



# HIGHWAY 102 WEST CORRIDOR SPECIAL PLANNING AREA

## PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

# Table of Contents

- 1. Project Overview..... 4
- 2. This Document..... 4
- 3. How We Engaged..... 5
- 4. Project Timeline ..... 7
- 5. What We Heard ..... 8
- 6. Environmental Sustainability ..... 8
  - 6.1 Impact on Environmental Features ..... 8
  - 6.2 Impact on Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Area ..... 9
  - 6.3 Recreational Community Value ..... 10
- 7. Housing and Community Design..... 10
  - 7.1 Housing Typology and Density ..... 11
  - 7.2 Affordability..... 12
  - 7.3 Environmental Features and Community Design ..... 12
- 8. Transportation and Mobility..... 12
  - 8.1 Existing and Perceived Future Capacity Issues ..... 13
  - 8.2 Access to Potential Future Park..... 14
- 9. Community Facilities and Finances..... 14
  - 9.1 Need for Schools and Community Facilities..... 15
  - 9.2 Fiscal Implications and Taxes..... 15
- 10. Planning Process, Transparency, and Role of Province..... 16
- APPENDIX A: Survey Result Overview..... 18

# Table of Figures

Figure 1: Environmental Subthemes Identified from Resident Comments and Survey Responses ..... 8

Figure 2: Housing Subthemes Identified from Resident Comments and Survey Responses ..... 11

Figure 3: Transportation Subthemes Identified from Resident Comments and Survey Responses ..... 13

Figure 5: Community Facilities and Finances Subthemes Identified from Resident Comments and Survey Responses ..... 15

Figure 6: Preferred Future Housing Location, Size, Type, as indicated by Online Survey Respondents ..... 18

Figure 7: Preferred Future Commercial Uses, as indicated by Online Survey Respondents, presented proportionally ..... 19

Figure 8: Preferred Future Park Features and Activities, as indicated by Online Survey Respondents ..... 20

Figure 9: Preferred Future 'Vision' of the Area in 20 years, as Indicated by Online Survey Respondents ..... 21

## 1. Project Overview

On May 16, 2025, the Highway 102 West Corridor area was designated a Special Planning Area (SPA) by the Nova Scotia Minister of Growth and Development. This designation is a part of a broader provincial effort to address housing challenges in the Capital Region. To date, sixteen (16) Special Planning Areas have been identified across the Halifax Regional Municipality. The *Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act* allows the province to designate Special Planning Areas and delegates approval authority for planning matters in those areas to the Minister of Growth and Development with the intent of supporting the timely planning and development of new communities.

Concurrently, the Province requested the municipality to begin comprehensive neighbourhood planning for the Highway 102 West Corridor Lands. The comprehensive planning process, also known as secondary planning, considers all aspects of planning a new neighbourhood.

The planning process includes:

- Community engagement,
- Background studies, such as land suitability, transportation, archaeological resource impact, potable water and wastewater servicing,
- Detailed review by HRM staff and other review agencies, and
- Drafting of planning policies, land use by-law amendments and development agreements for consideration by decision makers.

The purpose of the comprehensive planning process is to create complete communities, neighbourhoods that integrate housing, employment, recreation, and essential services within walking distance for current and future residents. A key input to the planning process is the recently completed Future Serviced Communities (FSC) Study. This study provides the technical foundation needed to evaluate the feasibility of developing the Highway 102 West Corridor area. The study helps both the Municipality and the Province understand the servicing, environmental, and infrastructure considerations that must be addressed before new communities can be planned and built. The study was completed in April 2025 and can be found [here](#).

The outcome of the planning process will be a coordinated set of new municipal land use policies and regulations to guide and support development in the area, informed by HRM priority plans, community engagement, collaboration with internal and external review agencies, rightsholders proposals, and supporting technical studies.

## 2. This Document

This document offers a summary of engagement activities and feedback received during the Phase 1 of the Highway 102 West Corridor Special Planning Area public engagement process that took place in 2025.

The following sections in this report provide an overview of all feedback and ideas collected from various forms of public engagement. Those include:

- an online survey hosted on the “Engage Halifax” website;
- public open houses; and
- email correspondence received by HRM staff.

Feedback is organised into key themes that emerged throughout the engagement process. Within this section, **blue text boxes** highlight quotes from residents who attended various public engagement sessions, provided input through the survey, or through email correspondence.

The report also outlines the upcoming stages of the planning process and outlines future public engagement opportunities.

### 3. How We Engaged

HRM’s Administrative Order 2023-002-ADM establishes the minimum requirements for public participation programs concerning Planning Documents within HRM. The Administrative Order provides a framework and allows staff to choose engagement methods most appropriate for the planning application. A number of engagement opportunities were created to promote community awareness and understanding of the planning process, facilitate accessible participation from the public, and support the contribution of meaningful and informed feedback. While feedback is welcomed throughout the planning process, feedback received during phase 1 engagement is most able to inform the planning process. Each method forms one part of the broader public participation program, and feedback from all methods were considered in the writing of this What We Heard Report.

The statistics on this page are accurate to January 2026.



**Project Website**  
Oct. 6, 2025 – Jan. 20, 2026  
9,280 page views  
442 Document Downloads



**Mailouts**  
3085 notices mailed



**Phone Calls and Emails**  
12 phone calls received  
135 emails received (unique email addresses)



**Public Open Houses**  
 Nov. 11, 2025  
 3 Sessions  
 275 attendees in total



**Social Media**  
 Posts to Municipal  
 Social Media Accounts



**Online Survey**  
 606 survey contributions

### 3.1 Public Open Houses

Three (3) in-person community engagement sessions were held. Municipal employees were available to answer questions in-person and take record of questions and feedback. A looped, pre-recorded presentation giving background information on the planning process, special planning areas, and the subject lands was available for viewing. Information boards on the planning process and background studies were stationed around the space. Tables and seats were stationed in the middle of the room with maps and sticky notes for attendees to sit and record their feedback or questions. There was an option for attendees to provide their personal emails to municipal employees to be given future updates. Landowners were also in attendance with information on their development proposals.

