



COGSWELL DISTRICT LAND USE POLICIES

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

October 21, 2024

HALIFAX

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Planning Process

On December 12, 2023, Halifax Regional Council initiated the Cogswell District Land Use Planning Process. This process will create land use policies and an affordable housing strategy for the Cogswell District, aligned with Council's direction and strategic priorities.

The planning process is supported by an infrastructure plan, approved by Regional Council in 2019, which includes parks and open spaces, multi-use paths, streetscapes, a transit hub, district energy system, and more. This infrastructure plan supports a new, transit-oriented complete community with mixed uses, designed to Rick Hansen Gold Certification Accessibility, linking Downtown Halifax with the North End and fostering a more inclusive network of communities.

Substantial public feedback informed the infrastructure design. Various public engagement initiatives played a key role in shaping the evolution of the Cogswell District design plan. The current land use planning process will focus on creating detailed urban design policies and regulations for the Cogswell lands and surrounding area, building upon the engagement done for the infrastructure design, and supplementing it with additional community engagement on building design and land use in 2024.

This Document

This document offers a summary of engagement activities and feedback received during the Cogswell District public engagement process in 2024.

The “**SUMMARIZED FEEDBACK**” section provides an overview of all feedback and ideas collected from the various forms of public engagement, including an online survey, open houses, design walks, and a Reddit Q and A session. Feedback is organized into key themes that emerged throughout the engagement process. Within this section, blue text boxes highlight quotes from residents extracted from various public engagement sessions.

The “**COMMUNITY INTEREST GROUPS**” section outlines the feedback and ideas received from community groups.

The “**NEXT STEPS**” section briefly outlines the upcoming stages of the planning process and outlines future public engagement opportunities.

How We Engaged

This section presents a summary of the engagement process which took place over approximately 6 months in 2024. The statistics on this page are current to June 30, 2024.



Online Survey

154 survey responses
submitted by residents



Public Open Houses

May 22, 2024
Two Sessions
25 attendees



Design Walks

June 4, 5, and 8, 2024
61 attendees



Reddit “Ask Me Anything”

Hosted on “Reddit” on June 3, 2024.

53,000 views
93% Upvote rate
94 comments
17 total shares



Project Website

4,500 visits
136 document downloads
33 video views



Community Interest Group Meetings

HRM staff met with Community Interest Groups, including government organizations, non-profit organizations, community groups and business associations



Social Media

Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram were used to inform public of engagement opportunities



Phone Calls and Emails

39 emails from unique email addresses

How We Heard You

1. Two **PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES** were held on May 22, 2024, at the Halifax Convention Center. At these sessions residents had the opportunity to ask questions and share their opinions and concerns. The sessions began with an introductory presentation and invited residents to draw their ideas on a concept plan of the Cogswell District. HRM Staff at each table facilitated discussions and answered questions.

3. Community interest groups, business associations, non-profit housing associations and other **COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS** were consulted. These sessions focused on meeting with a variety of organizations in community, and receiving feedback from experts in the non-profit housing development field.

