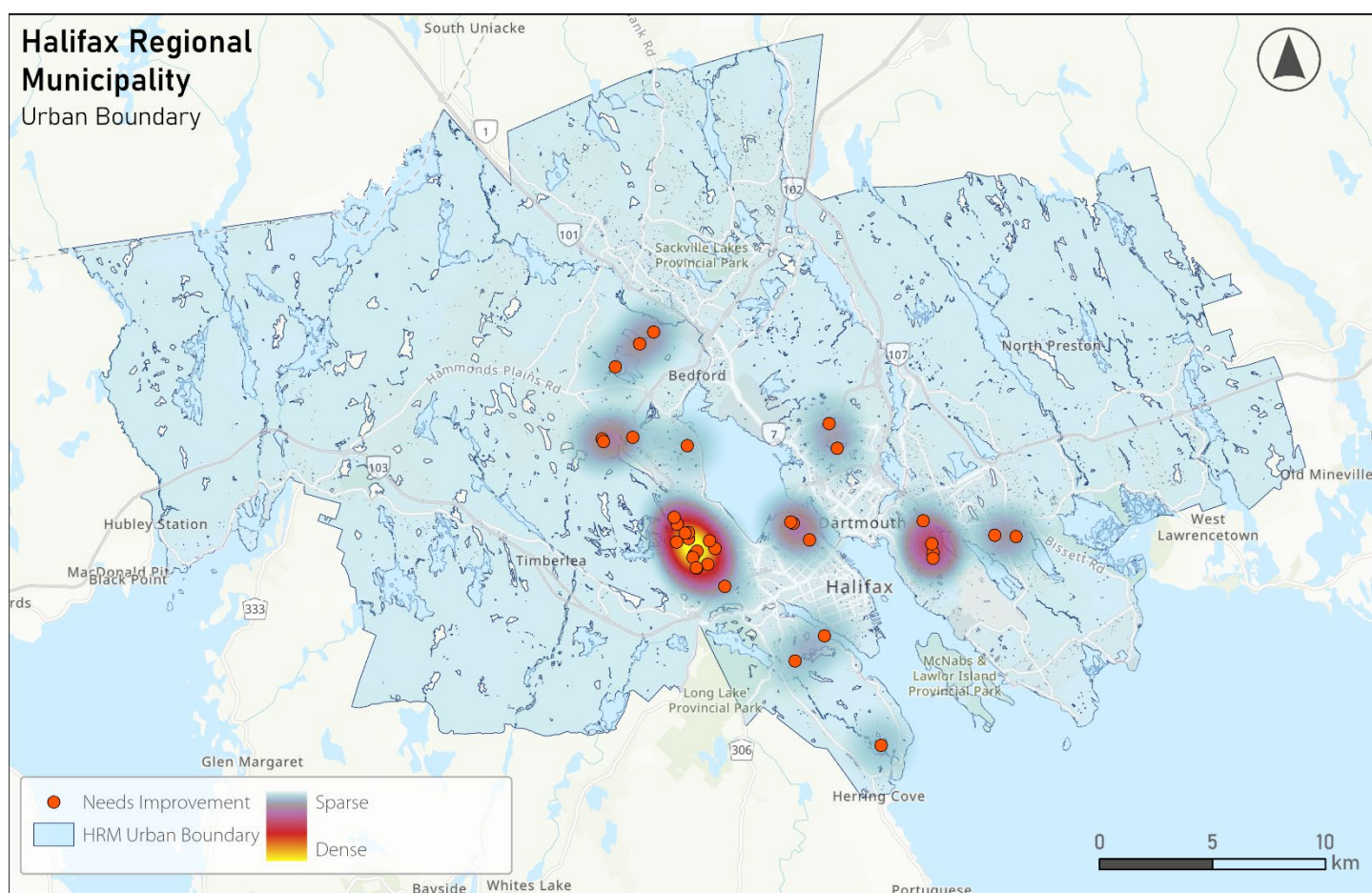


Figure 19. The locations of urban forest places that could use improvement within the HRM urban boundary based on the online mapping tool (total respondents: 37)

Table 4. List of urban forest places that could used improvement mentioned in online mapping tool comments (total respondents: 37)

Locations added as places where the urban forest could be improved	
Route 207	Sandy Lake (West Side)
Highway 111	Purcells Cover Backlands
Highway 102	Northwest Arm Path
Marsh Lake	Peverill’s Brook

“Although closed to public access, the 600 acres of forest at the DND Bedford Rifle range is contiguous with the forests of Sandy Lake Regional Park. There is likely wildlife movement through here, and extensive wildlife habitat, including for a few species at risk.”