**Date:** Three (3) sessions were held on November 11, 2025

**Time:** Morning (9:30 am – 11:30 pm), Afternoon (2 pm – 4 pm) and evening (6:30 PM – 8:30 pm)

**Venue:** St. Peter’s Anglican Church

**Number of open house participants:** 275 total (76 in the morning, 103 in the afternoon, and 96 in the evening)

### 3.2 Online Survey

The online survey was hosted on the Engage Halifax platform to collect community input and gather ideas about the project to help inform key components, including parks and open space, housing, mobility, amenities and recreational uses, and more. The majority of responses were received from people who self-identified as living in the area (66%), visitors of the Bayers Lake Business Park for shopping purposes (68%), or as visitors of the publicly owned lands in the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Wilderness Area for recreational activities (70%).

Residents provided feedback regarding the phrasing and structure of the survey, indicating the phrasing of questions and available responses did not sufficiently present a full range of interests and allow respondents to communicate a preference for no development. Municipal staff acknowledge these limitations and note the survey is just one of method of engagement used to collect public feedback.

**Dates:** The survey was live from November 12, 2025, to December 11, 2025

**Number of survey responses:** 606

### 3.3 Correspondence

Municipal employees received correspondence by email and phone throughout the first phase of public engagement.

**Number of notices mailed:** 3,084 letters mailed to residents who live within 150 metres from the project site.

### 3.4 Promotion of Engagement Opportunities

Mail out: A mailout was sent in October of 2025 notifying recipients of the public open houses scheduled for November. The notice included information on the open house schedule and format, and a fact sheet providing an overview of the project, a link to the related website, and how to contact the lead planner.

Engage Halifax website: The dedicated Engage Halifax webpage serves as a central hub for project information, offering detailed background, timelines, and engagement opportunities, including direct access to the online survey.

**Number of page views:** 9,280

**Max Daily Visits:** 1,419

Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, and Bluesky were leveraged to amplify awareness of the project, actively promoting the online survey and open houses to engage a diverse and digitally connected audience.

## 4. Project Timeline

The planning process includes the following steps below. The project is currently in the review stage.



## 5. What We Heard

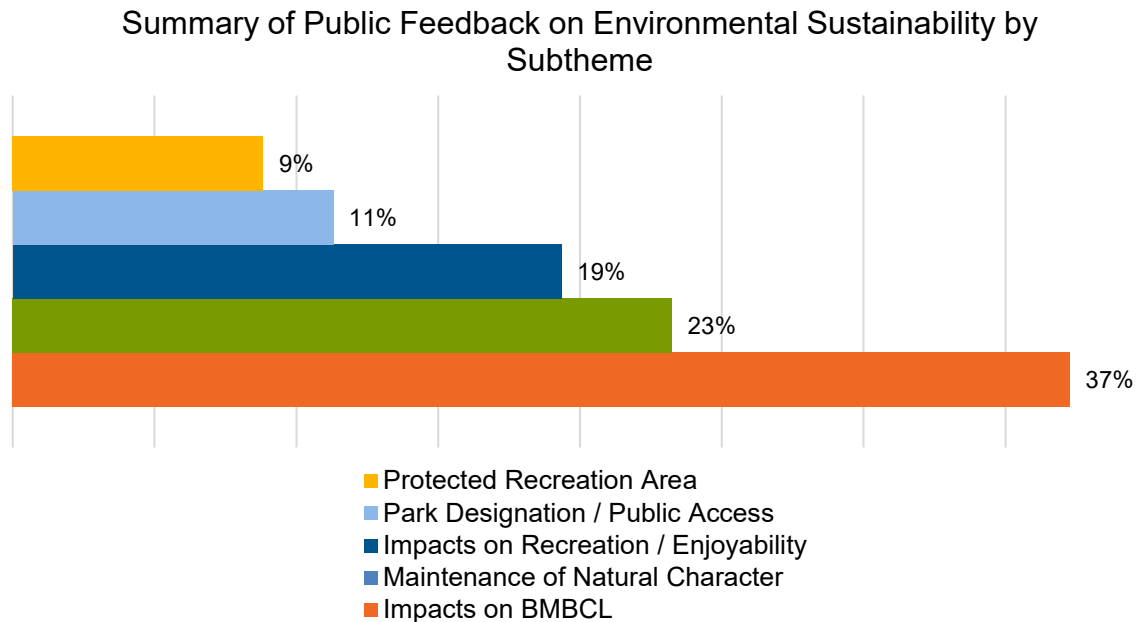
Feedback received across all engagement methods was synthesized into key takeaways and grouped into the corresponding sections throughout this report:

- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing and Community Design
- Transportation and Mobility
- Community Services, Amenities, and Finances
- Planning Process, Transparency, and Role of the Province

## 6. Environmental Sustainability

Residents provided feedback relating to the environment, environmental sustainability, and the potential impacts of development on the environment. Resident feedback was compiled and recurring themes were identified. These themes and their respective response proportions are presented in Figure 1 and detailed below. The three themes with the highest proportion of related comments are:

- Impact of development on Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Area,
- Maintenance of natural character, and
- Impact of the development on recreation / enjoyment (of the area).



***Figure 1: Environmental Subthemes Identified from Resident Comments and Survey Responses***

### 6.1 Impact on Environmental Features

Significant concern was raised at the impact the proposed development and its density would have on environmental features adjacent to and within the SPA boundaries. Environmental, water

and wildlife degradation were routinely described, and the following concerns were consistently shared:

- Run-off from housing development into lakes, watercourses, and impact on the larger Kearney Run Watershed (sedimentation, nutrient pollution, siltation);
- Reduction in natural storm water management features;
- Lack of adequate buffers between watercourses and development (proposed 20 m watercourse buffers noted to be insufficient);
- Lack of wildlife corridors in proposed concept plans;
- Impact to species at risk and wildlife populations identified in the area;
- Impact on surrounding area's private well water capacity and quality; and
- Noise and air pollution.