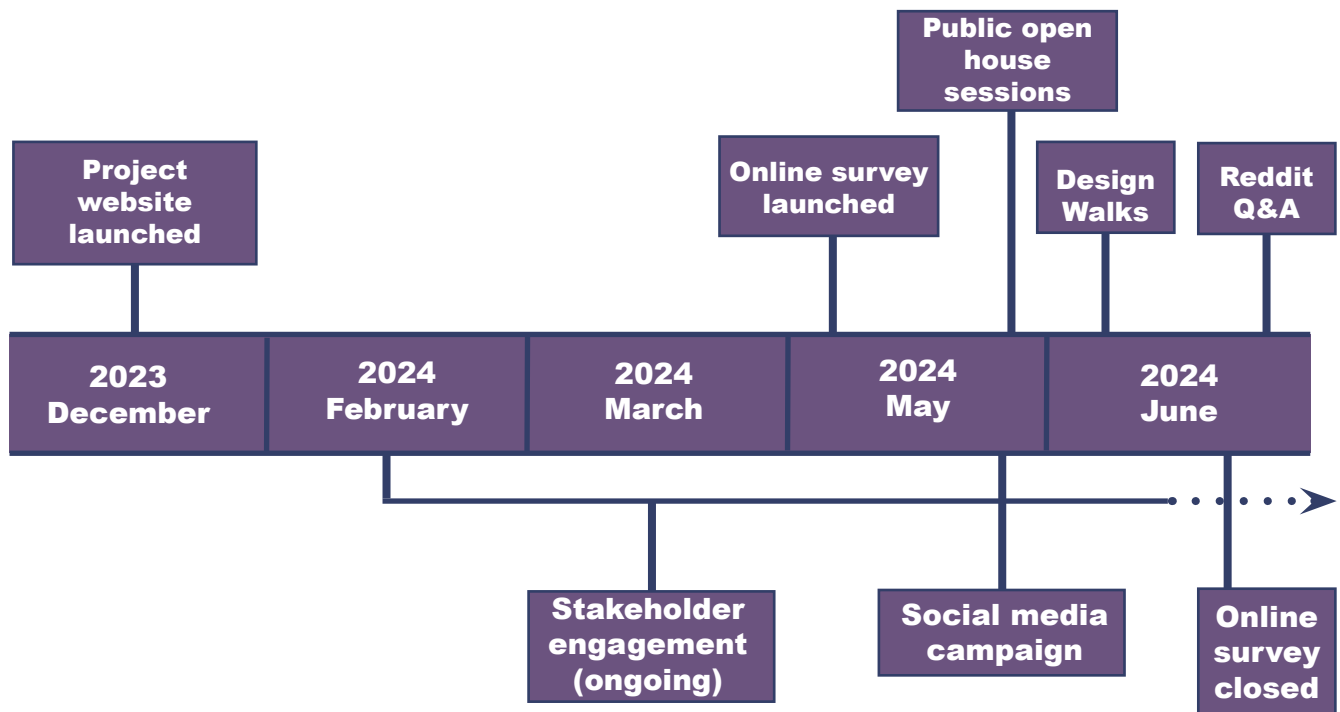
2. The **ONLINE SURVEY** received 154 responses from the public. Participants answered five questions regarding their preferences and opinions for land uses, housing types, community spaces, and building designs.

4. An **“ASK ME ANYTHING” SESSION** was held on Reddit on Thursday, June 6. The session took place on the subreddit r/Halifax, an online community commonly used for events and discussions specific to Halifax. The session was successful, with an enthusiastic audience asking questions about the Cogswell development and HRM staff providing information.

