HALIFAX EXHIBITION CENTRE

PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

July 8, 2025

HALIFAX

Photo Credit: Eagleview, 2024

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Executive Summary

In 2022, Regional Council added policy S-13A to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Regional Plan). This policy identifies the Halifax Exhibition Centre (HEC) lands at 180-200 Prospect Road, Beechville, as an "Opportunity Site" for new housing development in support of the significant demand for housing in the Municipality.

Before development can take place, "Opportunity Sites" require a comprehensive neighbourhood planning process. The planning process addresses what is needed for a new neighbourhood through developing a conceptual plan and supporting technical studies for the entire area and leads to the adoption of enabling policies in the secondary municipal planning strategy. The concept plan will include new roads, parks, pathways, housing mix, and other amenities. After enabling policies for the plan are approved by Regional Council, development will be able to proceed through one or more development agreements or the land use by-law, as well as through a subdivision process.

In November 2023, the Municipality received a proposal for the redevelopment of the 114-acre HEC site from Fathom Studio, on behalf of the landowner, BANC Group. On April 9, 2024, Regional Council initiated a process to consider amendments to the relevant planning documents to allow a mixed-use neighbourhood development on the HEC lands. As part of the initiation, Regional Council also approved a Public Participation Program (PPP). The PPP divides engagement into two phases: Phase I early in the process focused on visioning; while Phase II towards the later stages of the process will focus on reviewing and commenting on draft policies and regulations before municipal staff is able to return to Council with a recommendation. This executive summary reflects feedback collected during Phase I, which focused on visioning and gathering community insights.

Engagement Overview

- Over 300 people attended public information sessions.
- 500+ responses received through an online survey.
- Additional feedback gathered through meetings with community interest groups.

Key Themes Summary

Participants generally expressed support for developing a complete, resilient, and intergenerational community at the HEC site that respects the local context and offers services and amenities to residents living in the development and in the surrounding communities. Many want a walkable, mixed-use neighbourhood with shops, cafes, public squares, and community spaces that reflect the local context and rural character. Key amenities and services requested include a grocery store, schools, and recreation facilities among others. Parks, trails, and green spaces were deemed essential, especially as buffers near Long Lake Provincial Park and Prospect Road.

At the same time, participants raised significant concerns about the scale of the proposed development, particularly regarding its impacts on infrastructure. Participants noted that Prospect Road already experiences heavy traffic. It is a two-lane road (one lane in each direction), with narrow shoulders, and is the only road in and out of the area. The over 60-kilometre road connects to Highway 103 at St. Margarets Bay Road and Upper Tantallon, with no alternative route to access the communities along it, a single accident can cause hours of delays. With the potential influx of thousands of new residents, members of the public are concerned about the impact development will have on their daily commutes, safety, and emergency access and evacuation. Without an alternative route (but not through Long Lake Provincial Park) and improved safety measures put in place, many participants do not support redevelopment of the site.

Participants want public transit services and facilities, including bus routes, park-and-ride facilities, express bus lanes, and access-a-bus services. They also stressed pedestrian and cycling connections through and to the development, sidewalks and crosswalks on Prospect Road, an overpass to Ragged Lake, and grade separated or separate routes for cyclists to travel to other areas of the city.

Respecting the rural character and natural environment of the area is also important to participants. Many participants chose to live along Prospect Road for privacy, open space, and proximity to nature. As such, they want any new development to reflect the area's context. Low-rise buildings, human-scale design, and green buffers along Prospect Road and near Long Lake Provincial Park were supported. A 50–200-foot buffer between development and the park was requested, with uses such as trails or additional parkland.

Environmental protection was another recurring theme.

Participants want wetlands and wildlife corridors preserved and stormwater managed carefully to protect wells and watersheds. They also identified that green space between buildings should serve functional purposes such as gardens, parks, or areas for sunlight and privacy.

Participants also want to see more commercial space in the development. The most requested commercial uses were grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacies, general retail, convenience stores, markets, banks, gas stations, hairdressers/barbers/salons, and post offices. There was strong interest in adding health services, such as walk-in clinics, dentists, and doctors' offices, along with childcare and before/after school care. Overcrowded schools were a major concern, and participants want to ensure that new schools are planned ahead of any construction.

Participants also identified a shortage of parkland and recreation facilities. They desire more inclusive amenities, built for all ages and abilities, ranging from playgrounds to picnic areas, to swimming pools, among others.

Overall, while opinions on the scale and nature of development vary, the need for thoughtful planning that aligns with the area's character and addresses infrastructure challenges – particularly related to Prospect Road – was a consistent theme. Many participants do not oppose development but want to see infrastructure, transportation, and community services in place before it begins.



Fig 2. — Exhibition Park Site Map

Submitted Base Map (Fathom Studio, 2023)



Photo Credit: Prashanth Bala - stock.adobe.com

INTRODUCTION

Planning Process

In 2022, Regional Council added policy S-13A to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Regional Plan). This policy identifies the Halifax Exhibition Centre (HEC) lands at 180-200 Prospect Road, Beechville, as an “Opportunity Site” for new housing development in support of the significant demand for housing in the municipality. The Regional Plan provides high-level direction for the site to be developed as a mixed-use, transit-oriented neighbourhood with a range of housing types, employment opportunities, and services that meet the daily needs of residents on the site.

Before development can take place, “Opportunity Sites” require a comprehensive neighbourhood planning process (see infographic below). The neighbourhood plan will identify the location of new roads, parks, and pathways, and consider the housing mix and amenities needed to guide future development. After policies for the neighbourhood plan are approved by Regional Council, development will be able to proceed through one or more development agreements or the land use by-law, as well as through the subdivision process.

In November 2023, the Municipality received a proposal for the redevelopment of the 114-acre HEC site from Fathom Studio, on behalf of the landowner, BANC Group. On April 9, 2024, Regional Council initiated a process to consider amendments to the relevant planning documents to allow a mixed-use neighbourhood development on the HEC lands. As part of the initiation, Regional Council also approved a Public Participation Program (PPP). The PPP divides engagement into two phases: Phase I is to occur early in the planning process, while technical studies are being prepared and reviewed, and focuses on visioning; and Phase II is an opportunity for the public to review draft policies and regulations.

What is comprehensive neighbourhood planning?

A planning process which comprehensively considers all aspects of planning a new neighbourhood or area.

1. Initiation of Planning Process

Comprehensive neighbourhood planning begins when Halifax Regional Council decides to start a planning process. The Provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing may also designate Special Planning Areas to start a planning process.

2. Technical Studies

Next, technical studies take place to assess the impacts of development. Examples of these studies include a land suitability analysis, water and wastewater capacity assessment, and mobility study.

3. Public Engagement

Meanwhile, planning staff engage with the public to inform residents about the project and gather input on what the community desires. Feedback is welcomed throughout the process, but it is most influential at the beginning of the process and before a decision is made.

4. Detailed Review

The project is then assessed against infrastructure, service, and facility needs to identify constraints and opportunities.

5. Planning Documents

Based on this review, new planning policies are drafted including a conceptual neighbourhood plan. Strategic public investments in infrastructure, parks and facilities may also be identified.

6. Decision

Approval from Halifax Regional Council is required before the project can proceed to development and construction. Approval is required from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for development in Special Planning Areas.



HALIFAX

This Report's Focus

This document provides a summary of engagement activities and feedback received during Phase I engagement. It does not represent every opinion we heard but rather overarching themes. We acknowledge that there are residents who do not want to see any development or only limited development (e.g., some single unit dwellings or redevelopment for commercial entertainment uses only) on the HEC site. This summary report primarily focuses on feedback related to what residents want to see with regards to a new mixed-use neighbourhood on the HEC lands as enabled by Policy S-13A of the Regional Plan.

