



Young District

What We Heard Report

HALIFAX



Acknowledgement

Halifax Regional Municipality is located in the traditional, unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people, who have lived here since time immemorial. We recognize that we are all Treaty People and respect the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed here. Through this planning process, we seek to strengthen our commitment to a relationship of trust and collaboration with local First Nations and the Indigenous community.

Affirmation

We acknowledge that Nova Scotia is the birthplace of the African presence in Canada. African Nova Scotians are a distinct founding people in our community who have contributed to and have been a key part of Nova Scotian culture and history for over 400 years. We acknowledge that African teachings, strength, and perseverance continue to challenge and inspire our community.



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Introduction

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Halifax Regional Municipality is developing a long-term plan to guide the transformation of the Young District into a complete transit-oriented neighbourhood, where residents can work, play and shop within a reasonable walking distance of their homes.

This document summarizes key findings from Phase 1 of Public Engagement. Public feedback from this phase, along with the technical analysis, will help inform the vision, land use policies, and concepts for the transportation network.

About the Young District

Young District is an emerging neighbourhood in Halifax's North End and generally includes lands north and south of Young Street (Figure 1). The district is bound by Robie Street (east), Almon Street (south), Windsor Street (west), and Columbus Street (north). The strategically located district includes the Halifax Forum site, a historic and important recreational facility, and is within a 10-minute walking distance of the Hydrostone District, a National Historic Site. The district is also home to a mix of land uses, Canada Post sorting facility, the Department of National Defence, as well as residential buildings mixed with commercial and light industrial services.

The Young District includes large underutilized or vacant lots that present significant redevelopment opportunities, with the potential for over 12,500 residential units (or 26,500 people). Unlocking this potential requires significant and coordinated investments in transportation, water, wastewater, power, and park infrastructure, among others.

Figure 1. Study Area of the Young District Infrastructure Plan and the Young Street Lands FGN



Planning process

To guide future development, the Municipality initiated two (2) interconnected projects:

1. Young District Infrastructure Plan (YDIP)
2. A Comprehensive Neighbourhood Planning Process for the Young Street Lands Future Growth Node (FGN)

Young District Infrastructure Plan

The Young District Infrastructure Plan (YDIP) will develop a vision for the Young District, and guide the planning, design and implementation of transportation, water, wastewater, stormwater, power, and communication infrastructure in the neighbourhood over the next 20-30 years.

It also supports the Comprehensive Neighbourhood Planning Process for the Young Street Lands and the Kempt Road Future Growth Nodes (FGN) by providing clarity and direction on potential development capacity, right-of-way requirements and public realm improvements, among others. This project will guide future decision-making for public and private infrastructure investments, policy changes and strategic initiatives to support the transformation of the Young District.

Comprehensive neighbourhood planning process

The Young Street Lands FGN is approximately 11.8 hectares of underutilized land within the broader Young District. It is generally bounded by Young Street, Robie Street, Almon Street and Windsor Street. This area was identified as an FGN for its potential to accommodate significant growth within the Regional Centre. As a designated FGN, this site is required to go through a comprehensive neighbourhood planning process to define its future land uses, building heights, density distributions, community amenities and street network. This process will ensure coordination and integration between future development and planned infrastructure investments.

The YDIP and the Comprehensive Neighbourhood Planning Process for the Young Street Lands FGN represent a rare and unique opportunity to guide the transformation of a large area of land (~60 hectares) in the heart of the Halifax Peninsula. These projects will enable substantial densities with sustainable infrastructure and a complete community that supports current and future residents.

PHASE 1

Public Engagement Report

In summer 2024, the municipality asked the public to share their ideas for the Young District. The project team asked for input to guide the vision, design principles, land use policies, and transportation network for the Young District. This report summarizes what we heard from the community during the first round of public engagement.

Phase 1 was as a listening and learning phase – an opportunity to gather information, and ideas from the public. The goal of this phase was to understand what the community values in the Young District are today, what they think is currently missing, and what could be improved.

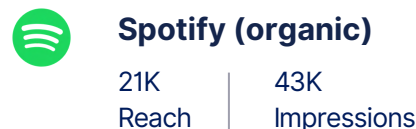
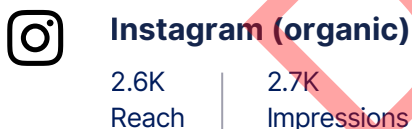
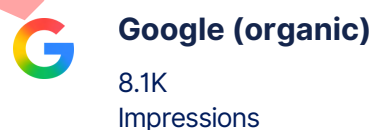
The insights collected here will shape the draft vision, policies, and design concepts that we will bring back for public review in Phase 2.



How we engaged

This section provides an overview of the engagement process, including outreach methods, and engagement activities. The Municipality used a variety of tools to engage residents of the district and the broader community, including in-person open house sessions, a project website, an online survey, targeted mailouts, and social media advertising.

Social media & advertising



Outreach

Notification letters were mailed to residents and property owners located within 200m of the Young District to inform them of the project and invite them to participate in public engagement activities.

Notification letters



Over 3,500 notification letters distributed.

Project website

The project website, hosted on EngageHalifax, served as a central hub of information, and included background materials, a summary of the FGN process, introductory videos about the FGN and the Infrastructure Plan, and an online survey. The website also includes an “Ask A Question” tab that enables residents to ask questions to municipal employees directly.

Website visits



5,900 visits to the project website (June 1 and July 31, 2024)

Engagement events

Engagement activities took place between June and July 2024 and included Open House sessions and an online survey through the Shape Your City platform.

Public open house



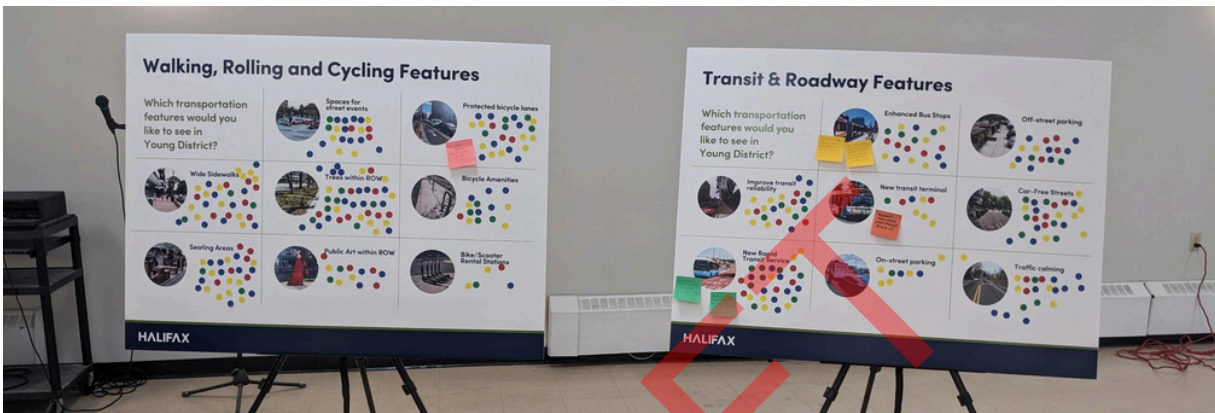
The municipality hosted three (3) open house sessions at the Halifax Forum on June 26, 2024. The open house sessions provided the public with an opportunity to speak directly to the project team, learn about the project and share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns about the Young District.

- Morning session: 9:00 – 11:30am (50 attendees)
- Afternoon session: 2:00 – 4:30pm (77 attendees)
- Evening session: 6:30 – 9:00pm (88 attendees)
- 215 people attended the open house sessions

Engagement activities at the open house sessions included:

Dotmocracy boards

Participants used sticky dots to identify their top priorities on key topics including community services, transportation elements, and park features.