There were reoccurring requests from residents that additional environmental studies be completed prior to development decisions, results be made publicly accessible, and to be incorporated into future development rationale and design. These included environmental research, wildlife research, floodplain surveys, and water quality monitoring. Residents cited previous studies conducted in the area and questioned how those findings were considered in the decision to proceed with planning for the area.

A few residents saw value in the remediation and development of the industrial quarry lands, noting an interest in the quarry being used in a recreational capacity for the community.

*“A great deal more information is required to understand the risks and challenges of attempting development on these lands and I hope that there is an extensive amount of additional research conducted - particularly around servicing in granite and protection of the watercourses and the very shallow ground water table on the greenfield portion of these lands.”*

- *Passage from email received from private address*

*“There's a beautiful park and greenspace dedicated to protecting the wildlife around. They've preserved the tree growth and the waterways, and the trails are kept clean. There's no houses too close to the lake so it still feels like a natural space.”*

- *Response to online survey question regarding the area as imagined in 20 years*

## **6.2 Impact on Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Area**

Many residents highlighted the history of community advocacy and organizing that supports the publicly owned, provincially-designated wilderness lands as a candidate for regional and national park status. Residents expressed concern that this development may impact the viability of the proposed park as a regional and national park candidate. Residents widely expressed the SPA designation threatens years of community planning and coordination efforts. Numerous requests were made to pause the planning process and consult with the public and interest groups regarding the area.

In contrast, a few residents acknowledged that more housing is needed in HRM and saw value in a proposed neighbourhood near the potential designated park.

*“Honour the history of promises and intentions shared by HRM council and staff since 1974. The residents said no in 2016 and we still mean it. Find a way to work with the landowners to resolve this issue. The developments are inappropriate in this location.”*

- *Response to online survey question regarding the area as imagined in 20 years*

### 6.3 Recreational Community Value

Residents consistently described the BMBCL area as a significant public asset valued for its recreational uses, tourism attraction potential, and year-round useability. The area’s unique location as a wilderness area near a downtown core was repeatedly noted. There was strong expression of how valuable an asset the existing wilderness area is, and how valuable a future regional and/or national park would be for Halifax on a national scale.

Residents feedback often referenced concerns around the impact of the development on the specific use of the area as a recreation hub and outdoor education resource. Feedback mentioned that both general members of the public and community groups valued the outdoor recreation opportunities provided by areas environment features, most notably the system of lakes and the presence of the Maskwa Aquatic Club on Kearney Lake and its recognition as an established paddling facility. When asked which features would be favourable in a new community, top ranked responses focused on the natural features of the land, including trails for hiking in nature, canoeing, kayaking, and paddleboarding, picnic areas, and beach access to lakes (see Figure 7).

*“How are people going to be able to access this planned urban park once this development is accomplished? Access to the urban park is of primary importance and shouldn’t be impaired by this special planning area development.”*

- *Written feedback received at public open house*

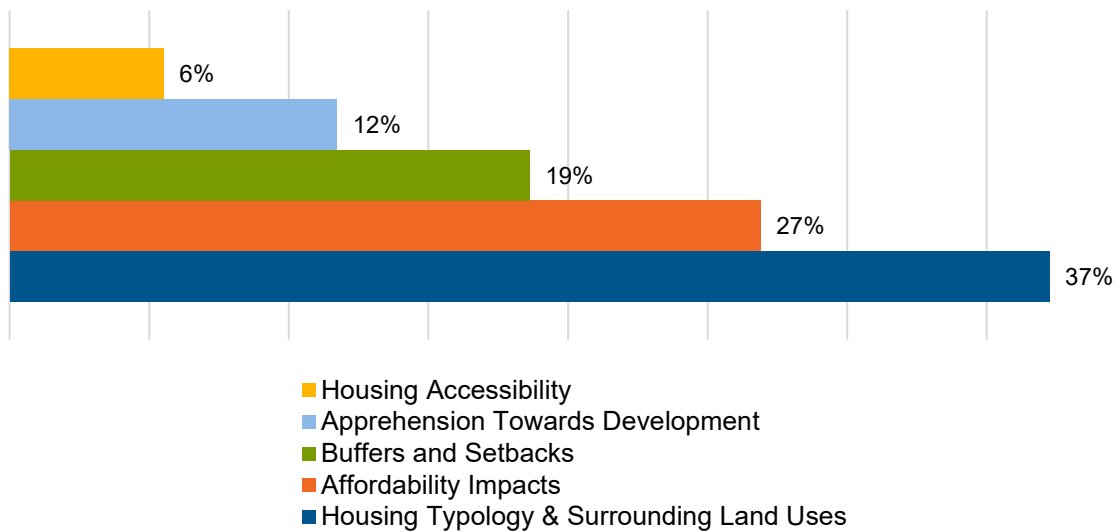
## 7. Housing and Community Design

Residents provided feedback relating to housing location, density, type, and level of affordability. Resident feedback was compiled and recurring themes were identified. These themes and their respective response proportions are presented in Figure 2 and detailed below. The three themes with the highest proportion of related comments are:

- Housing typology and surrounding land uses,
- Affordability impacts, and
- Buffers and setbacks.

Municipal staff acknowledge the limitations of the survey created for this phase of engagement, and the lack of an option indicating a preference for no development. Residents expressed that the survey negated reliability of results and had the potential to misrepresent community sentiment.