How We Engaged

Various public engagement methods were used during the first phase of public engagement. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback on a range of topics (see below) that are most influential in the planning process, particularly for visioning and determining the community's desires and concerns. The first phase of engagement started on April 10, 2024, and concluded on October 3, 2024.



How We Engaged



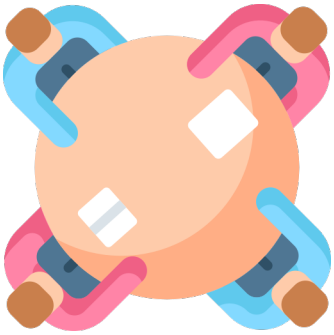
Site Signage
Installed May 2024



Project Website
5,949 Visits
421 Document Downloads
144 FAQ Page Visitors
69 Video Views



Mailouts
171 Notices Mailed



Community Groups
4 Meetings with Community Interest Groups



Public Engagement
2 Sessions
175 Participants (Afternoon)
175 Participants (Evening)
350 Attendees



Online Survey
508 surveys submitted by residents



Calls and Emails
18 unique calls and emails received



Social Media
Social Media Campaign started on September 4, 2024

Public Information Sessions
Two in-person public information sessions were held on September 11, 2024, at Halifax Exhibition Centre: 2:00PM-4:00PM and 6:30PM-8:30PM. At these sessions, attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and share their comments and concerns. Both sessions were in the same format and offered the same information. HRM staff provided a presentation about the planning process, role of municipal planning staff, and an overview of the preliminary proposal from the landowner. Attendees were then invited to participate in group discussions, and encouraged to share their vision for the site and provide feedback specifically about the landowner's proposal. Participants were also invited to view and engage with display boards to learn more about the project and share additional feedback.

Staff from Fathom Studio were available to answer questions specific to the landowner's proposal. Fathom supplied their own question boards to invite feedback. This feedback has not been summarized within this report as it was not developed or moderated by HRM staff.

Online Survey
Residents were invited to participate in an online survey posted on the project's Shape Your City webpage. The 11-question survey was available online from August 22, 2024, until October 3, 2024. Paper copies of the survey were also available at the in-person public engagement sessions; however, only one copy was taken, and it was not returned. All questions were optional, so some questions went unanswered by some participants. Questions asked participants to share their preferences and opinions on the importance of the site, preferred housing types, building designs, road improvements, public and outdoor amenities, and commercial uses.

508 survey submissions were received and 1136 people visited the survey website. Almost 90% of respondents were over 20 years old, with nearly 30% being over the age of 60. Most respondents lived in Halifax Regional Municipality, in communities surrounding the HEC site, including East Dover, Prospect, and Brookside, among others.

Direct Correspondence
During this first phase of public engagement, HRM staff received correspondence by telephone and email. In total, 18 unique calls and emails were received between April 9, 2024, and October 3, 2024.

Community Group Meetings
Focused community group meetings were held with community organizations that expressed interest in the project and requested a meeting with staff. These meetings involved sharing information and understanding the groups' opinions and perspectives on the project. These community groups included: Beechville Community Development Association (BCDA), Long Lake Provincial Park Association (LLPPA), and the Prospect Region Organization for a Better Environment (PROBE). At the time of writing this report, LLPPA and PROBE provided detailed feedback. Their feedback is summarized in the following pages. Engagement with the BCDA is ongoing.



Second public information session - 6:30-8:30PM (HRM)

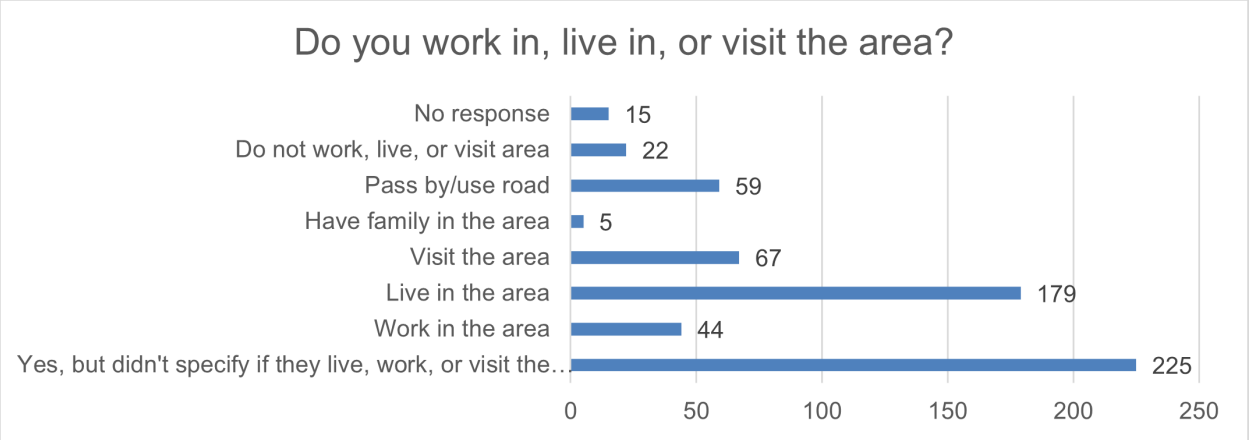


Photo Credit: Discover Halifax, 2024

WHAT WE ARE HEARING
KEY THEMES

Connections

Across various engagement methods, there was significant interest in the subject area, with participants reflecting on diverse connections – including a variety of personal, professional, and community-related reasons for frequenting the area. Approximately 91% of survey respondents either live, work, visit, and/or pass by the site while driving on Prospect Road.



Site and Surrounding Community

The HEC site and surrounding area connect people to different communities, to the natural environment, and to each other. The most common reasons noted for travelling along Prospect Road, and visiting the HEC site include the following:

- To commute to work, school, daycare, and shopping
- To get to Halifax Peninsula, Dartmouth, and Bayers Lake
- For events and fairs, to use the gas station, and for walking and swimming at Long Lake Provincial Park

In the online survey, respondents were asked to identify what aspects of the site and surrounding area were important to them (e.g., history of the site, cultural features, informal pathways, existing services, etc.). Survey respondents identified that addressing any future traffic impacts on Prospect Road was a priority. Notably, in the online survey, over 40% of respondents commented that traffic and roads were important to them. Respondents frequently noted that they have concerns with existing and future traffic levels on Prospect Road – often stating concern about whether adequate roads and access will be provided to support the proposed development.

Respondents noted that the natural environment and parkland and trails are important to them. They value the site and surrounding area for its natural environment, including Long Lake Provincial Park, wetlands, watersheds, and wildlife. Likewise, survey respondents appreciate the existing trails, open space, and green space in the area.

Respondents also expressed that the site is an important space for the community to gather and has historical or cultural significance. Many survey respondents noted that they value the Exhibition Centre as an events space. They value having a central space in the community that can host large events and for the opportunities the large, multi-purpose space provides. This feeling was also identified at the public information sessions where half of the discussion groups noted that they also value having a central space in the community to host large events.

It was also noted that some families have lived in the area for decades and that the site is at the gateway to Prospect Road and the communities beyond.

Key Point(s)

» Participants are concerned about traffic and access, and they value protecting the natural environment and having access to parks and trails, having a large space for community events, and the character of the existing community.