Sticky note feedback

Attendees were invited to share their comments by writing directly on three thematic boards. Each board posed an open-ended question designed to capture community values, priorities, and concerns. The prompts included:

- What do you value/love about the Young District?
- What is the biggest improvement that could be made to Young District?
- What is missing today from Young District?
- Did we miss anything?



Participatory Mapping

Participants were invited to draw, and sketch their ideas for improvements, and future connections onto a large-scale aerial map of the district.



Online survey

A survey was available through the [Young District project website](#) between June 11 and July 22, 2024. The survey invited the public to share thoughts, aspirations, and concerns to help shape a vision for the future of Young District. The survey included a mix of closed and open-ended questions covering topics, including demographics, desired community amenities, parks and open spaces, transportation priorities and features, and land use and services. Some questions asked respondents to rate their preferences, while others allowed for open-ended comments.

Survey

525 people completed the online survey.

June 11: Online survey open

June 26: Public open house

July 22: Online survey close

Who we heard from

3

Survey respondents were asked to share basic demographic information to help the project team understand who provided input during this phase of engagement.

Place of residence

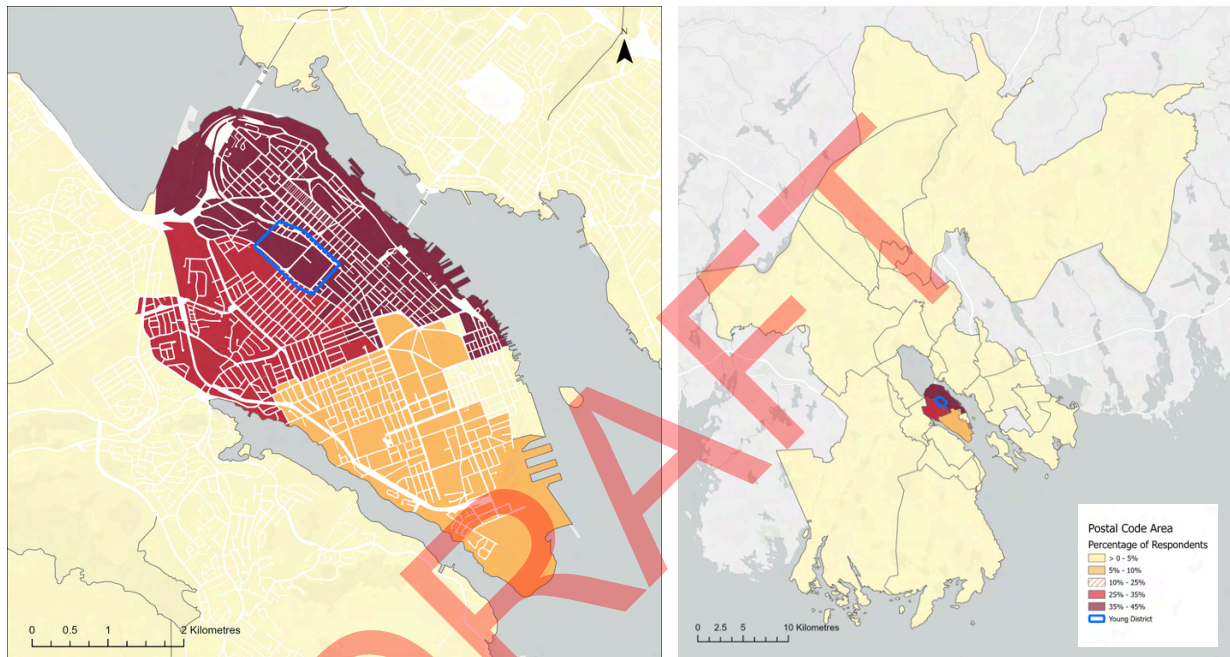


Figure 2. Residence of survey respondents by percentage and postal code area

Respondents were asked to provide the first three digits of their postal code area. 66% of respondents said they live on the Halifax peninsula, with the highest concentration of respondents located in the north end. 17% of survey respondents did not indicate their place of residence.

Age group

Survey participants were asked to identify their age group. Figure 3 shows that the largest portion of respondents were between 40 and 49 years old (25%), followed by 30- to 39-year-olds (24%) and 50- to 59-year-olds (18%). The fewest responses came from those aged 15-19 (1%).

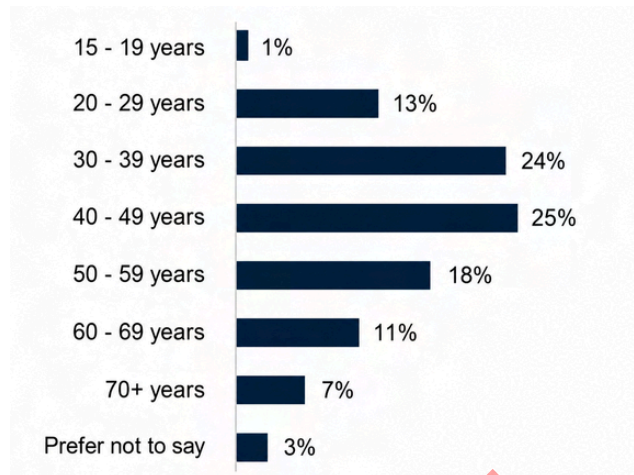


Figure 3. Age breakdown by percentage (%)

Relationship to the Young District

Participants were asked to select one or more options to describe their relationship to the Young District.

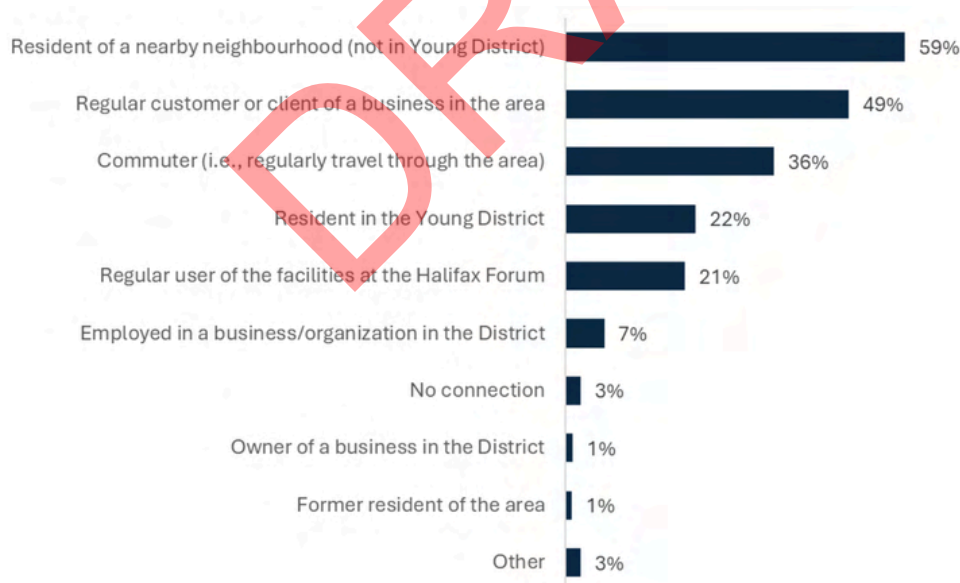


Figure 4. The relationship of respondents to the Young District. Respondents were able to select more than one option.

What we heard

Values, Gaps and priorities

Participants told us how they perceive the Young District today: what they value, what is missing, and what could be improved.

QUESTION ONE

What do you value or love about the Young District today?