Summary of Public Feedback on Housing by Subtheme



**Figure 2: Housing Subthemes Identified from Resident Comments and Survey Responses**

### 7.1 Housing Typology and Density

Survey responses related to housing location, size and type were mixed, with results fairly evenly distributed across desires for a low, medium, and high-density neighbourhood layout. Outside of the online survey, respondents showed greater support for high-density housing types. Feedback received at open houses, as well through survey responses reflected a support for a mix of housing types, including single-family dwellings, duplexes, townhouses and apartments. Many residents emphasized a desire for dwellings that could support families with references to housing for the “missing middle”.

*“There is no new neighbourhood in my vision. Assuming there has to be for the sake of the question, housing would be ACTUALLY low-cost. It is ensured the BMBCL area is well protected (e.g. wetlands, very well managed runoff from development, etc.)”*

- Response to online survey question regarding the area as imagined in 20 years

## 7.2 Affordability

The affordability levels of future housing was a frequent concern. Residents raised concern at the lack of affordable housing units in proposals and expressed a desire to see purpose-built affordable housing, including non-profit and cooperative models included. There were also concerns that low density, single-detached housing types may result in unaffordable home prices, and the surrounding natural area and wilderness lands would be enjoyed by only those who could afford to live in the new neighbourhood.

*“I want natural spaces and the proposed urban park to be protected from adverse effects of development. I want to see truly affordable housing as a component, ideally publicly owned or managed by true non-profit or co-op organizations.”*

- Passage from email received from private address

## 7.3 Environmental Features and Community Design

Regardless of density preferences, residents consistently expressed a desire for any future housing development to maximize areas of open space and watercourse buffers, and have minimal impact on the surrounding environment. Many residents emphasized that any future development should preserve the area’s natural character and higher-density development should be located closer to Highway 102 with substantial natural buffer areas.

Commonly expressed was a desire that future development result in minimal impact to users of the wilderness area and potential park participating in outdoor recreation activities. Residents repeatedly expressed a desire for natural buffers between the wilderness area and development and noted the proposed 20 m buffers as insufficient.

The remediation of the existing industrial quarry as proposed in proposal materials was well received by residents.

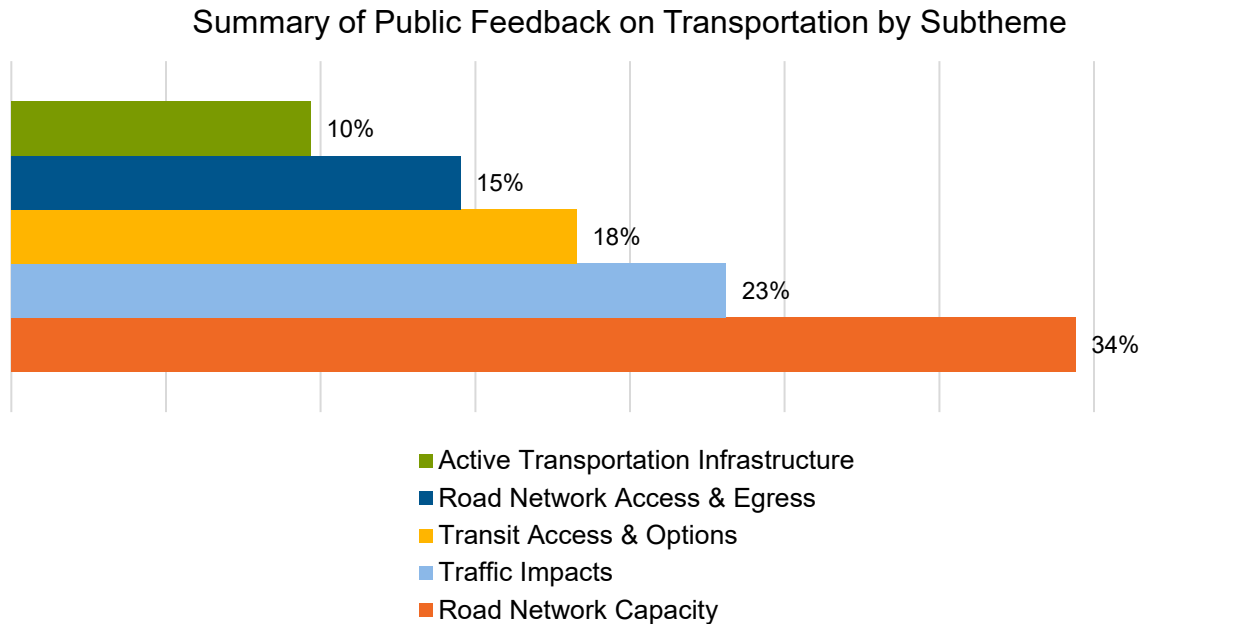
*“If we need to put in a certain number of housing units, then prioritize compact and affordable development that minimizes sprawl and environmental destruction.”*

- Passage from email received from private address

## 8. Transportation and Mobility

Residents provided feedback relating to transportation and mobility including infrastructure upgrades, public transit, and active transportation. Resident feedback was compiled and recurring themes were identified. These themes and their respective response proportions are presented in Figure 3 and detailed below. The three themes with the highest proportion of related comments are:

- Road network capacity,
- Traffic impacts (from the development), and
- (Public) transit access and options.



**Figure 3: Transportation Subthemes Identified from Resident Comments and Survey Responses**

### **8.1 Existing and Perceived Future Capacity Issues**

Across engagement methods, residents consistently raised concerns regarding the development’s proposed density and its impact on existing transportation networks. Numerous residents and survey respondents shared dissatisfaction with the area’s current transportation infrastructure, noting major congestion along Highway 102 and roads such as Lacewood Drive, Bedford Highway, Hammonds Plains Road, and Kearney Lake Road.