Natural Environment and Sustainability

Participants expressed a strong interest in protecting the natural environment and sustainability of the area. On the HEC site, survey respondents have concerns about the infilling of wetlands and watercourses, and object to wetlands being disturbed. Respondents also want to ensure that any future development does not negatively affect Long Lake Provincial Park. A buffer ranging from 50 to 200 feet was suggested to separate new development from the park. This buffer could include trails and parkland. Currently there are informal trails to access Long Lake Provincial Park from the site and residents would like to see formal public trail connections paired with animal waste disposal and waste facilities. Survey respondents also suggested a connection to the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea (BLT) trail system.

The HEC site is at the head of the watershed and participants want to see the watershed protected during and after construction. There was also general concern for the impact development might have on the area's private well water. A participant also noted that the water table is an issue on Prospect Road. Additionally, survey respondents want stormwater contained and managed on site to prevent runoff to adjacent lands such as Long Lake Provincial Park and to prevent any potential nutrient intensification of the park's watercourses. Participants suggested all paved surfaces be permeable to filter runoff.

Participants want to see natural spaces interspersed throughout the development, larger buffers around wetlands, and protection of wetlands wherever possible. They also want to see the protection of wildlife corridors and habitats. One participant also mentioned an osprey nest they want protected.

Sustainable development and infrastructure were also discussed. Some survey respondents want to see accessible electric vehicle parking and charging stations, solar panels, use of biophilic design principles including green roofs, and sustainable building design (e.g., no glass high-rises).

Key Point(s)

» Participants care for and value Long Lake Provincial Park. They want to protect the Park from any adverse impacts and ensure that residents and visitors can sustainably enjoy the area via new, formalized public trails.

» There is general concern for stormwater management and the impact the development could have on the watershed and the local water table.

» Participants want to see environmental sustainability incorporated into the development.

"Be careful with impacts to long lake and any water courses. Make it a sustainable and climate resilient neighbourhood. This could be a flagship for how to design cities for the future."

"Development of trails for the backside of Long Lake linking the system to all other trails in the area."



Painted Turtle (Maridav - stock.adobe.com)

Parks and Open Space

Participants requested more open space (green space, programmed parkland, or both) throughout the proposed development, and better use of open spaces for parks and amenity space. Some specified wanting open space on either side of the existing gas station and Tim Hortons. Various participants favored a central park, while others preferred multiple parks with different programming such as a dog park or recreational uses. Some survey respondents noted that the proposed central park is too small for the proposed population. Respondents want to see gentle density beside parks and housing surrounding any central recreation area. Respondents also want to see trails and parks throughout the development and connections created to trails off site (e.g., to Long Lake Provincial Park and to the BLT rails to trails).

In the online survey, respondents were asked to rank the importance of different outdoor amenity spaces for inclusion on the HEC lands. The options included:

- Active recreation facilities (e.g., baseball diamonds, basketball courts, soccer fields, etc.)
- Passive recreation facilities (e.g., grassed open space, picnic areas, seating areas, etc.)
- Trails and walkways
- Playgrounds
- Outdoor entertainment spaces
- Other

Where one (1) was the most important and five (5) was the least important, on average, respondents ranked trails and walkways as most important (average rank of 2.63). Trails and walkways were followed closely by passive recreation facilities (2.87), and active recreation facilities (2.92). However, within this question, respondents were provided the option to rank an “other” option. In reviewing the responses to this question, many elaborated in more detail about what outdoor amenity space they want (e.g., an outdoor hockey rink) and some suggested that they wanted indoor amenity spaces. Below is a list of some of what respondents requested:

- Facilities dedicated to programming for kids, specifically more HRM Rec programs
- Facilities and amenities for all ages
- Co-located facilities (e.g., entertainment venue with a library)
- Keep or build something like HEC
- Hockey rink (indoor and outdoor)
- Pool
- Accessible playgrounds for all abilities
- Community centre/hall
- Parking area and picnic area linked to Long Lake Provincial Park
- Keep as much green space as possible and protect the natural environment



Canoeing on Susie’s Lake (Tourism Nova Scotia / Photographer: Acorn Art Photography)

Similarly, at the engagement sessions, participants were asked to identify which outdoor amenity spaces they would like to see. Across both sessions, participants most preferred trails and walkways (34%), followed by active recreation (24%), and playgrounds (18%). See the full results below.

Which outdoor amenity spaces would you like to see?		
Category	**Votes**	**Percentage (%)**
Active Recreation (e.g., sports fields and courts)	43	24
Passive Recreation (e.g., picnic or seating areas, grassed open space)	21	11
Trails and Walkways	62	34
Playgrounds	33	18
Outdoor Entertainment Spaces	24	13
Total	**183**	

Key Point(s)

» Participants want more open space throughout the development and on average place higher importance on trails and walkways, passive recreation (e.g., grassed open space, picnic areas, seating areas), and active recreation (e.g., baseball diamonds, basketball courts, soccer fields, etc.).

"A park space, something like point pleasant or hemlock ravine. Wooded space to enjoy nature."

"Development of trails for the backside of Long Lake linking the system to all other trails in the area."



Photo Credit: Blitz - stock.adobe.com

Community Facilities

Participants identified a general lack of community services and facilities in the area and the need for more.

Recreation Facilities

Both the Prospect Road Basketball Association and the Prospect Road Communities Minor Baseball Association have seen a surge in the number of children enrolling in these sports. The children need to travel outside the community to use courts/fields because the courts/fields in the community are currently at capacity. The Associations and other residents voiced that they want to see sports fields and courts included in the development to support the existing and growing population.

In the online survey, respondents were asked to identify what public amenities they thought were needed to support current and future residents. In total, 44% of survey respondents identified community recreation facilities in their response. A long, varied list of recreation and community facilities that participants want to see in this development came out of the survey and public information sessions. Some survey respondents asked if the developer could pay for the new recreation facilities and provide more than the minimum required parkland dedication. Suggestions for additional recreation facilities included:

- Amphitheater
- Playgrounds
- Parks (with exercise equipment, picnic facilities)
- Trails, including trails for ATVs
- Soccer and football fields
- Baseball field
- Basketball court
- Skate park
- Pickleball courts
- Ice rink
- Gym
- Pool
- Rock climbing
- Community centre
- Wellness centre
- Arts centre
- Community theatre
- Library

Participants generally see the provision of community facilities as a tool for building a sense of community. It is important to have spaces for seniors, and to ensure that all spaces are accessible. Survey respondents also emphasized the importance of providing space for community gardens to help reduce food insecurity and the need to drive to get food.

Key Point(s)

» Participants want more community and recreation facilities in the area.

» Community and recreation facilities are important tools for building a sense of community and creating inclusive spaces for all ages and abilities.

"Larger rec facility."

"Recreation centre including rinks and pool. Development of parking, toilets and trails connecting to Long Lake Park."

"Indoor pool and community centre, indoor ice rink."



Sport courts and fields (sandsun - stock.adobe.com)

Halifax Exhibition Centre and Event Space

Many participants stated that they value the Exhibition Centre as an event space and will be sad to lose it. The Halifax Exhibition Centre is currently used as a place to host community events such as graduation ceremonies and was described as having a special significance and heritage value.

Some participants would like the existing building to remain; others would like a new space to host large-scale events – whether on this site or elsewhere in HRM. Some survey respondents suggested a concert venue (indoor and outdoor), a water park, roller coaster, and a go kart track. Participants said large entertainment spaces offer unique local experiences, create opportunities for local vendors, and generate economic spin-offs.

Key Point(s)

» Participants value the Halifax Exhibition Centre as a large, multi-purpose event space for the community.