Residents shared what they love or value about Young District. Some of the key themes include:



Central location

Residents value the district's central location on the peninsula, proximity to the bridges, and convenient access to major streets, and transit routes. Participants also appreciate that they can reach downtown Halifax easily via several bus routes.



Access to everyday services

Residents value existing services like grocery stores, pharmacies, the Halifax Forum, and farmers' markets. The Forum, in particular, is seen as a key community gathering place.



Walkable destinations

Residents appreciate being able to walk to grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants, the Halifax Forum, and the Hydrostone.



Street trees

Residents value existing street trees and many expressed a strong desire for more trees, green spaces, and parks.



Neighbourhood character

many like the 'small' neighbourhood while some feel that a cohesive and stronger identity is needed.

QUESTION TWO

What do you think is missing today?

Respondents identified key gaps in five core areas:



Transportation

- Walkability gaps: respondents expressed frustration with the long blocks, infrequent crosswalks and narrow sidewalks.

"It is ugly and very uninviting for pedestrians. Blocks are typically too large, and cars are too fast."

"Need more side streets and crossings for pedestrians and cyclists."

- No protected cycling infrastructure that link to the broader bikeway network.
- Frequent and reliable transit is missing.

"More frequent transit along north-south routes and adding east-west routes that connect"

"It takes me just as long to bus from my home on Gottingen Street to my work in the Young District (45 minutes) as it does to walk. I want to get rid of my car, but I can't because the bus system in this city is unusable."

- Key intersections like Young Street & Robie Street and Young Street & Windsor Street were identified as challenging for traffic flow.

"It's really hard to turn out of the Superstore parking lot."

“Better traffic management, especially if considering ultra dense high rises nearby.”

- Balanced parking management: most surface lots are underutilized, while event parking can sometimes overflow elsewhere.

“I'd love to see parking lots and the Canada Post building converted into housing, retail, entertainment, and services.”



Parks & green spaces

- One of the most frequently raised concerns was the lack of parks, shade, street trees and green spaces in the district.

“The area is limited in parks and green space and as density increases having easy access to parks is important.”

“Very few green spaces. Needs more parks with trees and benches.”



Housing

- Participants expressed that the area lacks diverse and affordable housing options.

“No need for suburban style, low rise developments or empty parking lots on the peninsula. We need to make better use of this land for people and for the environment.”



Services & amenities

- Respondents think that community facilities (library, recreation centre, pool, day-care, schools, clinics) have not kept up with the growth; small, local shops are under-represented relative to big-box retail.

"I would love to see the Forum redeveloped to meet a more diverse range of interests."

"Additional infrastructure to support the growth of the area (schools, day cares, clinics, accessibility, parks, etc.). There is a lot of focus on housing right now, however, not enough attention on the other infrastructure linked to population growth."

"A community centre with pool, rinks, fitness centre, programs. There are tons of families in the area that would benefit from a facility like this in the area."



Neighbourhood character

- Many feel the area lacks character and a sense of place. Distinctive architecture, street trees, active ground-floor, and welcoming public spaces are largely missing, leaving the area feeling generic and auto-oriented.

"I think what is missing is a community feel to the space, more green environments, and more devoted pedestrian character."

"Much of it feels like a generic strip mall without any unique features."

"More trees and natural elements to bring the district to life."



QUESTION THREE

What is the biggest improvement that we could make to the Young District?

Participants identified several improvements that would make Young District a better and more complete neighbourhood.

Improved transportation options

Participants want a more walkable, bicycle-friendly, and transit-oriented neighbourhood that puts people first. Typical suggestions included:

- Wider sidewalks, more crosswalks
- Protected bicycle lanes
- Frequent and reliable transit
- Rapid transit service
- Traffic calming and fewer travel lanes
- Redesigning streets for people
- Fewer parking lots
- Better intersection design, specifically at the intersection of Robie-Young and Young-Bayers-Windsor

More parks & green space

Participants want new neighbourhood parks, street-tree canopy, and community gardens to improve the quality of life and support a healthy, and aesthetically pleasing environment.

Expanded services & community amenities

Participants want more facilities to match the population growth. Typical suggestions included: multi-use community centres and recreational facilities (pool, rink, fitness), new schools and daycares, medical clinics, cultural spaces and more local cafes, shops and fresh-food options.

Diverse and affordable housing

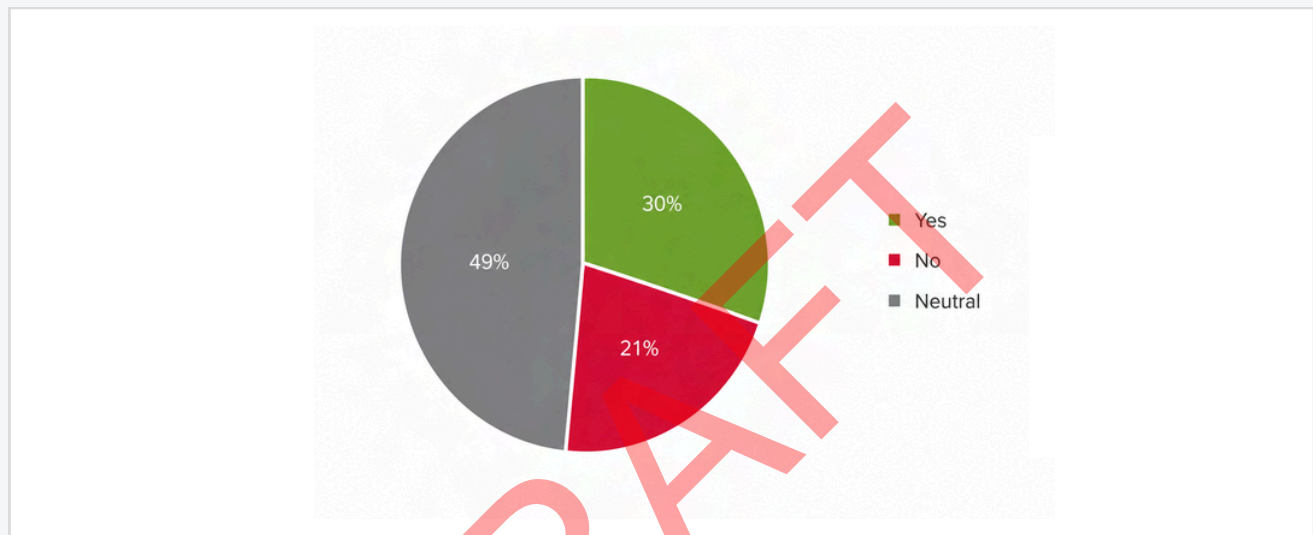
Participants suggested higher density housing, including mid- and high-rise buildings with a range of unit sizes. There's also strong desire for affordable housing, and general support for integrating residential, commercial, and retail spaces to create a more vibrant and walkable neighbourhood where residents can easily access the services and amenities they need.

District Naming

QUESTION FOUR

Do you like the name ‘Young District’?

Survey respondents were asked if they like the name “Young District”. Nearly half of respondents felt neutral about the name and less than one-third liked the name.