Residents repeatedly emphasized that improvements to transportation infrastructure be completed prior to new development. There were multiple requests for additional traffic studies to assess the proposed density on local networks. By contrast, a few residents opposed highway upgrades, noting a preference for investments in public transit and active transportation options. Concerns were raised that without viable public transit and pedestrian-oriented design, the development will increase car dependence reliance and congestion in the area.

The limited number of access points in the proposed plans were widely identified as unsuitable for the development’s size and density, with references to recent wildfires and emergency services and evacuation routes.

*“I don’t get any sense that traffic flows (102, Dunbrack, etc.) have been analyzed, certainly nothing presented here today (public open house). Traffic is already a disaster on these roads during rush hour, and regular accidents on the 102 makes commuting horrible.”*

- *Written feedback received at public open house*

## **8.2 Access to Potential Future Park**

Residents shared concerns that the development would limit public access to the adjacent provincially-designated wilderness lands. There were expressed desires for the neighbourhood layout to enhance public access to the area through transportation and mobility networks, with particular emphasis on multi-use paths, protected bike lanes, connections to hiking trails, and public access to lakes. There was an expressed interest in public amenities to support users of the wilderness area and potential future park, including public washrooms, educational features, and a designated trailhead.

The importance of adequate public transportation and active transportation infrastructure was referenced often. Residents expressed a favourable view of the existing public transit to the wilderness area and believed it should be expanded to ensure the area is accessible through a range of transportation modes.

*“How are people going to be able to access the access this planned urban park once this development is accomplished? Access to the urban park is of primary importance and shouldn’t be impaired by this special planning area development.”*

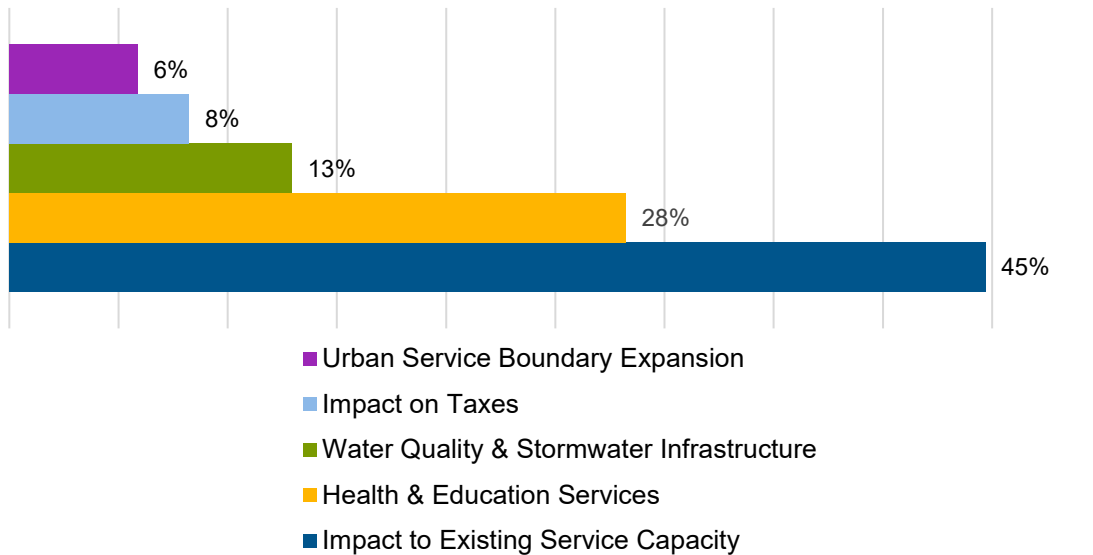
- *Written feedback received at public open house*

## **9. Community Facilities and Finances**

Residents provided feedback relating to community facilities and infrastructure, and the costs associated with the proposed development including the proposed development’s impact on taxes, the quality and capacity of current infrastructure, and the urban service boundary. Resident feedback was compiled and recurring themes were identified. These themes and their respective response proportions are presented in Figure 4 and detailed below. The three themes with the highest proportion of related comments are:

- Impact (of development on) existing service capacity,
- Health and education services, and
- Water quality and stormwater infrastructure.

## Summary of Public Feedback on Community Facilities and Finances by Area of Concern



***Figure 4: Community Facilities and Finances Subthemes Identified from Resident Comments and Survey Responses***

### 9.1 Need for Schools and Community Facilities

Residents repeatedly highlighted the need for schools and community facilities to meet current demand and to accommodate the population anticipated from the proposed development. Notably, residents expressed concern that local schools are at or over capacity, and requested new schools be built prior to development. Residents identified a lack of community facilities in the proposed concept plans.

*“There has to be an elementary junior high and high school in this project. The municipality must not accept or approve proposals from contractors who do not include schools in their proposals.”*

- *Written feedback received at public open house*

### 9.2 Fiscal Implications and Taxes

Residents raised significant concerns regarding the cost of infrastructure required to support the proposed development, most notably the costs related to transportation upgrades and extending servicing.

Residents questioned the rationale for proposing housing development in an area requiring service extensions, noting that associated costs would prohibit affordable home prices. Residents noted existing brownfield sites would be more suitable and more readily available for housing development and expressed desire to see such lands be prioritized for development before the Highway 102 SPA lands. The potential municipal tax implications due to extending infrastructure repeatedly arose, in addition to questions as to how developers would be contributing financially. Many residents expressed concern about the use of tax dollars to support a development that is experiencing significant public opposition.