"It's important to me that we have this large facility for hosting trade shows, flea markets, expos and all the other things that take place there."

"The city needs an Exhibition Center. This facility is routinely used by the community and should not be something we are looking to get rid of as the city grows."



Halifax Exhibition Centre Sign (Google, 2025)

Public Services

Many participants spoke about the need for public services including: a new hospital, medical clinics, including walk-in clinics, dentists, police and fire stations, and daycares. The YMCA or a similar organization that offers community services including immigrant services and daycare was also mentioned.

One of the most discussed topics at the engagement sessions was the need for additional schools. Participants noted that the existing schools in the community are already at or over capacity. In addition, when asked what public amenities and infrastructure were needed to support development, 51.3% of survey respondents mentioned schools. While participants feel that new schools are needed, they want to make sure the existing schools do not become underprioritized as a result. Respondents noted that there is a lack of French Immersion programs in the area and that some children in the community are currently bussed outside of the community. They felt that schools need to be built before or as the development is built, not after more children move to the area.

> "Need another school. Also, we really need another way to exit hwy 333."

> "Transit service, high school, another exit to 103 for prospect residents. A gas station further down prospect road."

> "With a development of this size, all public amenities are important."

Key Point(s)

» Participants recognized that the need for public services is wide-ranging and comprehensive. Public transit infrastructure and schools were frequently highlighted.



School (Inspiring.team - stock.adobe.com)

General Infrastructure

Participants also had several questions and comments about infrastructure. Some participants want to ensure that the infrastructure is in place before development begins and that the cost of any new or upgraded infrastructure to support the development does not come at their expense. They also want to ensure existing services are not overburdened and they are not deprioritized (e.g., power grid, snow removal, waste collection).

Some survey respondents felt that the area was already lacking in infrastructure and questioned why new developments would be added before services. Others expressed concern about the Otter Lake Landfill and questioned if it would have to expand operations, and what that would mean for truck traffic and smell in the area – asking whether an alternative route could be considered.

Others questioned how stormwater runoff would be managed and expressed that water and wastewater infrastructure would need to be upgraded to support the development. Additionally, residents want to see power lines installed underground.

Key Point(s)

» Participants expressed that any required infrastructure should be installed prior to development, the development should bear the costs, and existing residents should not be deprioritized.

"The current infrastructure around the HEC property is not adequate to support high density housing. Without significant infrastructure upgrades, a redevelopment of the property will have a negative effect on those currently living in the area."

"IMPROVE OUR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ROADWAYS BEFORE CONSIDERING BUILDING A NEW DEVELOPMENT!!!"







Top Left: Storm Drain (Lost_In_the_Midwest - stock.adobe.com)
Top Right: Snow Plow (Philip - stock.adobe.com)
Bottom: Road Construction (Freedy - stock.adobe.com)

Transportation

Transportation was one of the most discussed subjects and participants continually cited it as their biggest concern with the proposal. Notably, question 8 in the online survey asked respondents to share any other ideas they had for the site. In total, transportation was the most frequently mentioned theme with 131 mentions (emergency access and services was second with 60 mentions), and of those 131 mentions, 120 specifically identified ideas related to improving access, traffic concerns, and road improvements. Respondents noted that traffic on Prospect Road is already heavy and with the lack of alternative routes, they do not want new development until existing traffic problems and safety concerns are addressed. Respondents are frustrated that their commutes will be negatively impacted, and they will have to spend more of their day in their cars because of the potential influx of new residents. They are also concerned about the impacts on local tourism – particularly Peggy's Cove.

Survey respondents also made a number of suggestions for improving congestion and safety on Prospect Road including: adding an additional lane (or more) in each direction, adding a carpool lane, widening the road or adding passing lanes (to allow vehicles to pass when there is an accident), an alternate route in and out of the area (for vehicles or just truck traffic travelling to the industrial sites), roundabouts at intersections of the development and Prospect Road and at St. Margarets Bay Road, lower speed limits, traffic lights, and reducing car dependency (e.g., providing services and amenities in the development). Respondents also suggested a temporary access road be built from Prospect Road to St. Margaret's Bay Road to limit the impact on commuters during construction.

Participants suggested several options for new routes in and out of the community, including an overpass from the site or Ragged Lake connecting directly to Bayers Lake, a new road from Brookside or Hatchet Lake to Highway 103 at the Otter Lake exit, or a new road connecting Brookside Road to Old Sambro Road. Participants also suggested using an old road between Highway 103 and Prospect. Participants said it is important that no new roads go through Long Lake Provincial Park. Participants shared that they would like to see connections to Spryfield and Bayers Lake.

Safe routes and connections for pedestrians and cyclists were mentioned. Participants want to see sidewalks and crosswalks along Prospect Road. Participants suggested an overpass for pedestrians and cyclists to safely travel from the development to Ragged Lake. Some participants want bicycle lanes to connect to other communities, but most said they want them grade separated from roads or separate from Prospect Road.

Participants' traffic concerns go beyond Prospect Road. They said even if there is another route to Prospect Road, the traffic problems and existing bottlenecks around the city will be further exacerbated and they want transportation issues to be looked at more broadly. Participants cited several bottlenecks particularly when trying to access the Peninsula (e.g., the Armdale Roundabout, St. Margarets Bay Road, and Herring Cove Road). Participants suggested a bridge over the Northwest Arm if traffic was routed through Spryfield, building a third bridge over the Halifax Harbour, twinning St. Margarets Bay Road, and creating a new route to access the Peninsula.

Participants offered transportation-related feedback specific to Fathom's development proposal:

- They questioned if the internal road network, including streets around the townhouses are wide enough.
- They requested that the proposed road at the northern end of the site does not continue through Long Lake Provincial Park.
- Some wanted less parking, some wanted all parking underground, and others suggested a parkade to house a large amount of parking.
- Many residents expressed a need for streetlights in this area.
- A carpool parking lot or dedicated carsharing spaces were also suggested.

Key Point(s)

» Participants expressed concern for increased congestion along Prospect Road, while identifying opportunities to provide new access points and routes for vehicles and pedestrians.

"Improved access, other than Prospect Road…connections to St Margarets Bay Rd. and Spryfield."

Public Transit

Participants want a reliable bus service to ease congestion in the area and for efficient transportation to downtown Halifax. Some want bus service extended to this development, while others said there is a need to extend transit service further to other communities along Prospect Road. Some suggested having a dedicated transit lane or an express bus route along Prospect Road. Some participants also suggested a light rail connection.

Participants also want a park-and-ride facility (e.g., like in Sackville or Tantallon) in the development or further down Prospect Road. There was a suggestion that the park-and-ride be located next to a new trailhead to Long Lake Provincial Park. Participants also expressed a desire for a transit hub within the development. Participants said that, to switch from driving their own vehicles to using transit, they need the service to be reliable, frequent, and more appealing than driving their own vehicles. Accessible buses were mentioned as important for servicing the seniors in the community.

In the online survey, when asked what public amenities and infrastructure were needed to support development, 64.1% of survey respondents mentioned public transit.

Likewise, at the public information sessions, participants were asked to choose which transportation infrastructure features they would like to see. Across both sessions, bus stops (26%) were the most preferred by participants, followed by a park & ride (22%), and sidewalks (20%). See the full results below.

Which transportation infrastructure features would you like to see?		
Category	**Votes**	**Percentage (%)**
Bus Stops	44	26
Park & Ride	38	22
Car-Free Streets	16	9
Sidewalks	35	20
Protected Bicycle Lanes	24	14
Traffic Calming	15	9
Total	**172**	

Key Point(s)

- Participants generally want public transit extended to the site.
- However, opinions differ on how far and how extensively public transit should be implemented on the site and within the area.
- Participants said that, to switch from driving their own vehicle to using transit, they need the service to be reliable, frequent, and more appealing than driving their own vehicles.