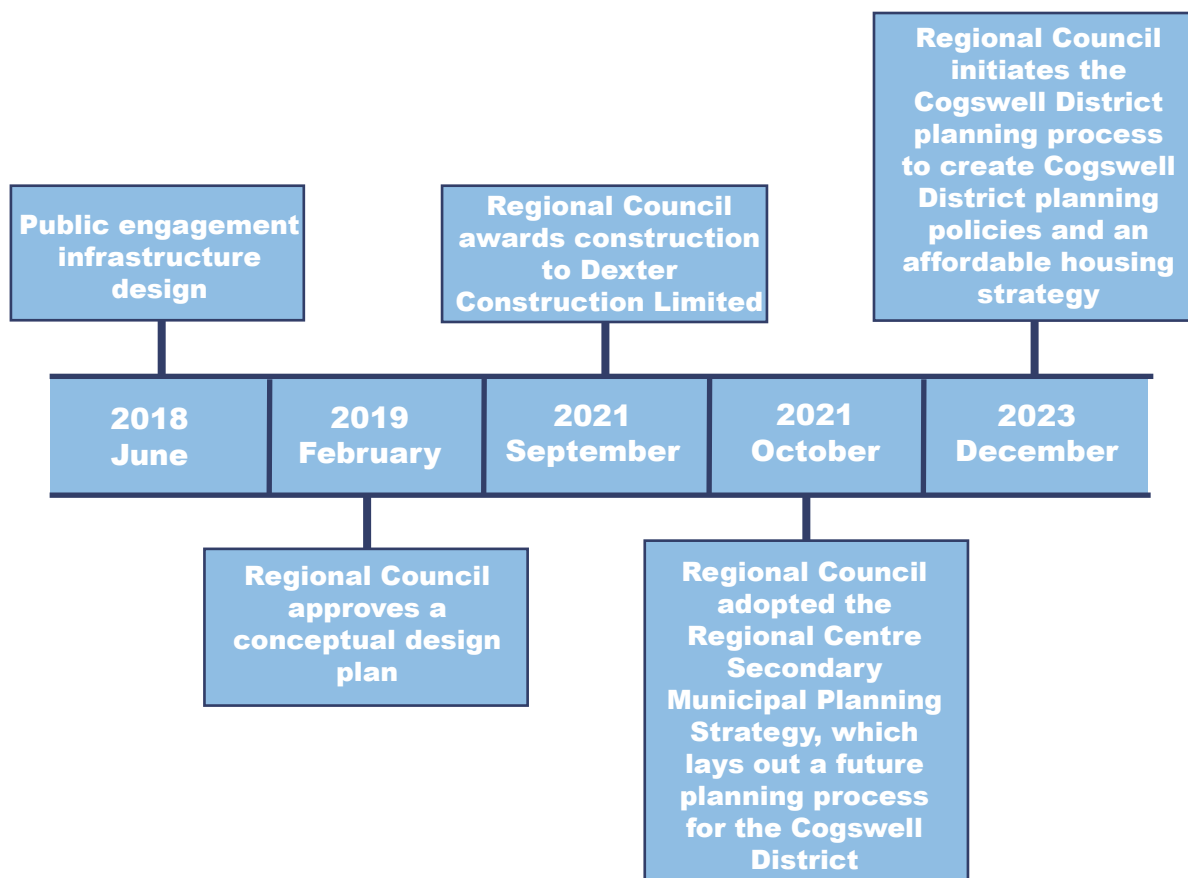


The site during construction - June 2023

Engagement Timeline



Cogswell District - Overall Timeline





Summarized Feedback

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Overall View

Overall, feedback from residents was positive regarding the redevelopment of the Cogswell District and the overall project aims are well understood by the public. Responses tended to show significant curiosity and interest in the development.

Many residents suggested that Cogswell should be a mixed-use development with supporting facilities, grocery stores, affordable housing, pedestrian-friendly design, equitable development, green spaces, and representation of the district's identity and history.

Many participants view the Cogswell District development as a crucial opportunity to address the impacts of gentrification and displacement in the North End.

Key Points

- » The community is supportive of the Cogswell District development, seeing it as a key opportunity to address gentrification, displacement, and to create a mixed-use, inclusive neighborhood

"I'm excited at the prospect for Cogswell to be a mixed-use space of affordable housing and green space"

"Cogswell District is a core element of the Halifax downtown, height restrictions should be minimized to maximize the optimization of the space while being integrated as an important extension of the vibrant fabric of the Halifax downtown."

"Halifax needs more pedestrian focused and mixed-use series of developments. I hope the Cogswell District can fit that niche!"



Existing site conditions as of March 2023

Housing

Residents expressed a strong interest in having affordable and accessible housing in the Cogswell District. Many questions were raised about the number of units that would be designated as affordable housing and whether developers would be required to meet affordability requirements. Many respondents to the survey, and participants at engagement events, suggested that affordable housing be a requirement in Cogswell developments.

Some comments suggested that residents perceive the Municipality's existing incentive bonus and affordable housing grant program as ineffective in contributing to housing needs.

The online survey results revealed that the majority (33.8%) preferred deeply affordable non-market housing for low-income households, provided by a non-profit or government.

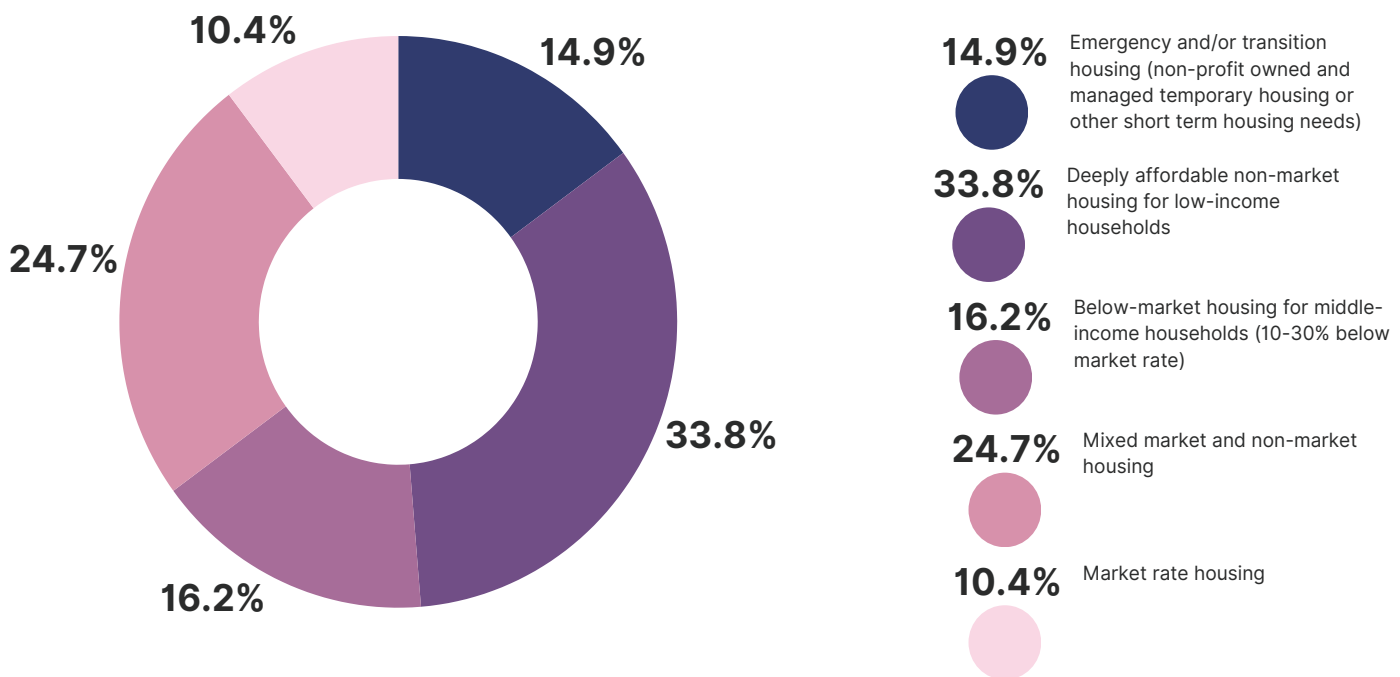
Residents advocated for defining affordable housing as costing a maximum of 30% of income and 15%-20% of units in Cogswell should be designated as affordable. One resident suggested city-owned