QUESTION FIVE

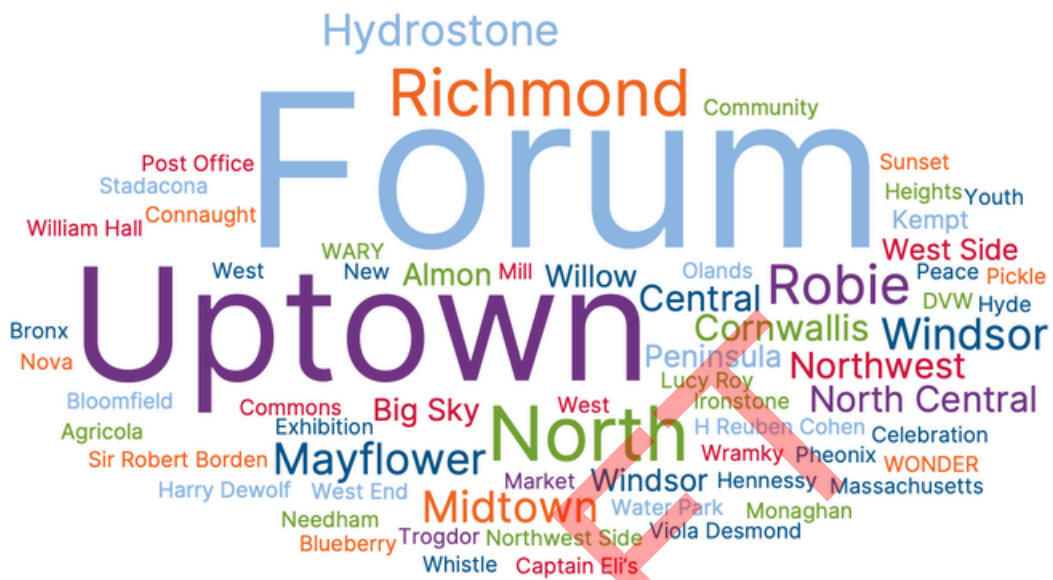
What other names should we consider?

At the open house sessions and in the survey, participants offered dozens of alternatives. Common themes among suggested names include:

- Referencing the Halifax Forum, like “Forum District”.
- Naming after adjacent streets or nodes like “Robie Station”, “Windsor Park”, “North Central”.
- Engaging the Mi’kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities to come up with a new name for the district.
- Aspirational labels like ‘Uptown’.

These themes demonstrate an interest in tying the district’s name to:

- Landmarks (the Halifax Forum) that already anchor community identity.
- Streets or transit nodes (Robie, Windsor) that help people find their way.
- Cultural heritage through engagement with Mi’kmaw and African Nova Scotian partners.
- A sense of place or aspirational qualities.



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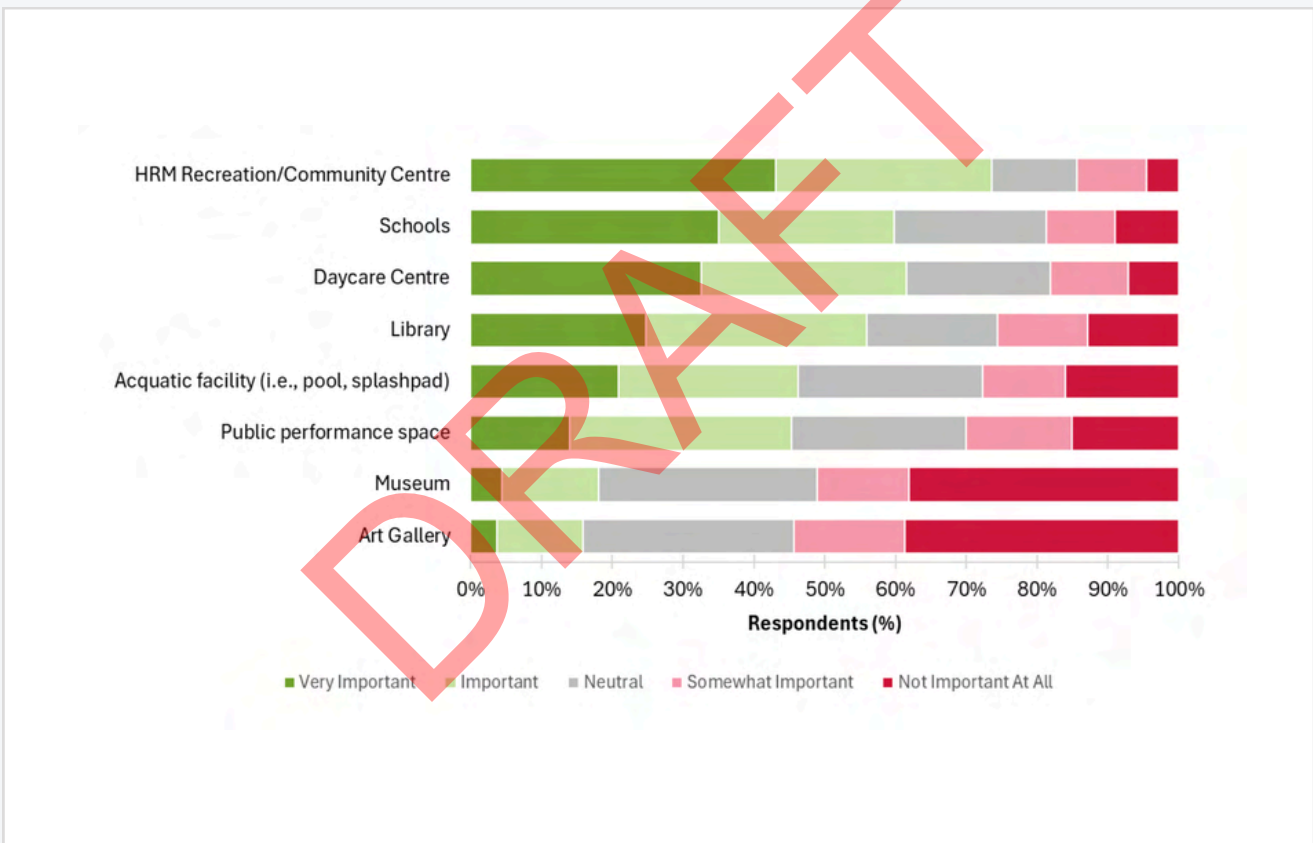


Community Amenities

Next, we asked participants about the types of community amenities they would like to see in the district.

QUESTION SIX

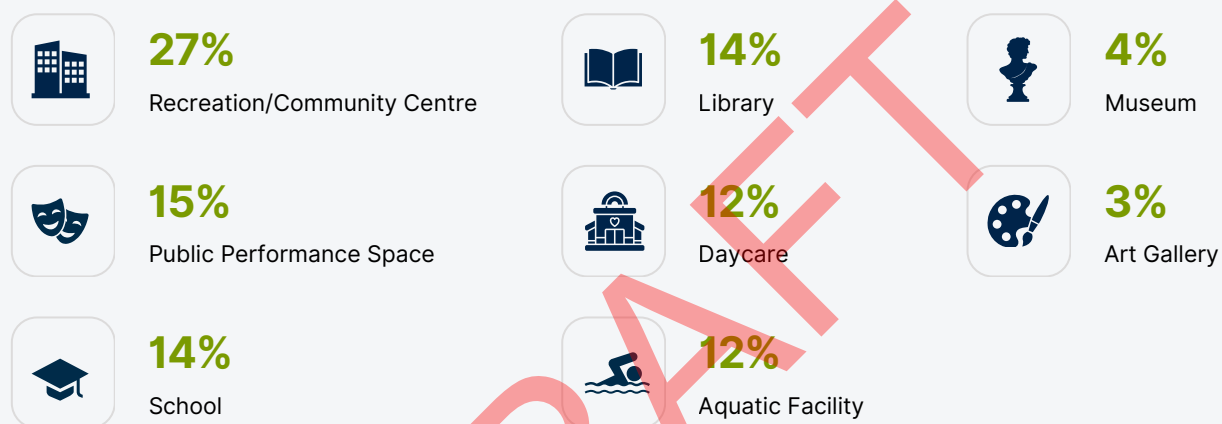
How important are the following community amenities to you?