"Reserve land for public transportation use such as bus, rapid transit, or metro service."

"Lots of public transit to try to minimise increased road congestion on prospect and bay roads."

"Make a transit hub to serve the new residents and the existing Prospect Communities. Make a park and ride for prospect residents."

"EXPAND THE BUS ROUTE."

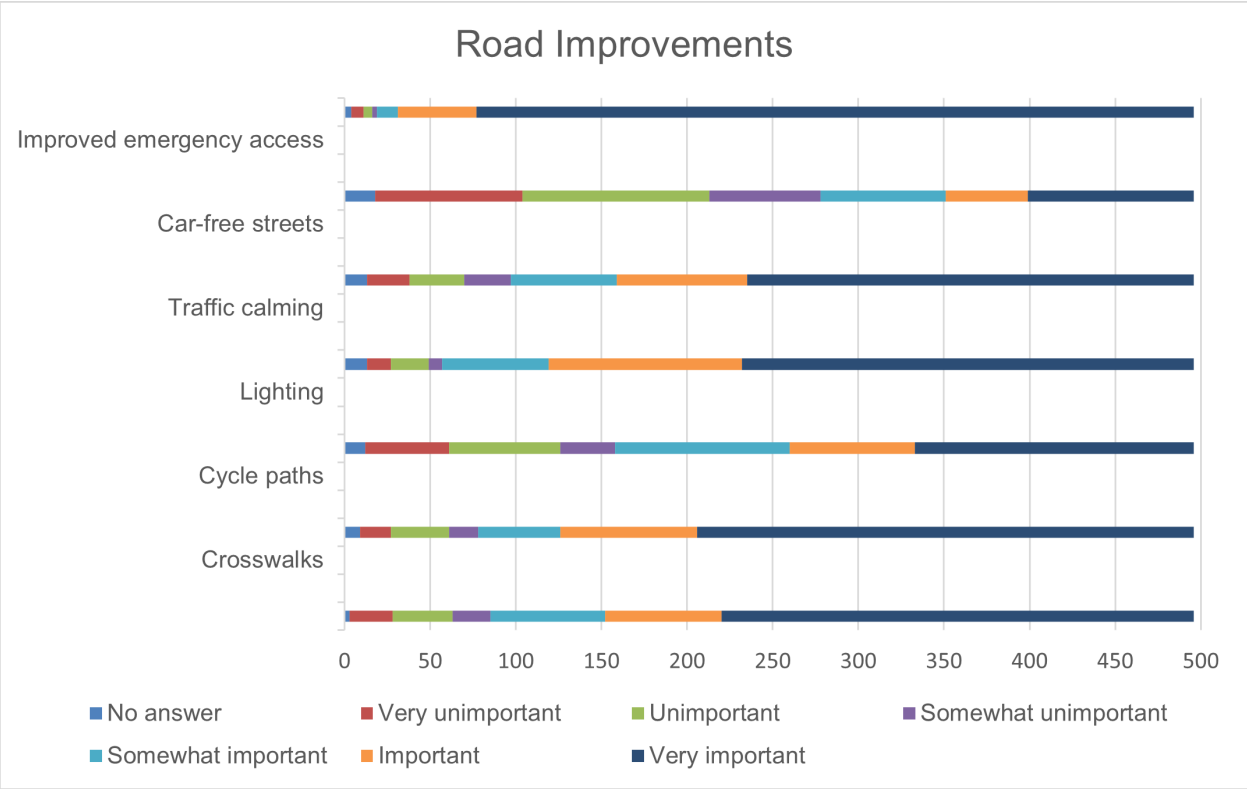
Emergency Access and Services

Participants are concerned about the capacity of emergency services to serve a growing population amidst an increased risk of natural disasters including forest fires, floods, and hurricanes. General concern exists for response times for emergency responders, and the ability to quickly and safely evacuate during an emergency.

As noted above, Prospect Road is the only route in and out of the area (unless you drive around to Tantallon) and it is one lane in each direction. If there is an accident on Prospect Road, participants recalled that traffic quickly backs up because the road is not wide enough for vehicles to safely pass. They suggested that an alternate route in and out of the area is critical for improving emergency response times and for emergency evacuations.

In the online survey, respondents were asked to rank a series of road improvements according to how important they felt they were for current and future residents. In total, 84% of respondents ranked improved emergency access as “very important”. See the full results below.

Participants also want additional emergency services in the community, including new fire and police stations. Participants want to see these issues dealt with and services in place before any development happens.



Key Point(s)

» Participants expressed concerns about the existing capacity of emergency services to service the area. New emergency services should be added/extended to the area to support the development.

» The area does not have an alternative route for emergency evacuations.

“There needs to be another way in and out of the area. In an emergency we are trapped. Day to day traffic is also a huge concern.”

“Need emergency evacuation route.”

Housing and Density

Participants' opinions about what type of housing and how much density they want to see built are broad and conflicting. Many agree some development should happen but that the current proposal is too dense and out of character for the rural area. However, there is no clear consensus about what may be appropriate. Suggested maximum heights ranged from three storeys to 20 storeys, with many falling somewhere in between. Suggested density varied and included a maximum of 2-3k people or five hundred families; 3,000 units; and 50% lower than proposed. Some survey respondents noted they would be okay with high-rise, high-density housing if that meant more of the site could be green space, parks, or other amenities to serve the community.

Participants want a mix of housing options (e.g., single unit dwellings, townhouses, and apartment buildings) – although some are very clear about only wanting single unit dwellings – and unit sizes. Some participants said it is important for some units to have multiple bedrooms to accommodate larger families or to allow people to share apartments for more affordable housing.

Survey respondents expressed the need for accessible and senior friendly housing. The existing population includes many seniors, some of whom would like to be able to downsize in the community but are concerned about whether they could afford to. Respondents expressed concern about the accessibility of townhouses and stacked townhouses.

While many respondents agree there is a general need for more housing, some believe the only solution is to build affordable housing. Need for a clear definition of what affordable means and how it is calculated was noted; 30% or less of a household's pre-tax income was specified by some as what should be considered affordable. Respondents want a commitment that there will be affordable housing included in the development, but they do not want the quality and design of housing to be compromised for affordability. There is concern that this development will not be affordable to existing residents, which makes them feel they are not part of this development. There were also questions about how to create affordable housing when respondents felt that there is currently a lack of supportive infrastructure (e.g., public transit).

Respondents want to see a mix of rental and owner-occupied units, including in multi-unit buildings. Their hope is that if there are owner-occupied units, residents will be more likely to have a sense of community, take care of their spaces, and stay long-term. They also want to see affordable units mixed with market priced units to support an inclusive and diverse community. Respondents also suggested the development include public or cooperative housing options.

At the engagement sessions, attendees were asked what types of housing they would like to see. In total, 155 votes were received, and the most preferred housing type was single unit dwellings with 50 votes (32%). Townhouses were the second most popular choice with 31 votes (20%) and low rise-apartment buildings closely followed by 30 votes (19%). Attendees could vote for as many housing types as they wanted, and the data did not tell us whether participants wanted solely one type of housing or a mix of housing types. The detailed results are available below.