shares in affordable housing through a limited equity ownership model.

To secure affordable housing, residents suggested implementing mandatory inclusionary zoning for blocks sold to private developers, ensuring that affordability was incorporated throughout the district. Additionally, there was an interest in non-profit and co-op housing models.

Residents provided comments on housing types and models. Suggestions included tiny homes, studios, townhouses, stacked townhouses, and high-rise development. While some residents preferred a mix of two and three-bedroom units, others mentioned that one and two-bedroom apartments would be the most popular in this area.

Some residents highlighted the need for special attention to accessible housing and the provision of housing for seniors and African Nova Scotians.



Survey results for ranking the importance of housing types within Cogswell

Key Points

- » Residents want affordable and accessible housing in Cogswell District
- » Residents would like to see a range of unit sizes and types
- » The expectation is for affordable units to be built in developments in the district, not encouraging cash contributions to the existing incentive or bonus zoning program
- » According to participants, special attention should be given to seniors, and African Nova Scotians

“It would be great to see mandatory inclusionary zoning used where blocks do go to private market to ensure some affordability is incorporated throughout the district and not only in a few community housing buildings.”

“The Cogswell redevelopment gives us the perfect opportunity to create affordable and accessible housing to those marginalized by current economic and social conditions.”

“Make sure development isn’t segregated and that affordable units and housing for African Nova Scotians is integrated throughout the development. Make sure there aren’t separate entrances in buildings where there are affordable units and market priced units.”



90% design master plan

Equity and Community Support

Residents see the Cogswell District redevelopment as an opportunity to confront the effects of gentrification and displacement in the North End, particularly affecting the African Nova Scotian community. Some residents emphasize the importance of collaborating with Black community leaders to ensure that access to housing and resources is prioritized for the African Nova Scotian community.

Residents also highlight the importance of involving Black and Indigenous architects in the building design process. There are suggestions that efforts to incorporate underrepresented communities must extend beyond mere commemoration in building design.

Additionally, residents expressed interest in community interest group proposals for ANS-led housing developments.

Feedback was received on physical accessibility. Ensuring the district is accessible to all, including those with mobility, hearing, and vision challenges, is a key concern that residents identified.

Key Points

- » Policies supporting African Nova Scotian community needs in the Cogswell District are repeatedly mentioned
- » Ensuring the area is accessible to all is highlighted as important

“It is also an opportunity to address the historic and ongoing racism for the African Nova Scotia community.”



Mobility

Residents emphasized the importance of enhancing public transit, including reserving land for future public transport infrastructure such as light rail, bus priority lanes and heated shelters.

Other suggestions included providing separated and protected bike paths, well-lit and safe cycling infrastructure throughout the Cogswell District, and providing bicycle charging stations.

Some residents discussed a need for additional car parking spaces in the Cogswell District, perceiving a shortage of car parking in the area. Some even suggested that the Municipality should develop a parkade.

In contrast, some residents suggested that private automobile parking should be significantly restricted in the Cogswell District, given its ability to be a transit-oriented development.