- Mapping Tool Respondent

Targeted Technical Workshops

Participants at the online and in-person targeted workshops included members from various federal, provincial, municipal, and Aboriginal governments such as Nova Scotia Power, Halifax Water, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), as well as others. The intention was to identify current challenges and opportunities, think about a vision for the future, and identify solutions to achieve that vision through the plan's implementation. Participants were asked to discuss challenges and opportunities, their vision for the future and solutions for how to achieve it around four urban forest themes: tree planting, tree protection, urban forest management and urban forest engagement.



Figure 20. Participants of the targeted workshops for partner organizations

Planting

Participants encouraged HRM to take bold action to **enhance growing conditions along streetscapes** by burying utilities, formalizing utility setbacks, and meeting rights-of-way (ROW) standards using consistent sources of developer funding. Argyle Street served as a notable example of where this has been accomplished. Participants noted that the inclusion of trees in intensification projects has been inconsistent. They suggested **establishing planting and species selection standards** for street trees that consider existing challenges like snowplows. Participants recommended that planting goals and actions **prioritize native species and bird-friendly planting palettes** and help **increase species diversity** by creating list of native, bird-friendly, and less common but suitable tree species. Identifying areas with low species richness would also help prioritize the location of planting efforts to increase tree species diversity. Participants addressed the need for **better maintenance of street planters**, especially on Lower Water Street and Bedford Row. To make downtown more vibrant, they suggested **planting more trees and planning new**

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parks such as Granville Park, and designating tree planting sites for non-profit organizations like Scouts Canada. Some participants also raised the importance of balancing urban forest canopy goals with **the need for programmable and active use spaces** due to potential trade-offs between the two.

Protection

Protecting vegetated waterways and wetlands in areas of suburban expansion was perceived as critical by many participants. Participants suggested that urban forest protection should be **mainstreamed across HRM planning policies**. Emphasizing the importance of **tree protection over replanting in new subdivisions**, they noted that road construction often involved considerable tree removal, followed by replanting with small-stature trees, leading to runoff and erosion. They recommended **creating urban forestry positions** within the planning department to support tree retention during the planning and development phases. These positions could also help acquire parkland that included forested areas, thereby enhancing biodiversity outcomes and ecosystem service provision.

Respondents expressed a desire for **clearer street tree protection requirements** as well as **protection and retention fees** when widening ROW for active transit. They highlighted the need for better strategies to **balance competing priorities**. They specifically called for **changes to the Red Book (Municipal Design Guidelines)** to make development outcomes more predictable, potentially by including an urban forestry-specific section. They also emphasized the importance of **incorporating biodiversity (including wildlife) considerations** into the UFMP and advocated for **retaining dead trees** to preserve their habitat value.

Management

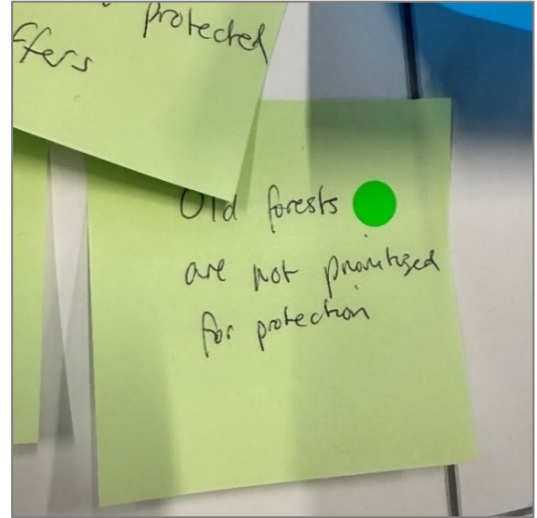
Respondents called for creating **an invasive species management plan** and **proactive measures to address potential pest and diseases**, such as the emerald ash borer. Emphasizing the need to **manage risks after extreme weather events**, respondents would like to see a focus on reducing the risk posed by the most vulnerable trees and providing clear cleanup guidelines. They also suggested **using woody debris as a resource** instead of treating it as waste. Respondents desired clearer urban forestry goals and associated requirements for development. Specifically, the development community sought **clarity** on where the HRM wanted them to concentrate on green amenities (e.g. along streets or in riparian areas). Participants suggested an annual progress report to the council and UFMP reviews every five years for transparency and accountability. Additionally,



respondents requested a comparison of the previous Urban Forest Mater Plan with the new draft UFMP to evaluate performance in terms of canopy cover, temperature, and impervious cover changes.