QUESTION SEVEN

What community amenities would you like to see in the district?

Public open house sessions featured a dotmocracy board that allowed attendees to indicate their preferences for a variety of community amenities. Participants placed a total of 486 dots on this board. The top four amenities, by percent of all dots cast, were:



QUESTION EIGHT

What community facilities did we miss?

Popular community facilities proposed by respondents included farmers markets, fitness centres, and ice surfaces.

1. Several respondents suggested a farmer's market to activate the street, support pop-up vendors, and serve as a gathering space.
2. Some suggested adding fitness centres (walking track, public gym) and ice surfaces to provide affordable recreation.
3. Some highlighted the Halifax Forum as a key amenity—proposing renovation or full replacement to meet evolving needs.

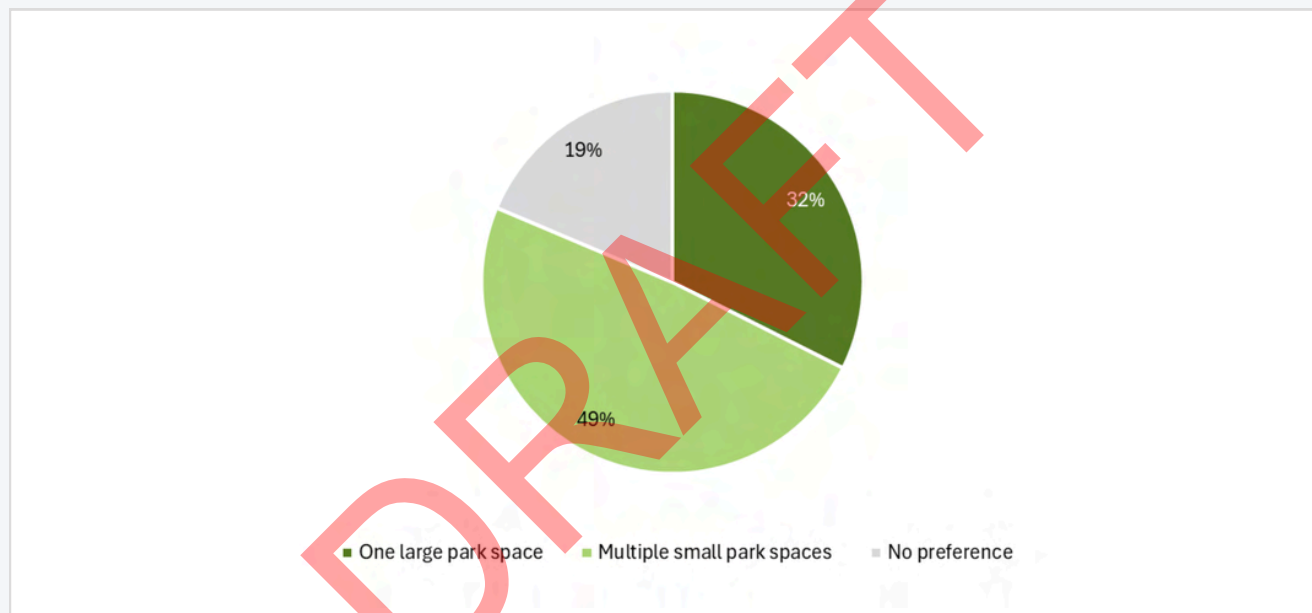
Parks & Open Spaces

Next, we asked the public about the types of parks, features and activities they want in the Young District.

QUESTION NINE

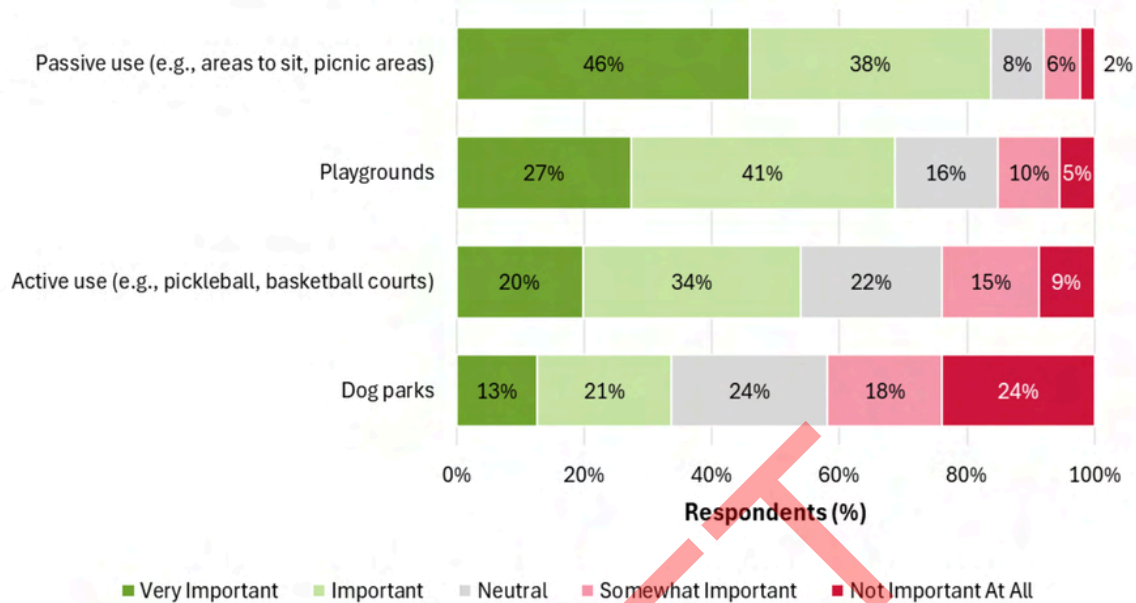
What kind of parkland would you like to see on this site?

Respondents were asked for feedback about parks and open spaces. Questions explored the type of park, park features, and park uses that community members would like to see in the district.



QUESTION TEN

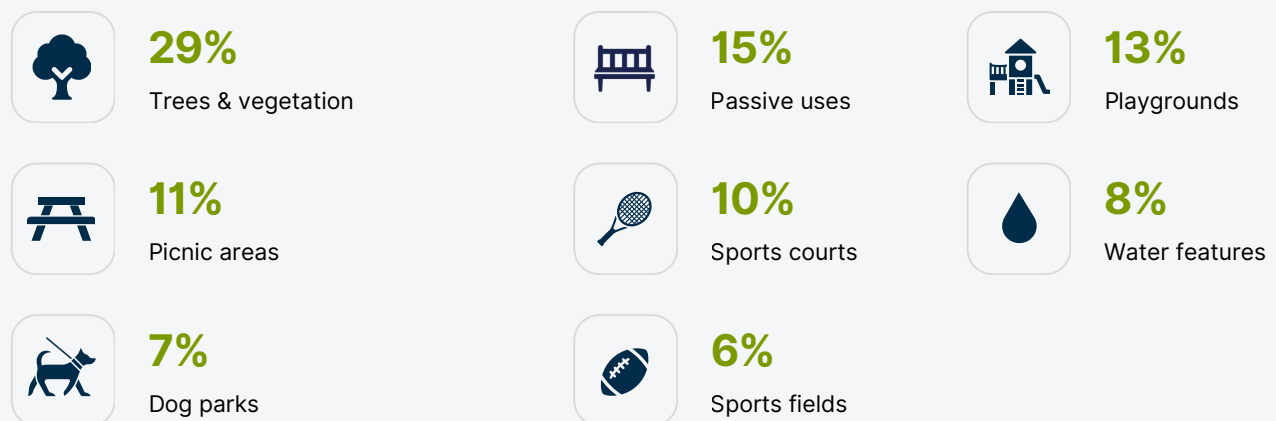
What types of activities should the park(s) in Young District support?