*“HRM must prioritize growth within the USB (urban service boundary), where infrastructure and services already exist and where transit can be efficiently improved to support new housing. Expanding outward into remote, car-dependent areas is financially unsustainable and undermines efforts to build complete, accessible communities. These SPAs, as proposed, do not address affordability needs and would generate long-term servicing costs that residents should not be expected to bear.”*

- Passage from email received from private address

*“These ‘special planning areas’ are undemocratic provincial overreach. Who is going to pay for the installation and upkeep of all of the infrastructure required? It is a burden on taxpayers.”*

- Passage from email received from private address

## **10. Planning Process, Transparency, and Role of Province**

Across all forms of engagement was an expression of strong dissatisfaction with the Province of Nova Scotia’s designation of the area as a Special Planning Area. Feedback was received on the decision to designate the special planning area, with many residents citing a lack of regard to democratic planning processes and public transparency. There were a number of requests to pause, or entirely stop the planning process, and for the special planning area status to be revoked. Some residents characterized the designation as an overreach of provincial authority into municipal planning and parks planning, with calls for HRM Council to intervene. Some residents felt the public engagement process for the proposed development was ineffective and procedural rather than an opportunity to influence planning and neighbourhood design outcomes.

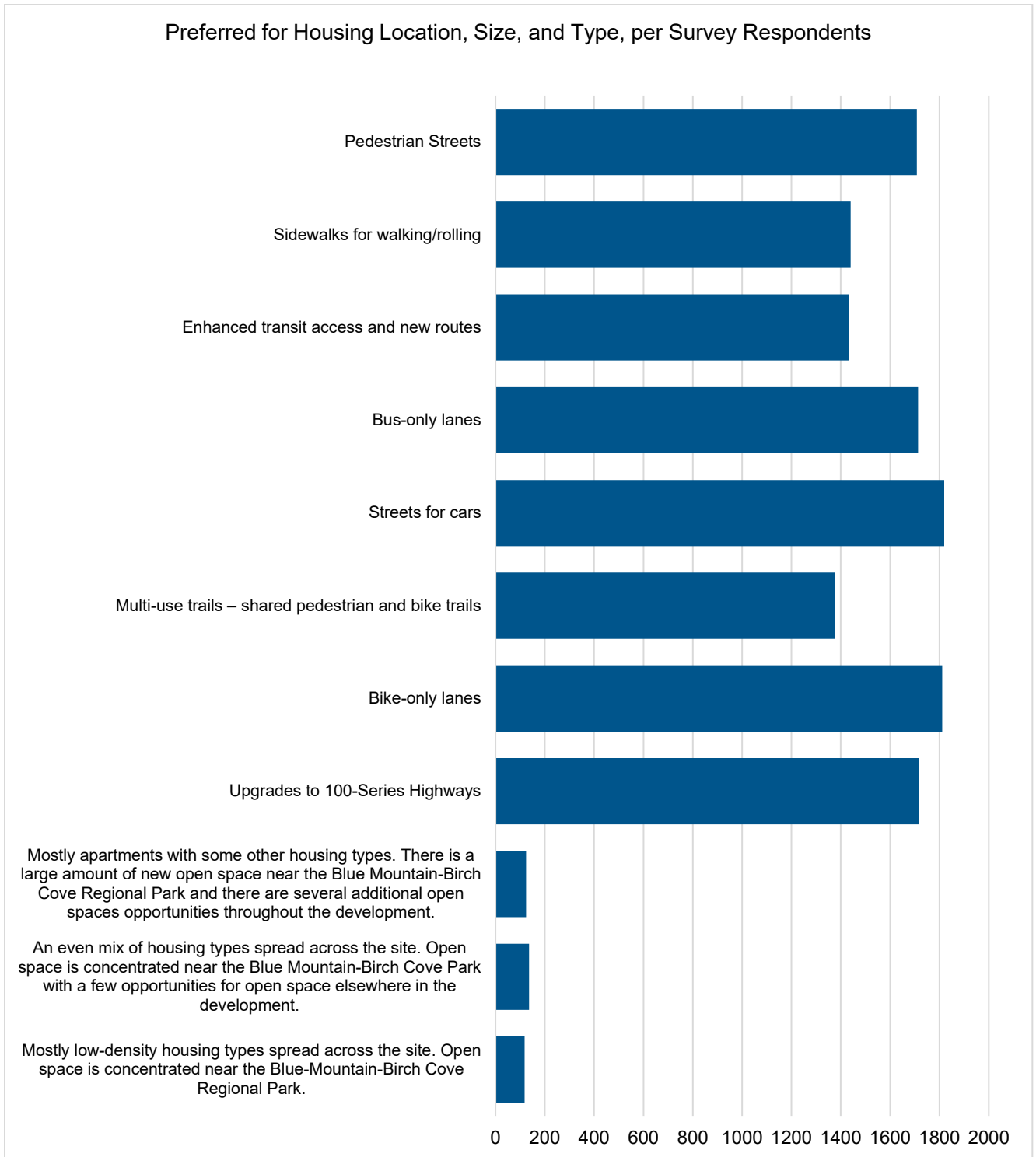
*“This approach sidelines Council, diminishes public trust, and limits HRM’s ability to uphold its evidence-based strategies for sustainable, climate-aligned growth. Given the extraordinary nature of the SPA system, HRM must take every possible step to preserve democratic participation, reinforce the role of public input, and reassert municipal authority in land-use planning.”*