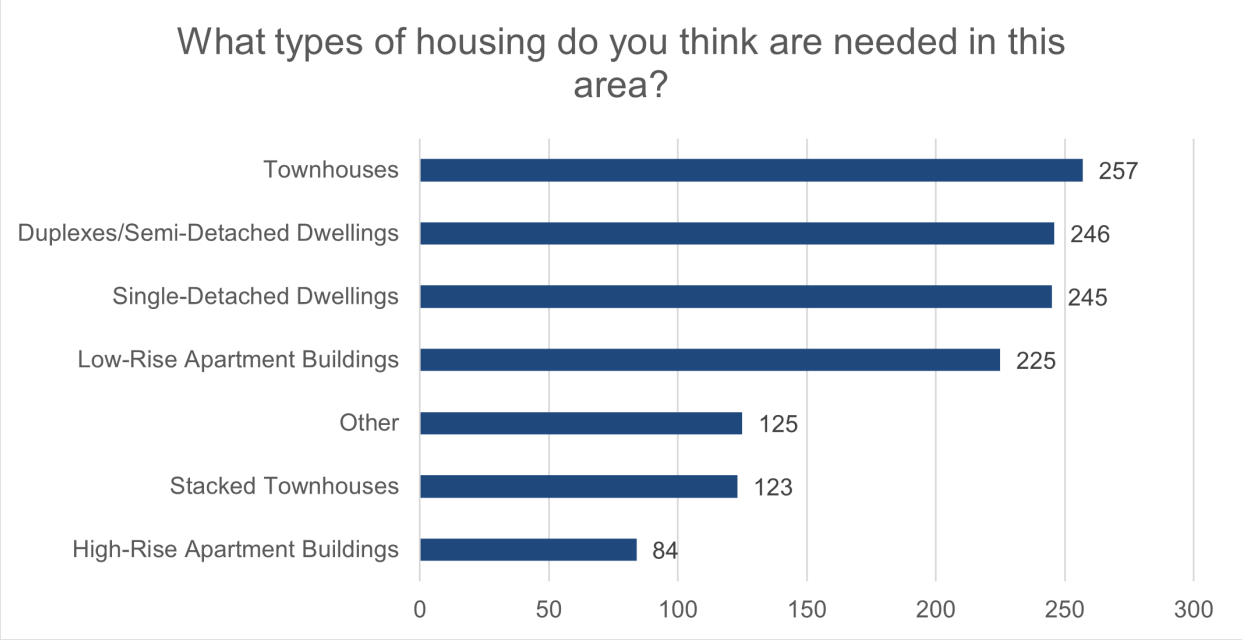
Which types of housing would you like to see?		
Category	**Votes**	**Percentage (%)**
Detached Single Unit-Dwellings	50	32
Townhouses	31	20
Stacked Townhouses	14	9
Duplexes/Semi-Detached Housing	23	15
Low-Rise Apartments	30	19
High-Rise Apartments	7	5
Total	**155**	

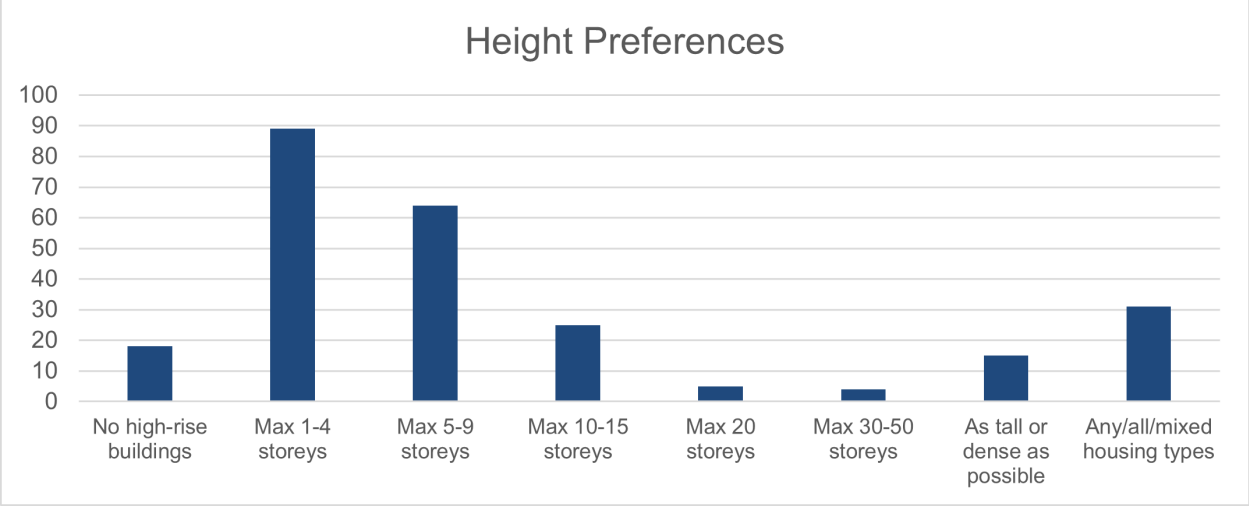
In the online survey, respondents were asked what types of housing they thought were needed in the area. Respondents were asked to select from a pre-defined list the types of housing they think are suitable for the site. In total, 470 respondents answered this question. Most respondents chose a mix of housing types. The "other" option was chosen 125 times, and variety of explanations were provided, including:

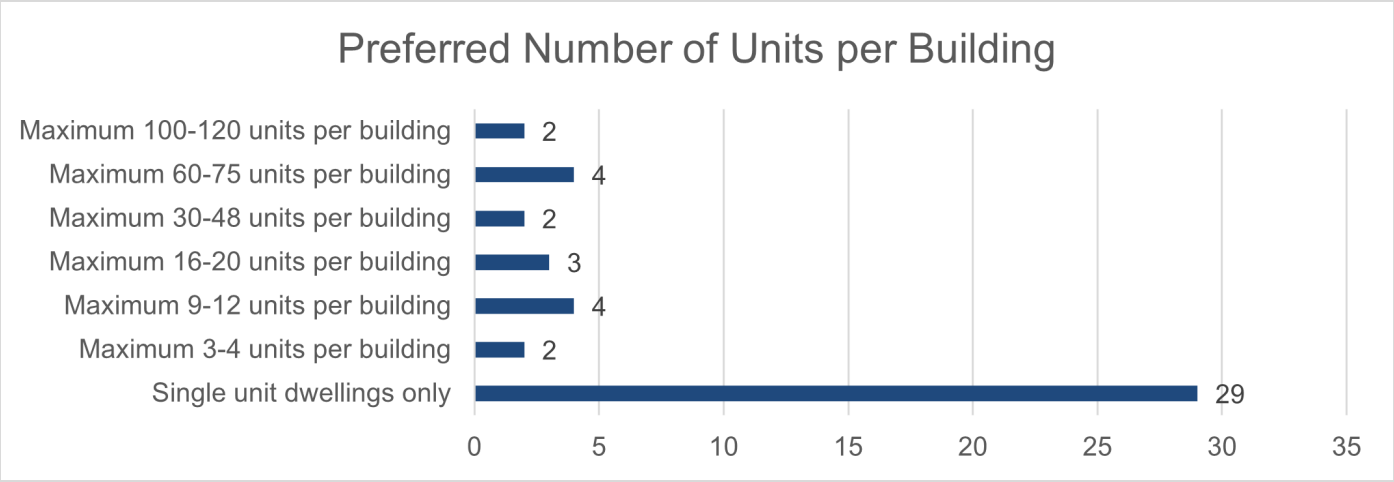
- None. Although some went on to explain they do not want to see any housing until there is infrastructure to support development (e.g., improved road access).
- Low-income housing and affordable housing
- Secondary and backyard suites
- Shelters
- Cooperative housing
- Seniors' housing
- Accessible and adaptable housing
- Different unit sizes, including micro units and units with multiple bedrooms

Another survey question asked respondents what size building (e.g., height or number of storeys, width, number of units) they thought was most appropriate for the site. Most of the 429 responses focused on maximum building height and/or the number of units per building or for the entire development.