QUESTION ELEVEN

What park features would you like to see in the District?

At the public open house sessions, participants cast 489 voting dots. The top eight (8) features were:



QUESTION TWELVE

What features/amenities would you like to see in a park?

Respondents proposed nearly 100 features they would like to see in a park. The most common ones included seating areas (e.g., picnic tables, benches), vegetation (e.g., trees, shrubs, shady areas), washrooms, water fountains, and gardens.



QUESTION THIRTEEN

Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about parks and open spaces?

"Parks provide a valuable third space for people to gather, meet each other and enjoy leisure time. They also provide rest for folks who commute on foot"

"While I think that multiple small parks are a good idea, I like the idea of one big park, like the public gardens, to separate people from the more urban higher density environment. A larger park would also support a water retention and storage pond"

"A lot of parks are designed for summer uses only, which is why they become empty during winter. I would like to see more parks designed for all seasons"

Transportation

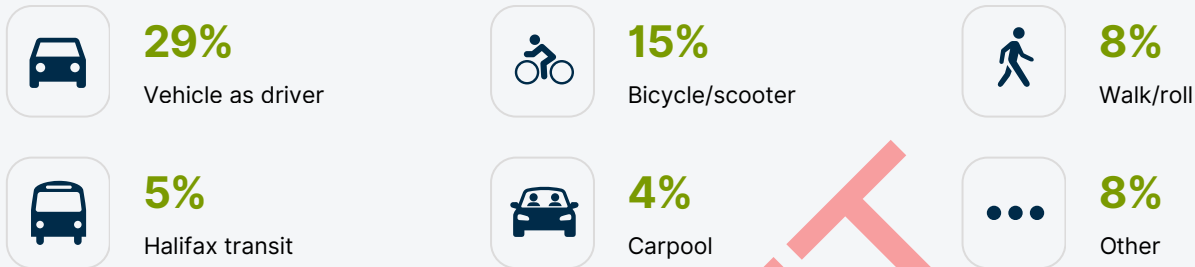
We asked how people travel to Young District, which modes they would like to see prioritized in the district, and what transportation improvements they want.



QUESTION FOURTEEN

How do you usually travel/get to Young District?

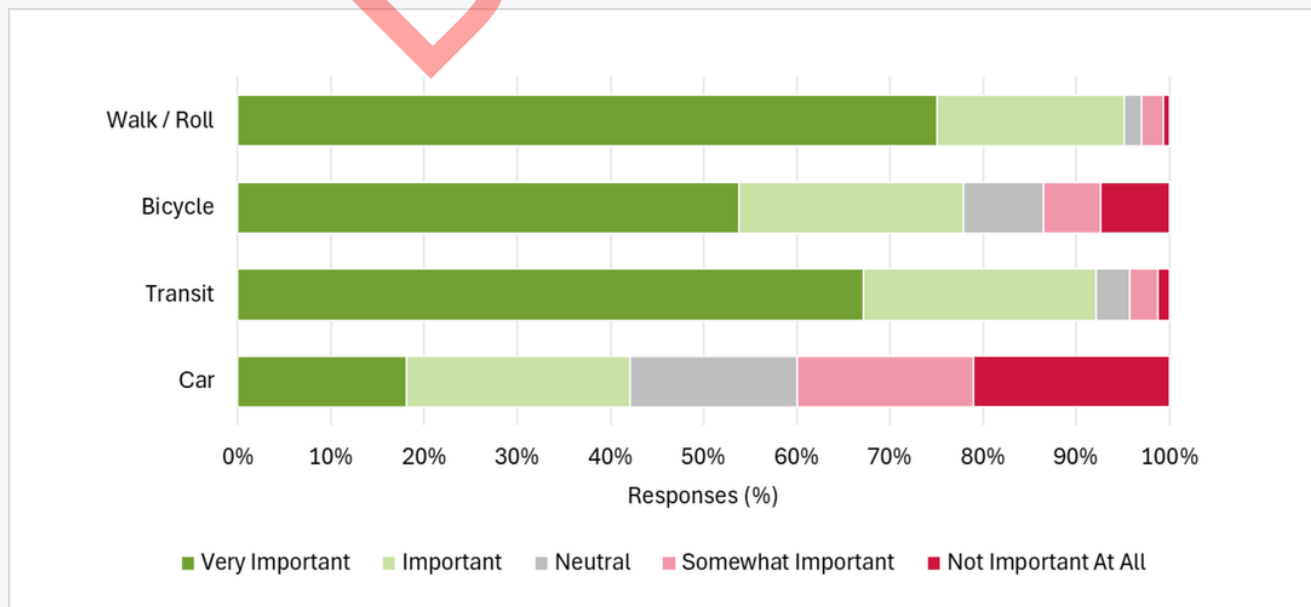
The majority drive (41%) to the district, followed by walking (33%), cycling (11%), and transit (8%).



QUESTION FIFTEEN

In your opinion, how important is it to accommodate these transportation modes within the district?

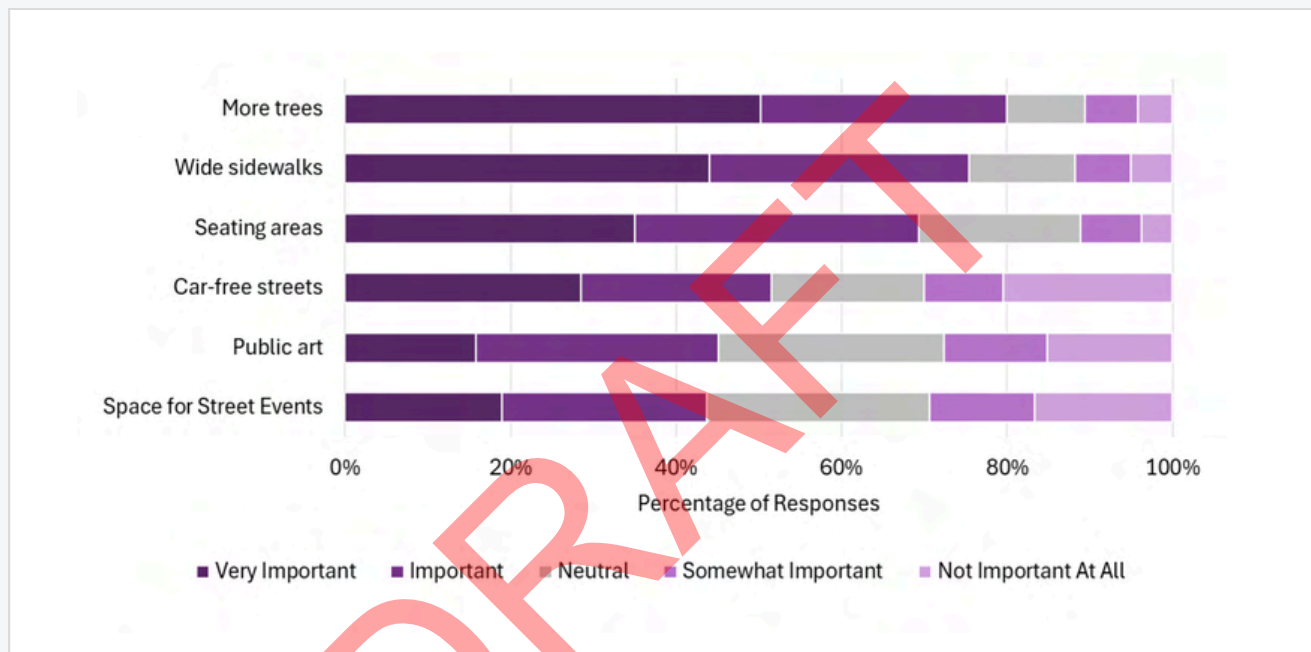
Pedestrians ranked as most important, then transit, cyclists, and cars