Engagement

Respondents believed that community engagement was crucial for fostering a sense of ownership and understanding of urban forestry initiatives, ensuring long-term support and success. They stressed the need for **mandatory engagement with developers** and **improved communication strategies** to reach community members, including targeting non-forestry related community groups. They advocated for **incorporating Indigenous values and knowledge** in urban forest management. They also suggested promoting ecological diversity in **school tree plantings**, as well as **conveying the financial value of early investment in treatment** to prevent larger scale invasive species issues.



Participants highlighted the need for governing bodies to understand the value of greenspace and for **accessible property boundary information** through GIS for easier determination of ownership. They recognized the **contributions of urban forestry NGOs**, specifically mentioning Peter Duinker, and called for increased engagement with HRM residents.

"Silos between park, private, and street trees present challenges to protecting tree out of scope"

- Workshop Participant

Synthesis of feedback

Results from the first phase of public engagement are summarised around the following themes:

- Developing a **vision** for the future urban forest, i.e., imagining Halifax's ideal urban forest after the plan's implementation and understanding what community members would like to see in the plan to feel their community is represented
- **Maintenance and Monitoring:** Maintaining the urban forest, i.e., pruning, watering, and other activities that assist with the establishment and growth of trees, and enhancing the levels of services to establish a more proactive maintenance program.
- **Management:** Managing the urban forest, i.e., managing the urban forest as natural assets, monitoring and tracking the conditions of the urban forest, and managing threats to the urban forest, such as invasive species and climate change.
- **Planning and Protection:** Planning and protecting the urban forest, i.e., protecting trees from removal or damage from activities, such as development and construction, and creating planning tools and policies that help enhance the urban forest.

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- **Planting:** Planting right trees in right places, prioritizing areas where now few trees exist, replacing removed trees to offset canopy cover loss, sustaining and increasing the urban forest and its benefits to community.
- **Stewardship:** Stewarding for inclusive urban forest management, i.e., participation from community members, landowners, and community organizations to steward the urban forest (e.g., tree planting, watering, invasive species management, education, and access, etc.).

Summary of feedback for the urban forest long-term vision

Urban forest vision

- By 2050, survey respondents would like to see a healthy, diverse, well-managed, and expanding urban forest across parks, private yards, streets, and natural areas in Halifax that provides important environmental and social benefits.

Urban forest benefits

- Survey respondents acknowledged a wide range of benefits that the urban forest can provide. They considered the urban forest as an important component of a livable and environmentally sustainable city.
- Mapping tool participants valued forested areas in and around parks and natural areas because they were accessible space that offered ecological values, peace and tranquility, and scenic beauty.

Canopy change

- 82% of survey respondents would like to see an increasing tree canopy

Summary of feedback for the urban forest maintenance

Requirements for developers

- Technical workshop participants highlighted the need for more clarity on green amenity requirements for developers

Proactive tree maintenance

- Survey respondents highlighted the need for regular pruning, watering, and removals of deadwood and invasive species with increased funding.

Summary of feedback for the urban forest management

Monitoring and reporting

- Technical workshop participants suggested:
 - An annual progress report to the council and UFMP reviews every five years.
 - A comparison of the previous Urban Forest Master Plan with the new draft UFMP to evaluate performance
 - Provision of accessible data for easier determination of ownership.

Urban forest management program performance

- Survey respondents thought the HRM's urban forest management over the last ten years was only partially successful. They identified critical issues in the following aspects:

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- Community awareness and knowledge about urban forestry
 - Integration with regional and community planning
 - Funding and staffing
- Survey respondents believed that a successful urban forest management program should:
 - Enhance tree protection during development
 - Increase tree canopy
 - Ensure equitable access to tree canopy and associated benefits
 - Increase tree planting
- Survey respondents were partially satisfied with the current levels of service. They were particularly unsatisfied with:
 - Replacement of trees removed due to development
 - Public education and awareness
- Survey respondents were more satisfied with the following levels of service:
 - Tree planting
 - Pruning
 - Stump removals
- 63% of survey respondents are willing to spend an extra \$25-100 per year on property taxes to support improved urban forest management.