The charts below highlight feedback about desired housing types, building sizes, and density for the site.







Key Point(s)

- Participants' opinions about what type of housing and how much density they want to see built are broad and conflicting.
- Participants want to see a mix of housing options, but mostly prefer low-rise development (e.g., single unit dwellings, townhouses, and low-rise apartments).
- Participants emphasized the need for affordable housing and multiple bedroom units to support family living and affordability.

"Leave the Exhibition as it is and build low density housing around it if anything at all."

"Build build build, more rentals and homes built opens up for affordable housing."

"I am fine with residential development, I just think the volume is too high for where its located."

"No apartment buildings larger than 4 stories, 2 storey townhouses and single family homes. No more than 500 housing units total."



Housing (HRM)

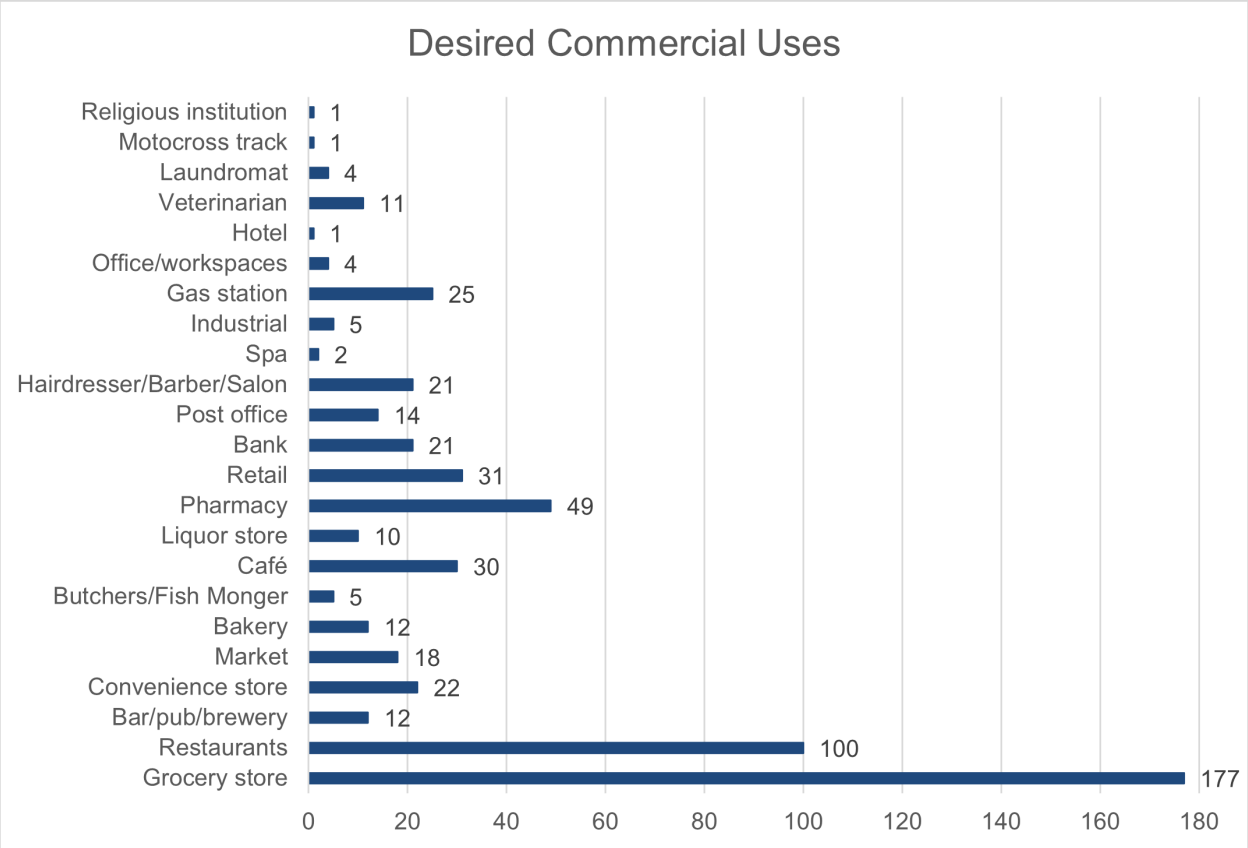
Commercial Uses

Participants generally want to see more commercial space integrated into the proposal. They feel the amount proposed is insufficient to provide for the needs of residents in the development and surrounding communities. They also feel that it does not support the creation of a complete community.

Survey respondents want to see a variety of shops and services, so residents do not have to travel to Bayers Lake for daily needs. Many respondents mentioned the importance of providing space for local retailers and small/neighbourhood scale commercial. Respondents want the existing gas bar, Tim Hortons, and convenience store to remain. The most frequently mentioned uses respondents said they wanted are a grocery store and a pharmacy. Other uses include restaurants, bars, hotels, short-term rentals, gas station with a full-service option, laundromat, professional services, post office, a gym, liquor store, services to support tourism, and faith-based organizations. Respondents also mentioned the importance of providing places for people to work, including office buildings to cater to different employment opportunities.

The online survey asked respondents to list the businesses or services they thought were most needed on the HEC lands. Within the responses, respondents identified a variety of commercial uses they wanted to see in the development. The full list of desired commercial uses is below.

Grocery stores (177 mentions) and restaurants (100 mentions) were the most requested. Respondents also indicated that they want locally owned, family-friendly, and/or not take-out or fast-food restaurants.



Key Point(s)

» Participants want to see more commercial space integrated into the proposal.

» Grocery stores, restaurants, and pharmacies were the most frequently mentioned commercial uses.

"Grocery stores, pharmacy, medical clinic. Important things people on 333 cannot get to currently do to traffic being so bad on this road."

Building and Site Design

Participants expressed that they do not think the current design promotes a sense of community, some specifically noted the “clumping” of buildings. They suggested that yard space – for any type of dwelling – helps encourage people to spend time outside and interact with their neighbours.