- *Passage from email received from private address*

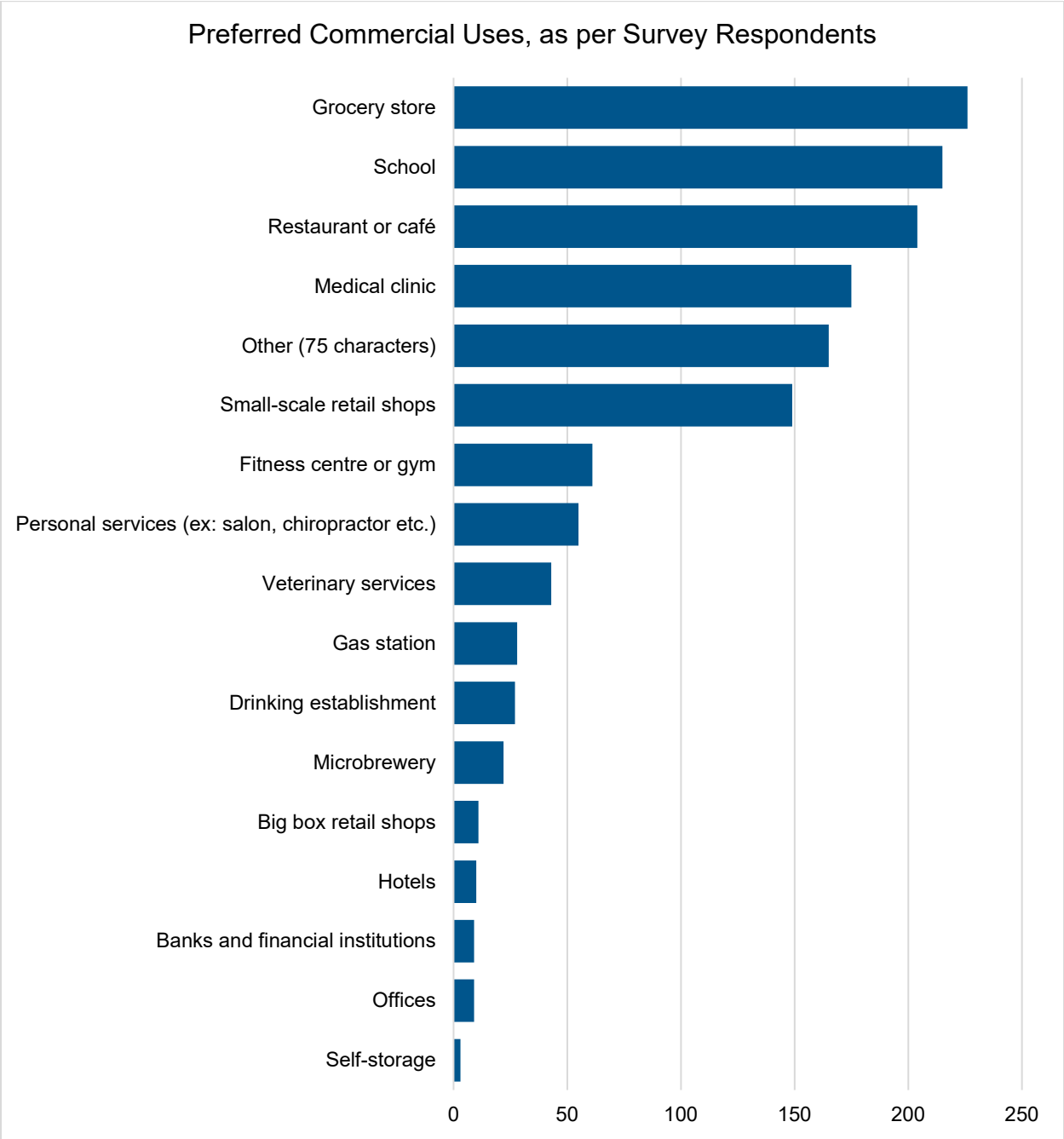
*“As a taxpayer, I do not want to fund this development. I also resent that this area has been removed from the HRM planning jurisdiction in an unprecedented anti-democratic move. My preferred option for this area is to extent the boundaries of the BMBCL planned regional/ national park.”*