Almost universally, engagement participants raised significant concerns about excessive noise from truck traffic, particularly along Lower Water Street.

During the **Design Walks**, residents noted that it was incredibly loud due to truck traffic, making conversations challenging even with nearby individuals. They highlighted that the current noise levels would make parks and gathering spaces less usable and enjoyable. Some suggestions to mitigate this in the short term include installing sound barriers.

Key Points

- » Residents emphasized prioritizing pedestrian-friendly design and transit-oriented development
- » There was strong support for minimizing vehicle access to downtown and improving public transit infrastructure, including the development of a light rail system and bus priority lanes
- » Residents are deeply concerned about excessive noise from truck traffic, particularly on Lower Water Street, and suggest installing noise barriers to make public spaces more enjoyable

“Don’t encourage parking. The area is well connected by transit and the cost to include underground parking would be passed down to the cost of units”

“For the parks and gathering spaces to be used and enjoyed, something has to be done to reduce the traffic noise generated by trips to/from the port.”

“I do not see how a pedestrian-friendly Cogswell district and a truck route can be compatible.”

“It looks like one of the people in the rendering is listening to music. But who would hear the music over the trucks?”

Amenities and Land Use

Residents provided a wide range of suggestions and concerns regarding the amenities and services in the District. The primary focus of feedback was on ensuring that the Cogswell District is a “complete community” - a place where daily needs can be met within walking distance.

Many comments suggested that a grocery store would contribute to a complete community. Some participants noted that the North End of Halifax around the Cogswell area does not have a grocery store. Additionally, the inclusion of small medical clinics and pharmacies was highlighted as essential to meet healthcare needs.

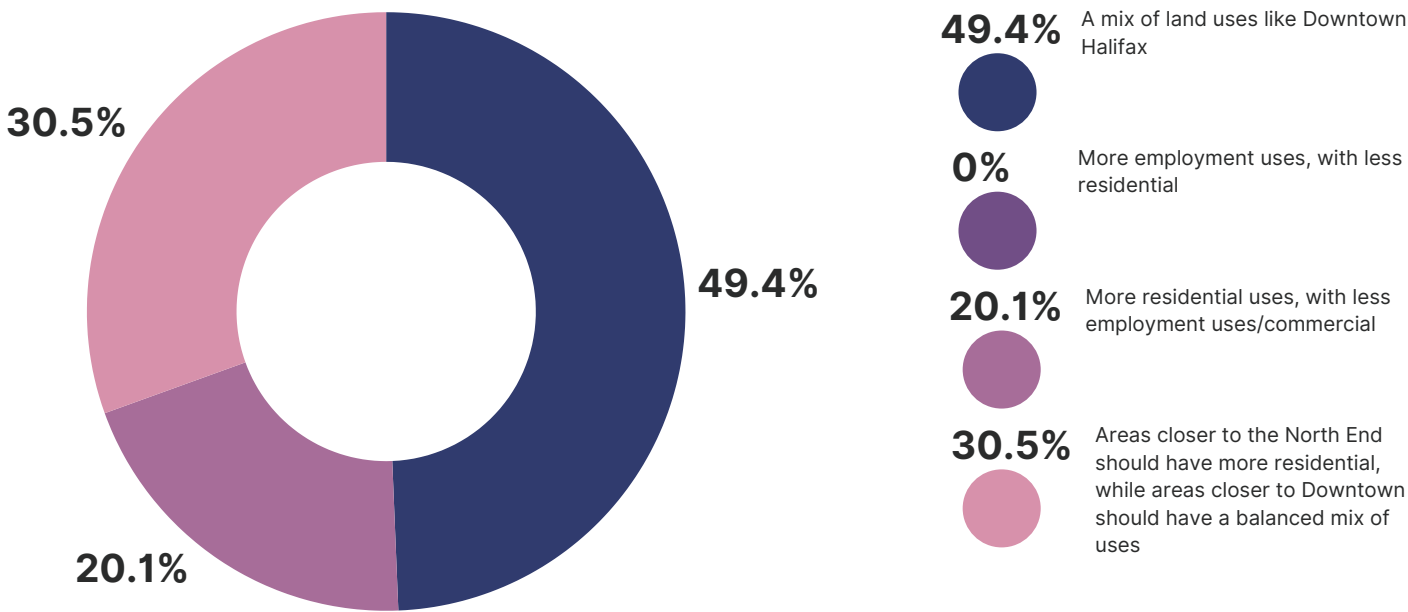
Many comments suggested community and multi-use spaces that could be used year-round, including venues for local artists and performing arts. Queen’s Marque and the Brewery Market were mentioned as good examples for year-round multi-use spaces.