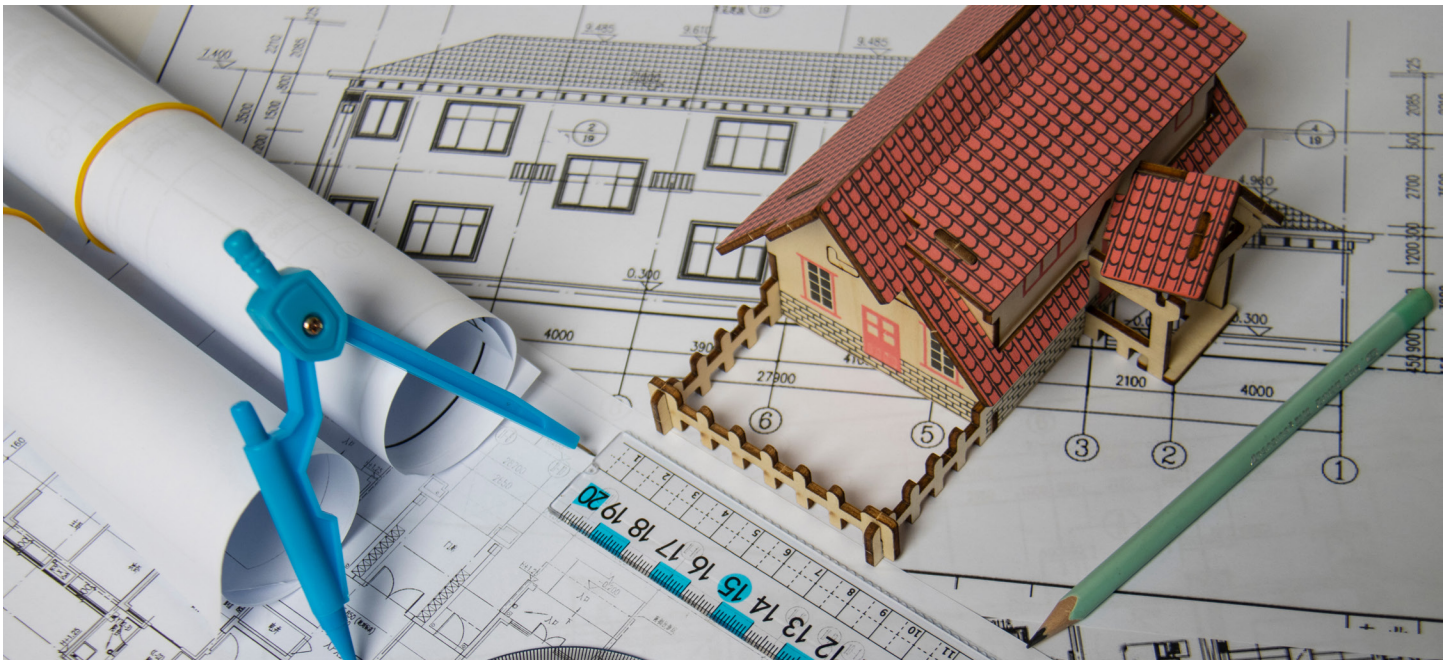
Some participants said that the development does not look welcoming, nor does it look like it was designed to be enjoyed and experienced by pedestrians. They recommend considering how people will experience the site. Participants suggested having larger separation between buildings to improve access to sunlight, allow people to have gardens, and overall create a more inviting neighbourhood.

Participants are also concerned about safety and crime prevention and want to see the design incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. Participants suggested that low to mid-rise buildings will help not only with natural surveillance, but limit shadowing and create a friendlier atmosphere. They further advised that low to mid-rise building typologies help address residents’ concerns about occupants being able to evacuate safely and quickly during emergencies and power outages. Accessibility is also a concern. Participants want the entire development to be accessible.

Participants emphasized the need to consider existing community character and how to integrate this development into the surrounding context. They said it looks like a generic design that does not reflect the rural culture or heritage. It is a sharp transition from largely undeveloped lands to a wall of high-density development. The community values privacy and the proposed design does not create a sense of privacy – especially where residents are in towers staring at each other. They suggested an urban village design would be a better fit and that integrating more nature and using native plant species would help too.

There seems to be general agreement that, along Prospect Road, participants do not want high rises, and they want a larger setback between the road and buildings. They are concerned that high-rises along Prospect Road will create an unwelcoming atmosphere. Instead, they would prefer human-scaled, low-rise housing (townhouses or apartment buildings) and or commercial and community facilities that are setback from the road. They would also like more green space between buildings or a greenbelt between the development and road.

On the eastern side of the site, abutting Long Lake Provincial Park, there is a wider range of opinions about the appropriate type of development. Some participants said if there are high-rise buildings, they should be on the eastern side while others want to see low-rise (single or townhouse) style development to avoid shadowing the park and that a shadow study should be conducted to mitigate impacts on the park. Others recommended



Drawings (tony - stock.adobe.com)

five storeys to take advantage of the solar orientation. Some participants who support taller, higher density housing said they would prefer it to be where the townhouses are currently proposed. Supporters of high-rise development said they prefer building up rather than out to provide for more green space. A participant recommended “skinny towers” which have narrow towers but larger podiums to support commercial; they could be designed to have smaller commercial spaces to give flexibility to businesses who don’t need or can’t afford large spaces.

Participants suggested having one main street dedicated to commercial and retail, but it could also include residential uses too. They also recommended placing controls on building design to allow for small commercial spaces.

Participants want high quality, visually appealing development. Some specified they want wood frame construction, while others said they prefer concrete.

Key Point(s)

- Participants emphasized the importance of creating a community-oriented design that promotes a sense of community – focusing on building separation for sunlight penetration, green space, and supporting outdoor interaction.
- Participants are also concerned about safety and crime prevention. Participants suggested that low to mid-rise buildings will help not only with natural surveillance, but limit shadowing and create a friendlier atmosphere.
- In general, along Prospect Road, participants do not want high rises, and they want a larger setback between the road and buildings.

“Whatever goes there, please make it look really nice – attractive buildings with beautiful landscaping.”

“Keep it simple with active living in mind for everyone.”

“No more meandering streets, bring back grids.”

“Full CPTED audit. Inclusion of solar panels on open roof spaces.”

Public Engagement

Participants offered general feedback on the engagement opportunities, including suggestions to enhance participation at in-person sessions. Additionally, several comments received during the engagement phase did not align with the categories outlined above. This remaining feedback is summarized below:

- Ensure all attendees can participate in table discussions.
- Include more copies of printed materials to share with those not in attendance.
- Provide more in-person public engagement and other opportunities to engage with the project.
- Host an open public forum for the public to ask questions and for everyone to hear the answers.
- Birds eye (plan view) maps make it difficult for people to understand the height impacts of the development.
- Include a quiet room for accessibility.
- Establish a resident steering committee to guide the project.
- Investigate how artificial intelligence can be used to support engagement.
- Develop a virtual experience so the public can walk through the site to experience what it would look like when it's developed.
- They would like ongoing surveys to request feedback about emerging and ongoing safety concerns.
- Some residents feel their voice does not matter and they are not being heard by government which creates a feeling of distrust (the Prospect Community Centre development process and the Beechville Community boundary changes were both provided as examples). There are concerns about governments' decision-making power for proposals that the community does not want, and residents want to see more transparency in the decision-making process.
- There is a risk that the province could unilaterally approve developments (i.e., for those sites designated as special planning areas) and HRM should advise the public about this risk.
- Participants do not want the development agreement to allow for any amendments, substantive or non-substantive. They would also like to see development phased over an extended period.



Dotmocracy boards at public information session (HRM)



Photo Credit: Tetiana - stock.adobe.com

NEXT STEPS

Planning Process

» Community Interest Group engagement is ongoing.

» Adjustments to the proposal will be required to address comments made by various HRM departments, external review agencies, and the public.

» HRM staff will draft policies for future development that outline the requirements for the consideration of a development agreement.

» Depending on the outcome of the review and policy drafting stages, and the landowner's readiness, HRM staff may also draft a development agreement or land use by-law regulations to enable development on the site.

» HRM staff will share draft planning policies and regulations with residents and the Community Interest Groups. The public will be invited to review and comment on the draft policies and regulations.

» HRM staff will revise the draft policies and regulations following feedback from the public.

» Finally, HRM staff will draft a staff recommendation report that includes the draft policies and regulations. This will be presented to Regional Council for decision. A public hearing will be required prior to a decision from Regional Council. Residents will be invited to the public hearing. Details about the public hearing will be shared on the project's Shape Your City webpage, and letters will be mailed to residents and landowners within a predetermined radius around the site. Those that want to be added to the mailing list can be added.

For all up to date information visit:

https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/exhibition-park

Scan QR code to visit project website