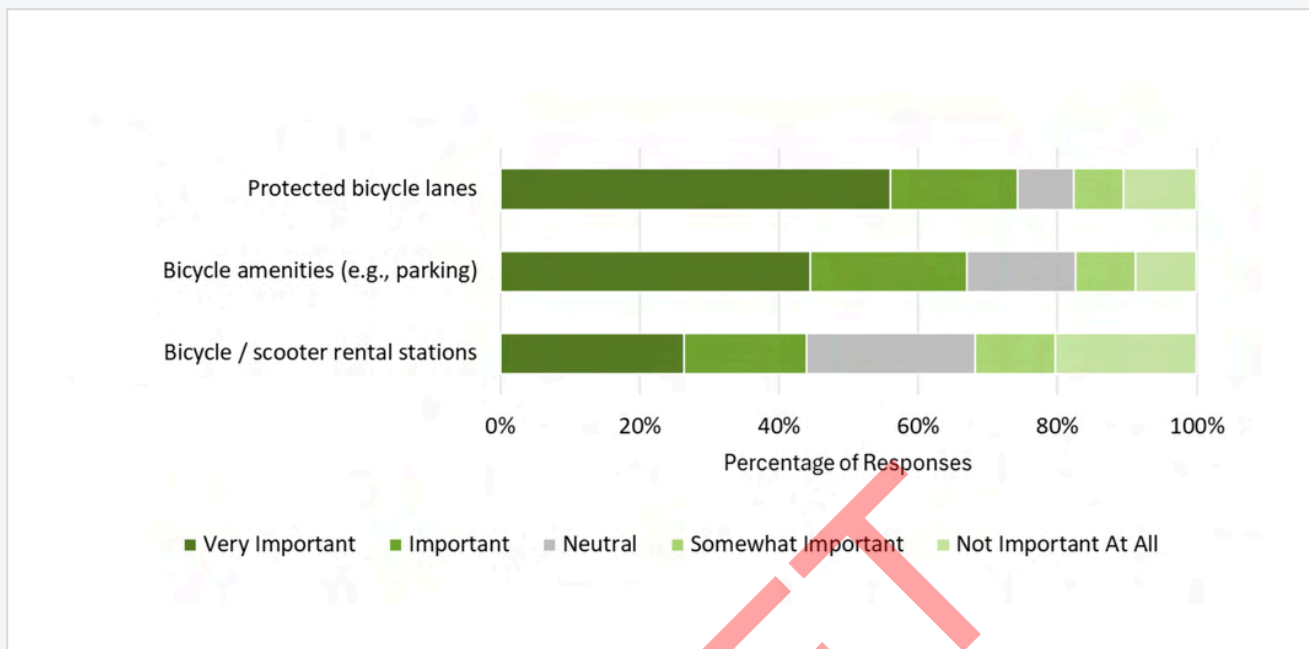
QUESTION SEVENTEEN

When imagining the future of Young District, how important are these transportation improvements/features?