The integration of social services, such as legal aid and employment support, was also mentioned. Furthermore, spaces for non-profit organizations and immigration services were recommended to serve the community’s needs.

In the online survey, when asked which community spaces are needed in the Cogswell District, the majority (69 responses) selected “day care,” followed closely by “small affordable local business space for lease” (68 responses).

When asked which mix of land uses most closely aligns with their vision for Cogswell, the majority (49.4%) indicated a preference for a mix of land uses similar to Downtown. Some specified that 75% residential and 25% commercial is an ideal mix.

Other amenities and services noted include schools, provincial government services or offices, performance venue, community kitchens and artists studios.



Survey results for land uses

“It should be like in Europe where you can get everything within a few blocks.”

“The expanded land use mix will help to balance the area and maybe result in businesses staying open longer into the night.”

“Ground floor retail and commercial is great if it is occupied.”

Key Points

- » Residents emphasized the need for essential services and retail options, including grocery stores, medical clinics and institutional uses, alongside educational facilities and year-round community spaces
- » Residents supported mixed-use development, proposing a blend of residential and commercial spaces
- » Concerns included downtown storefront vacancy rates and the need for flexible retail space options



The extension of Granville Mall

Public Space, Art and Asset Naming

Some residents showed an interest regarding naming locations within the Cogswell District development. Some of them proposed having a naming contest for the parks to engage the community. They also suggested avoiding naming the parks after people to prevent potential controversies in the future. Instead, they encouraged retaining historic names.

Residents suggested public art should reflect the district's identity and history. Some residents suggested adding pictures of the old Proctor Street on the new Proctor Street and incorporating art that reflects the naval history of Halifax, including the former ordinance yard.

Some responses noted that the development appears to have overlooked amenities for children, proposing the addition of playgrounds or spaces for teenagers.

Residents emphasized the importance of green spaces, trees, and open spaces throughout the district. Residents suggested ensuring public spaces are active and well-lit.

Other commonly mentioned amenities include drinking fountains, water features, and public washrooms in the public parks.



Granville Park with space for festivals, performances and other gatherings.

Key Points

- » Residents emphasized the need for public art reflecting local heritage, and highlighted the importance of diverse recreational amenities, green spaces, and well-lit public areas in the Cogswell District

“I would like to see a playground in the area to promote families. Kids can play in a courtyard.”

“There should be affordable community spaces for art, music, theatre groups. Flexible art spaces for classes, rehearsal, performances, art shows, etc.”

Building Design

There is a significant amount of interest in building design in the Cogswell District.

A variety of architectural preferences was expressed from traditional heritage to modern and futuristic looking buildings. Flexibility in building design and human scale design were highlighted as priorities and consistently mentioned regardless of architectural preference. Queen's Marquee was cited multiple times for its successful integration of pedestrian-friendly elements.

Many comments suggested using stone or imitation stone facades in building podiums for a historic appearance that transition to a modern look as the buildings rise, especially in Block A.

Some preferred a mix of materials, including wood and warm lighting, to create inviting spaces. They recommended avoiding typical brown, beige, and black combinations. Instead, they preferred varied and colorful materials.

Some responses also mentioned glass buildings with projections, similar to the Central Library.

Residents want more sustainable building designs with energy-efficient features like LEED certification and rooftop gardens.

There were many comments received regarding the height of the buildings. Residents expressed a preference for a mix of building heights, with transitions to the North End. Some comments suggested removing the Rampart Sight Lines. They questioned the necessity of maintaining these sight lines, as they felt there was little public benefit.

There was also interest in incorporating local cultural heritage, particularly African Nova Scotian and naval military history, into building design. Other suggestions included representing women in design, and integrating immigrant cultural elements.

Accessibility was mentioned multiple times with some suggesting that Rick Hansen Gold Certification should apply to buildings as well.



Granville Park

Key Points

- » Residents emphasized the need for inclusive and accessible design
- » Residents suggested building designs inspired by a variety of architectural traditions
- » Some suggested materials representative of Halifax's built heritage or other history could be used in certain locations

"Adding buildings of various shapes would enhance the experience for people, providing visual contrast and diverse colors. People enjoy walking around and seeing different architectural designs. Including cut corners in the buildings is a good aspect of this plan."

"Consider the wind and shadow impacts of the buildings on the area and use them to determine the best possible public spaces."