Incorporation of Indigenous values and knowledge

- Technical workshop participants suggested the incorporation of Indigenous values and knowledge in urban forest management

Manage urban forest threats and risks

- Survey respondents identified the most significant threats to the urban forest as habitat loss due to development and climate change.
- Survey respondents prioritized the following urban forest management objectives:
 - Climate resilience (1st)
 - Integrating urban forest policy into regional and community planning process (2nd)
 - Protection, maintaining, and enhancing the urban forest (3rd)
- Technical workshop participants suggested to:
 - Create an invasive species management plan
 - Introduce proactive measures to address pest and diseases
 - Manage risks after extreme weather events
 - Use woody debris as a resource rather than a waste
- Open house participants called for more proactive disaster planning

Summary of feedback for planning and protection of the urban forest

Integration with strategic plans and process

- Technical workshop participants recommended to:
 - Mainstream urban forest protection across HRM planning policies
 - Plan new parks
 - Update the Red Book (Municipal Design Guidelines) and include an urban forestry-specific section

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- Create new urban forestry positions within planning departments to support the integration
- Incorporate biodiversity/wildlife considerations

Balance competing priorities

- Technical workshop participants emphasized the importance of balancing tree planting with competing priorities, such as housing, and the need for programmable and active use park spaces

Protection of natural areas

- Open house participants:
 - Stressed the importance of protecting upper watershed, unique forest areas and urban wilderness
 - Suggested specific sites for protection due to their ecological significance.
 - Called for more protection of areas outside service zones

Protection of existing trees

- Open house participants:
 - Raised concerns over removal of mature trees for major developments and clearcutting activities in rural areas.
 - Called for more protective measures to stop clearcutting enabled by development permits.
- Survey respondents:
 - Showed more support for improving tree protection during construction on private land. But they were the least supportive of a tree protection bylaw on private land.
 - Suggested to prioritize enforcement and penalties for unauthorized removal or damage of trees.
- Technical workshop participants suggested to:
 - Prioritize tree protection over replanting in new subdivisions
 - Establish clearer street tree protection requirements
 - Introduce protection and retention fees when widening ROW for active transit
 - Retain dead trees as habitat

Enhancement of green space connectivity/accessibility

- Open house participants suggested establishing active transportation corridors/greenways to improve green space connectivity.

Summary of feedback for planting of the urban forest

Priority planting locations

- Survey respondents:
 - Prioritized new tree planting in parks (by 82% of respondents), new development projects (by 80%), and schoolyards (70%).
- Open-ended responses suggested other priority locations, including along streets, bikeways, and sidewalks.
- Mapping tool participants identified areas that needed improvement, mostly located along roadways and in parks. Key suggestions included increasing canopy cover, restoring greenspaces

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and trails, planting trees along roads for wildlife corridors, and improving connectivity between trails and parks.

Priority urban forest activities

- Survey respondents showed more support for the following activities on municipal property:
 - Planting more street and park trees
 - Constructing new planting space in tree-deficit areas
 - Improving species selection guidelines
- Survey respondents showed more support for the following activities on private property:
 - Requiring trees with development for stormwater management and shade
 - Increasing tree planting requirements with development

Planting space requirements

- Technical workshop participants suggested to:
 - Enhance growing conditions along streetscapes
 - Improve maintenance of street planters
 - Designate planting sites for non-profit organizations

Species selection

- Survey respondents who shared open-ended responses suggested to prioritize:
 - Planting native species and fruit and nut trees (for food security)
 - Trialing innovative approaches to rewild space
- Technical workshop participants suggested to:
 - Establish planting and species selection standards that consider existing challenges like snowplows
 - Prioritize native species and bird-friendly planting palettes
 - Increase species diversity, especially in areas with low species richness

Summary of feedback for public stewardship of the urban forest

Current public perceptions and knowledge

- 74% of survey participants had previously heard of the term urban forest, but 61% were unaware of the existing Urban Forest Master Plan

Public education, communication, and stewardship

- Open house participants called for:
 - More public education on invasive species and natural area management
- Technical workshop participants suggested:
 - Improved communication strategies to reach all community members (including non-forestry related groups)
 - Mandatory engagement with developers
 - Creating school tree planting programs
 - Approaches to convey the financial value of early investment in treatment of invasives species

Barriers to tree planting and care on people's own property

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- The biggest barriers indicated by survey respondents:
 - Costs (cited by 23% of respondents)
 - Utility obstructions (23%)
 - Property ownership constraints (23%)
 - Time, interest, physical efforts, and space were less of a concern to most respondents
- Survey respondents suggested that incentives for tree planting on private property could include subsidies, tax credits, training and guidance on tree selection, tree planting and care.