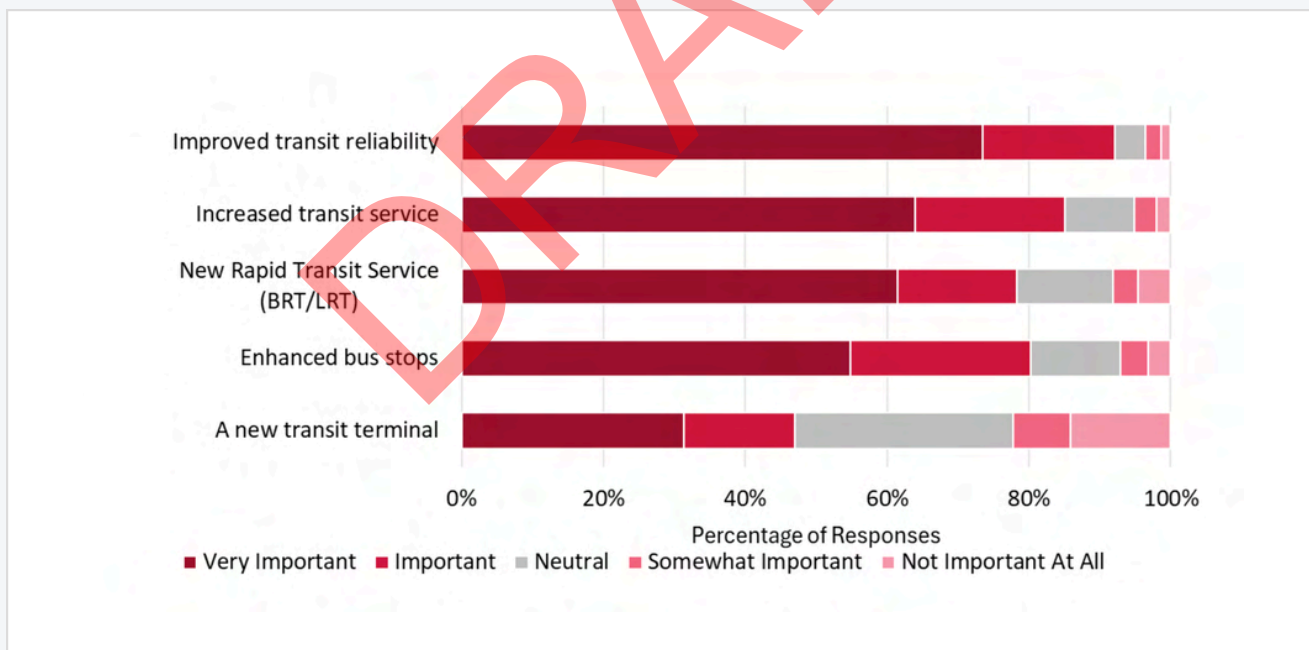
Pedestrian realm features/improvements



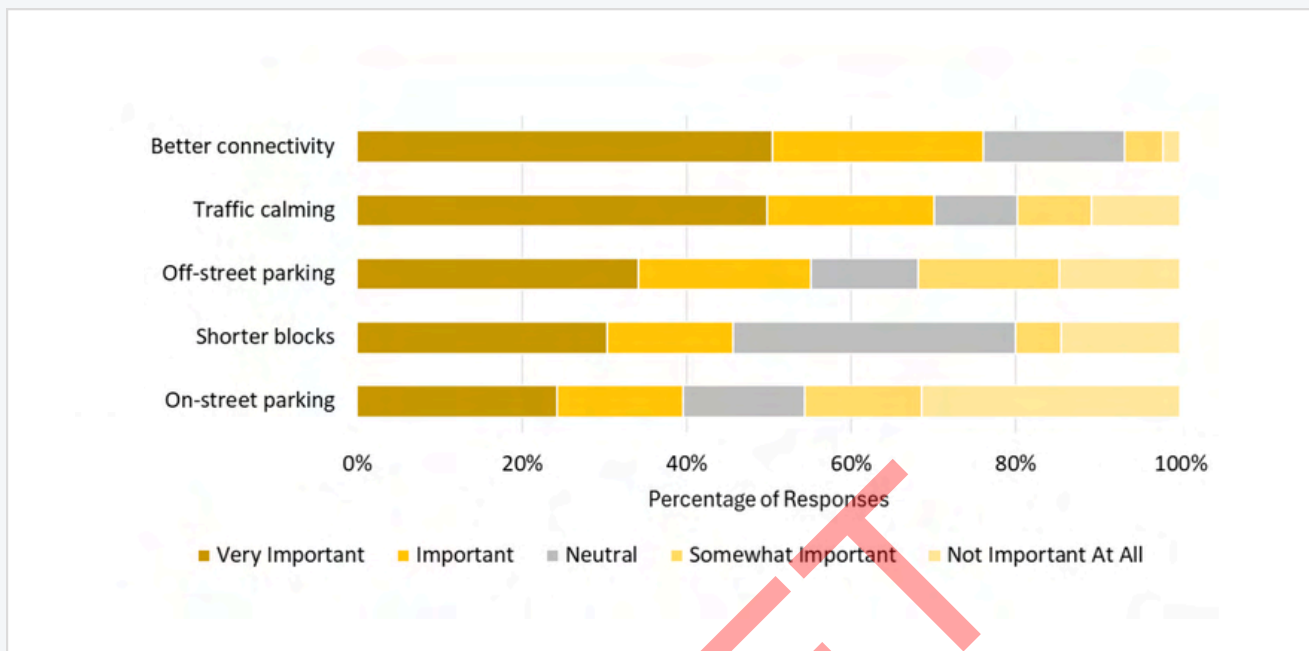
Cycling features/improvements



Transit features/improvements



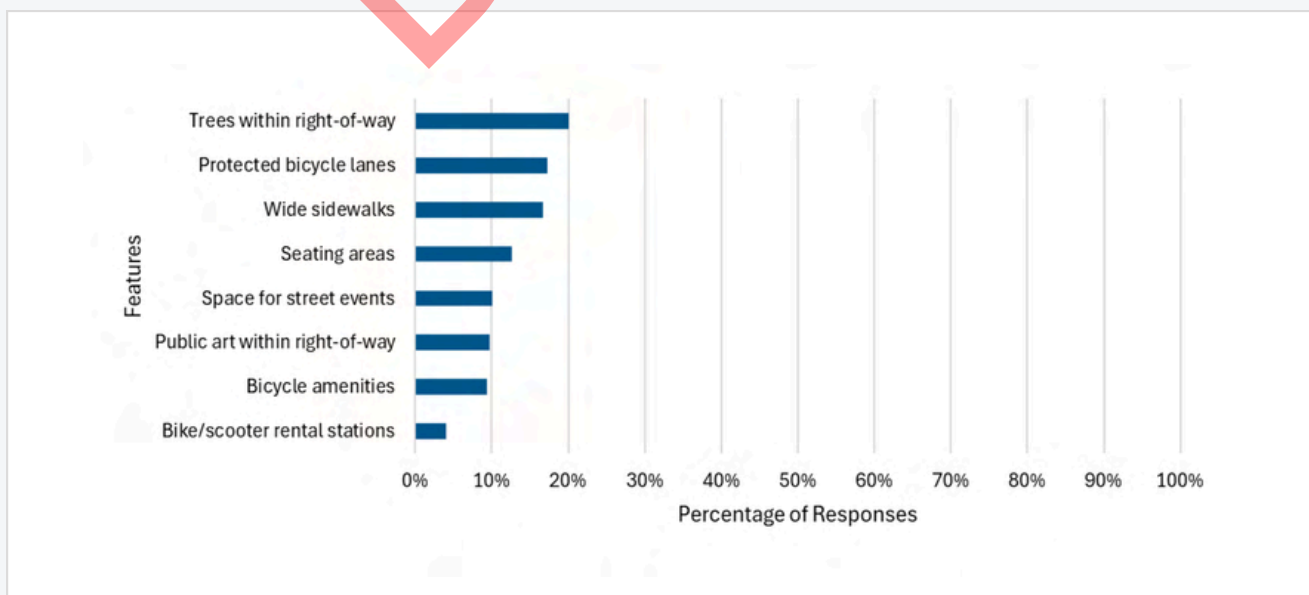
Parking and street network features/improvements



QUESTION EIGHTEEN

Which walking, rolling, and cycling features would you like to see in the District?

Public open house sessions included a dotmocracy board that allowed attendees to indicate their preferences for transportation features. One board focused on walking, rolling, and cycling features. Participants placed a total of 563 dots on this board.



QUESTION NINETEEN

Which transit and roadway features would you like to see in the District?

Public open house sessions included a dotmocracy board that allowed attendees to indicate their preferences for transportation features. One board focused on transit and roadway features. Participants placed a total of 485 dots on this board.



QUESTION TWENTY

What transportation features did we miss?

Respondents were invited to share any additional ideas for transportation features that were not included in the original list of options. The most frequently mentioned uses are summarized below, with most popular suggestions listed first

- Respondents indicated they would like to see crosswalks to improve safety in areas where there are frequent pedestrian crossings.
- Some respondents described the need for improved traffic flow at key intersections (e.g., Robie Street and Young Street)
- Respondents highlighted the need for improved accessibility to enable people of all ages and abilities to easily navigate sidewalks and bike lanes.
- A few respondents suggested that car share parking be considered in the district.

QUESTION TWENTY-ONE

Is there anything else you like to share with us about transportation within or surrounding the district?

"Can't wait to be able to reach this district easily using BRT and safe cycling infrastructure!"

"I only drive there because transit isn't reliable. More reliable transit and I will use it more. Many will, reducing congestion."

"I currently drive to do anything in this district; I would joyfully take the bus and walk this district if it was friendlier to do either."

"Need to be able to walk for everyday activities: work, shopping, but also should have parking to access stores, businesses and medical centres."

"I currently drive to the area to work, but it is within biking distance - with increased protected bike lanes I would switch to biking."

Land uses & services

Participants appear strongly in favour of access to the services they need to live, work, and play within reasonable walking distance. Many residents value the access to services that presently exists in the area but suggested that many amenities were only accessible by car, and there is a popular desire to walk, cycle, or take transit to reach daily destinations.

QUESTION TWENTY-TWO

What kind of services would you like to see on the site?

Popular services amongst survey respondents include grocery stores, restaurants, farmers markets, retail, and active recreation/fitness services. The graphic below shows different ideas for services that respondents might like to see in the district.



QUESTION TWENTY-THREE

Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about land uses & services?

"Consider the viability of smaller footprint grocery stores - no attached parking, within other developments."

"Emphasis should be placed on mid-height mixed-use buildings; ex 3-5 and 5-10 storeys, commercial at ground level w/ residential above. Density is GOOD and the HRM does not have enough of it."

"I use my car only because everyday shops and services within the district are too far to walk to (mostly between Robie and Windsor) - I would definitely prefer to walk than drive."

"Surface parking should not be permitted; given the amount of people who will call this district home, all public space should be for people, and not just subsidized car parking."

"This should at its base be designed as a walkable neighbourhood so all services that residence will required must be included."

"Building an area where community can come together to live, work & enjoy leisure would be a great improvement to this currently very car-centric area."

How this feedback will be used

Feedback received during phase 1 of public engagement will inform the development of a vision and guiding principles for the district. The vision and guiding principles will guide the development of a proposed transportation network concept design, as well as proposed land use policies for the Young Street Lands Future Growth Node.



Next steps

5

The following steps will be taken moving forward to support the planning efforts of the Young Street Lands and the Kempt Road Lands Future Growth Node:

- Completion of technical studies by municipal employees and project consultants
- Development of conceptual design options
- Round two of engagement with the public, landowners and community interest groups as part of the Young Street Lands FGN process