Environmental Sustainability

Comments from the online survey included a desire for green space focusing on perennial and native species, urban permaculture, biodiversity and pollinator gardens. Residents mentioned that these spaces could host educational and skill-building activities. Additionally, residents inquired about requirements for greenery within or on buildings, such as green roofs or areas for food production.

Concerns were raised about potential loss of sunlight due to high-rises and the need to consider climate change impacts in planning. When informed of the existing ways that the Regional Centre Plan addresses access to sunlight, many residents found the existing approach to be suitable.

Suggestions included continuing street trees up Cogswell Street to the Commons and other surrounding areas, as well as considering green building features. Some residents proposed extending the trees along Cogswell Street beyond the intersection of Brunswick Street.

As was also mentioned for building design, many residents suggested that buildings should have some kind of LEED standard requirement for energy efficiency.

There was limited awareness of the District Energy System, but residents support the concept when informed of its potential.

“Is the plan considering climate change?”

“Consider evergreen trees for the winter months.”

“We are going to lose a lot of sun because of high-rises”

Key Points

- » Residents stressed the need for increased greenery and natural spaces in the Cogswell District, with specific suggestions for tree planting, green roofs, and areas for wildflowers, while considering climate change
- » Residents want buildings in Cogswell to be energy efficient

Land Disposal and Development

Residents shared ideas about land ownership and the sale or lease of lands in the Cogswell District.

These included concern over the municipality's revenues, opportunity costs and loss of land related to land disposal. Many responses indicated that the lots should remain under municipal ownership.

Other comments, tied to equity and housing considerations, suggested that some lands could be used for affordable housing, but did not specify whether lease or sale was appropriate.

Some residents identified the value of using land for affordable housing in lowering development costs. They tended to view this approach as contributing to social equity.

Key Points

- » Residents were worried about land disposal in the Cogswell District, especially its impact on municipal revenue, opportunity costs, and land loss
- » Some residents suggested that HRM should retain lands in Cogswell

“The lots should be kept in municipal ownership”





Community Interest Groups

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List of Community Interest Groups

This section summarizes the engagement with Community Interest Groups for the Cogswell District. The process of collecting ideas from Community Interest Groups is ongoing throughout the planning process, and additional groups are being contacted for their participation in the process.



Government Organizations

01

- Province of Nova Scotia
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)



Non-profit organizations

02

- Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia (AHANS)
- North End Halifax Community Land Trust (NEHCLT)
- United Way
- Shelter Nova Scotia
- Discover Halifax
- Brunswick Street Residents



Business Associations

03

- North End Business Association
- Downtown Halifax Business Commission

Government Organizations

Housing Nova Scotia and CMHC both have funding programs available which primarily target a variety of mixed-market and non-profit led housing developments. These funding programs are generally designed to support the federal National Housing Strategy. CMHC indicated it has funding specifically to support Black housing projects.

Most funding programs require “mixed market” development structures - developments which are partially rented at market rates and partially rented at non-market rates. Both organizations suggested that it is extremely challenging to develop 100% non-market housing due to the upfront and ongoing costs of development and that mixed market developments are generally more financially sustainable.

Presently, funding can be directly accessed by Municipalities under three primary avenues. The most common stream directly accessed by municipalities is the “Rapid Housing Initiative” of which HRM has been a participant. Housing Accelerator Funds (HAF) can also be used for funding affordable housing, which

HRM has received as part of its successful HAF application. Municipalities may also choose to engage in developing affordable housing directly as well, which is eligible for funding.

The municipality could also incentivize or require developments in Cogswell to participate in affordable housing programs from either Housing NS or CMHC. It could also simply point willing participants to potential funding, or assist non-profit organizations with limited capacity in applying for funding.

Both CMHC and Housing Nova Scotia offer funds to support start-up costs for development (seed funding). However, these both require a certain amount of business planning or property development before seed funds can be accessed. There may be a need for additional up front funding which is more flexible than the provincial or federal programs, to encourage and support non-profit and non-market housing development in Cogswell.

Key Points

- » Both CMHC and Housing Nova Scotia offer targeted funding and support programs for affordable housing, targeted to the non-profit sector
- » Funding programs generally support the National Housing Strategy objectives
- » Municipalities can access funding directly through the Rapid Housing Initiative, Housing Accelerator Fund or if it undertakes development directly
- » Municipalities may also wish to engage in a support role, pointing organizations to existing funding programs and supporting the non-profit sector



Non-Profit Organizations

Non-Profit Housing Providers and Advocates

Valuable feedback was received from various non-profit housing providers.