- *Written feedback received at public open house*

## APPENDIX A: Survey Result Overview

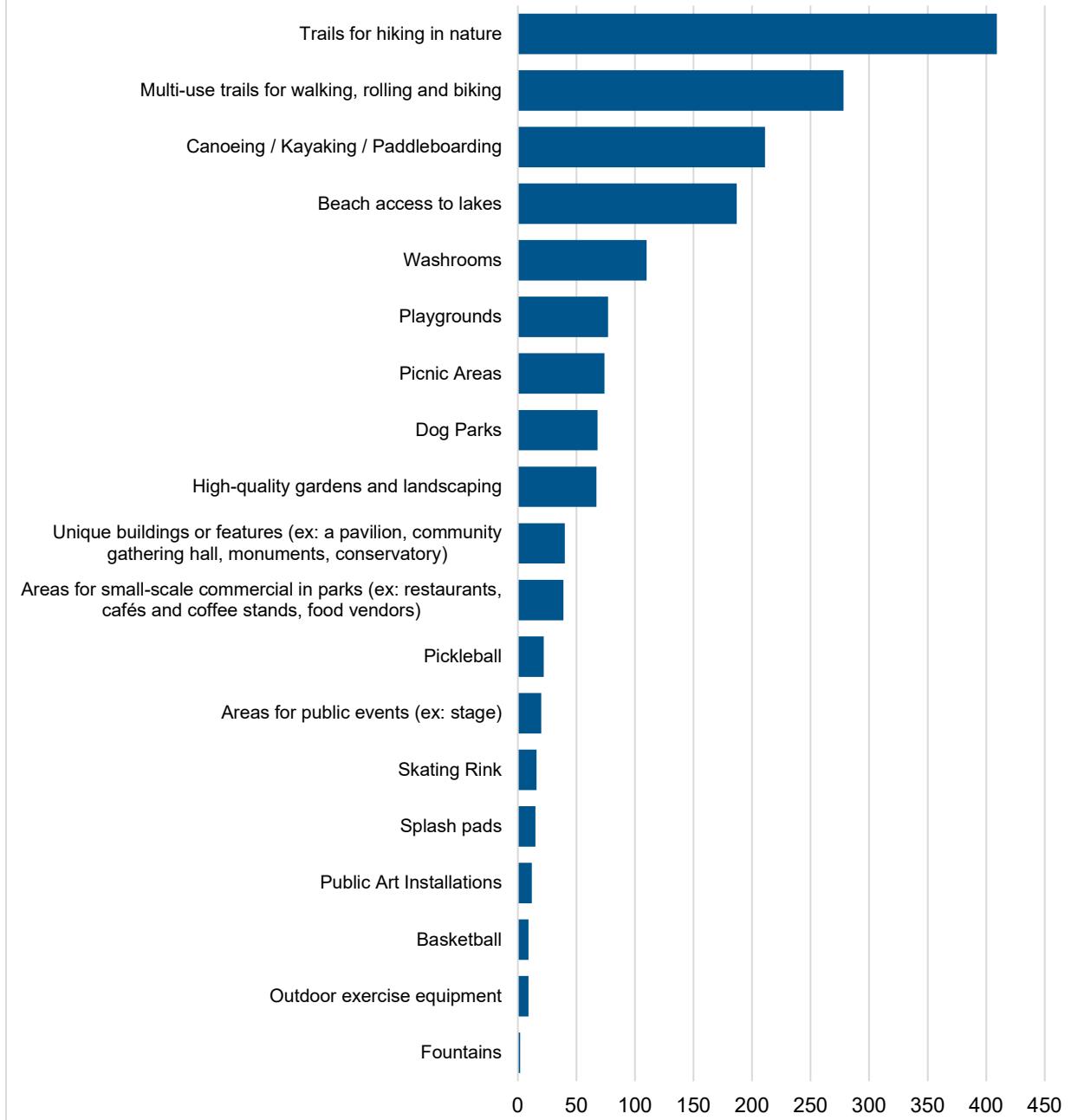


**Figure 5: Preferred Future Housing Location, Size, Type, as indicated by Online Survey Respondents**

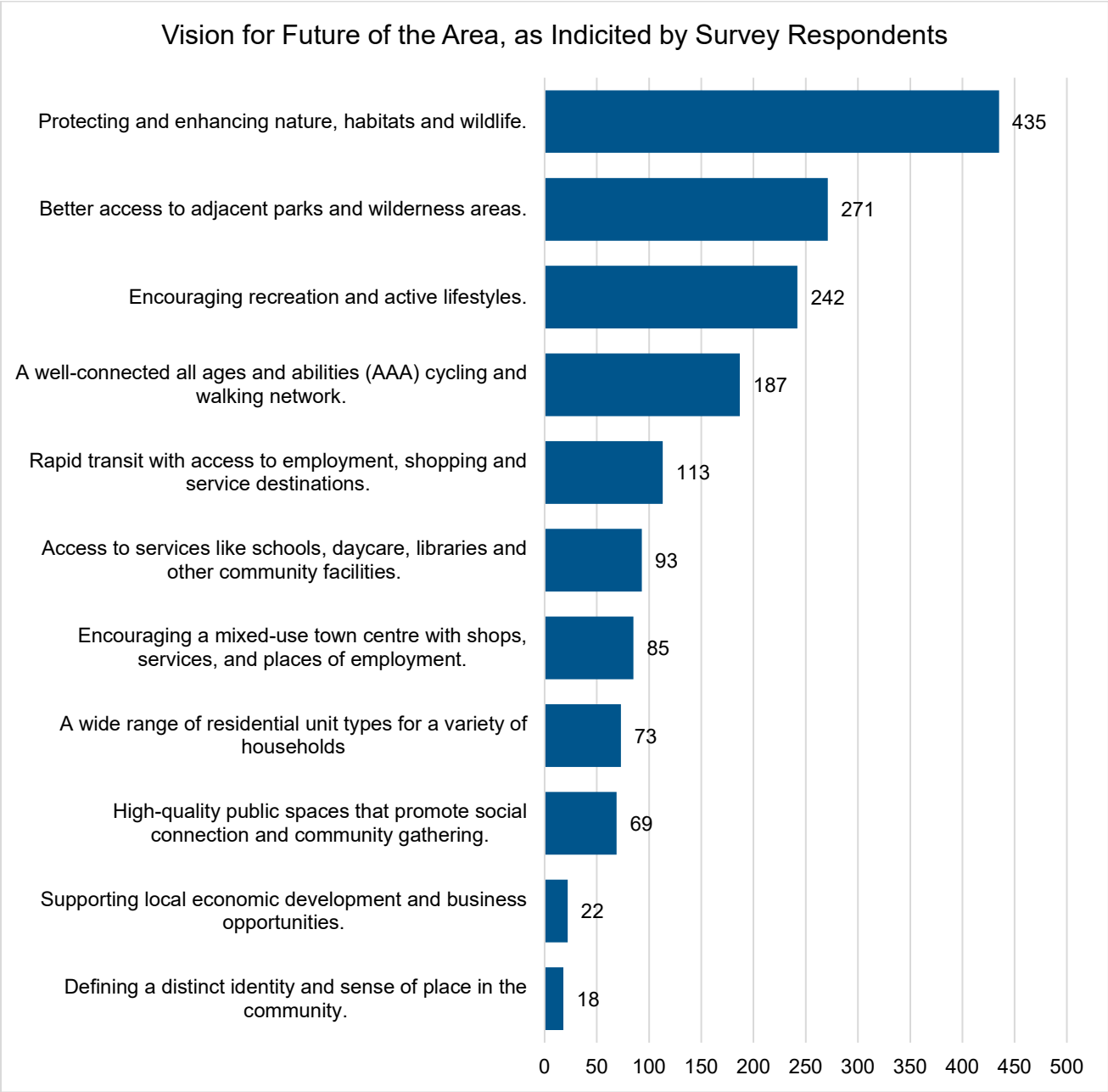


**Figure 6: Preferred Future Commercial Uses, as indicated by Online Survey Respondents, presented proportionally**

## Preferred Park Features and Activities, as per Survey Respondents



***Figure 7: Preferred Future Park Features and Activities, as indicated by Online Survey Respondents***



**Figure 8: Preferred Future 'Vision' of the Area in 20 years, as Indicated by Online Survey Respondents**