These organizations highlighted the limited capacity of non-profits, especially in competing with the private sector for land and funding. They recommended dedicating some lands in Cogswell to the community housing sector and recognized that the majority of the lands are likely to be developed by the private sector. Furthermore, to allow non-profits to respond to request for proposals (RFPs) or requests for qualification (RFQs) they require notice from the Municipality that lands are going to be made available for non-profit development so they can mobilize the needed resources to respond. Providing additional time to respond to the RFPs/RFQs can also assist.

They cautioned that asking for non-profits to participate in a process where they are competing with the private sector is not likely to achieve any desired social outcomes. The private sector's resources allow it to move faster, pay more, and draw from vast technical talent pools which are experienced in the highly competitive private development market. The non-profit sector needs time to acquire funding and secure similar expertise, often on a per-project basis.

Non-profits also highlighted the need for up front funding for development costs. While Housing Nova Scotia and CMHC do provide "seed funding" this still comes with some restrictions which mean it cannot be accessed in the very initial stages of a development, especially if an organization is new and without a real estate portfolio or previous development experience. They highlighted the need for capacity-building funds which enable the non-profit sector to grow.

If the Municipality is looking to the non-profit sector to address certain housing needs in Cogswell this capacity building will be needed, especially where the type of development in the district is likely to be large, high-rise buildings. They stressed that, ideally, this funding would be long term and consistent. Some groups expressed a willingness to partner with the private sector on developments. Others did not.

Multiple organizations emphasized the importance of ensuring the African Nova Scotian (ANS) community is included in the development process. This includes honoring the history of ANS communities, providing opportunities for land ownership and economic prosperity, and directing incentive or bonus zoning money to the ANS community. Some organizations suggested that the Municipality's Incentive Or Bonus Zoning program should direct funds from Cogswell to the ANS Community.

Key Points

- » Strategic funding to build non-profit sector capacity is needed in order for them to address desired social outcomes in Cogswell
- » Non-profit organizations emphasized including the African Nova Scotian community in the Cogswell District development, honoring their history and ensuring their involvement in decision-making



Business Associations

Ideas from the business associations included creating pop-up community spaces and developing buildings with retail on the first floor, offices on the second, and residential units above. Emphasizing the need for retail would help make the area a destination. They suggested using features in the district to create a unique identity and connect adjacent communities. Also, proper wayfinding from Downtown and Cogswell to the North End was highlighted as important.

The Business associations articulated support affordable housing in the district, especially to address affordability issues for downtown workers.

These associations requested the initial plan for recovering infrastructure costs through immediate land sales should be revisited due to the need for housing and since long term tax revenue will offset any financing costs.

Another suggestion was amending the Halifax Citadel Rampart Sightlines to allow for varied building heights and densities in Cogswell. They suggest that the current bylaw is not effective in maintaining zero visibility of modern development from within Citadel Hill.

Additionally, they recommend considering the inclusion of a farmers market like Atwater in Montreal, cultural and public amenities, such as a new art gallery, a 1,500+ seat performing arts center, a permanent outdoor public event space and a connected transit terminal. They also suggested exploring the potential for hotel development within the district, due to rising demand for rooms especially during special events and peak tourist season.

Discover Halifax

Discover Halifax stressed maintaining high building standards in Cogswell while ensuring equity goals are met. They highlighted a need for new hotel rooms in Downtown Halifax to support tourism and provide affordable accommodation for visitors. It was suggested that hotels could include staff accommodations. Additionally, there was a call for flexible land use to support live music venues and community art spaces, which are currently lacking in Halifax.

Key Points

- » The business associations suggest including amenities and arts and culture spaces to make Cogswell a destination
- » They support developing affordable housing in Cogswell, especially for downtown workers
- » The discussions highlighted the importance of high building standards, flexible land use for arts and music and the potential for new hotels





Next Steps

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Next Steps

The next steps of the planning process include the following:

» Although formal public engagement events are now complete, meetings with Community Interest Groups are ongoing throughout the project.

» HRM will draft land use policies and regulations to guide development in the district throughout the summer of 2024. The Cogswell Affordable Housing Strategy will also be drafted during this time.

» Draft planning policies and the draft affordable housing strategy will be shared with the public in late 2024 or early 2025

» The public will be invited to review and comment on the draft policies and affordable housing strategy at that time.

» It is anticipated that the land use policies and affordable housing strategy will be presented to Halifax Regional Council in the spring or summer of 2025 for adoption. A public hearing will be required at this point and will be advertised on the Municipality's website.

For project updates, notices and documents visit the project website:

www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/cogswell-district-land-use-policies

