

Phase 1 Community Engagement Summary

Case 23820: Southdale Future Growth Node



Shape Your City Website



Virtual Public Information Meeting



Signage Posted on the Site



Online Questionnaire



Information Mailout



Questions and feedback via email and phone

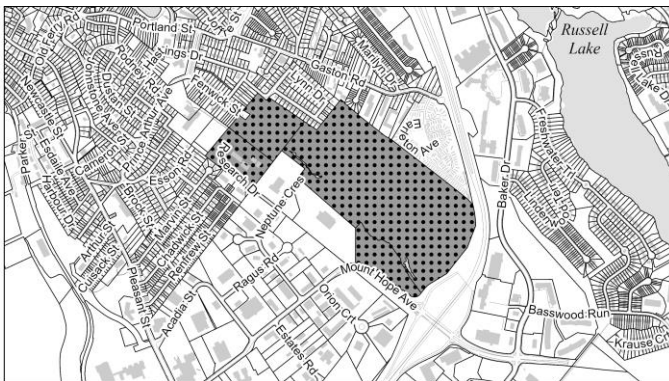
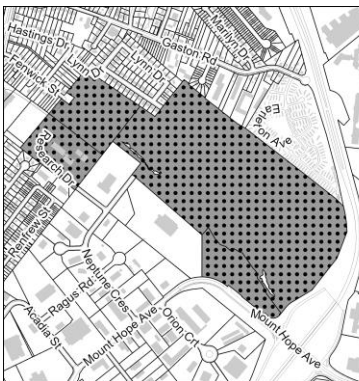


Social Media

On January 11, 2022, Halifax Regional Council initiated the Southdale Future Growth Node Planning Process. On January 26 HRM staff opened Phase 1 of community engagement when the Shape Your City page went live. Phase 1 formally closed on February 14, 2022 with the completion of the online questionnaire, however staff continue to accept feedback via email, phone, and stakeholder meetings. Phase 2 is planned for later in 2022 and will be communicated through another direct mailout, social media, and the Shape Your City webpage. This document provides a summary of Phase 1 engagement and feedback received.

Overview of the Project

The Southdale Future Growth Node is located at the south-eastern edge of the Regional Centre, in Dartmouth, immediately adjacent to Highway 111 (“Circumferential Highway”) as illustrated on the map below.



The lands are designated “Future Growth Node” under the [Regional Centre Secondary Planning Strategy \(Centre Plan\)](#) which requires a comprehensive master planning process to be completed before development can take place. The planning process will address what is needed for a new complete community through a neighbourhood plan for the entire area. This will include new roads, parks, pathways, housing mix, and any other amenities. After policies for the neighbourhood plan are approved by Council, development will be able to proceed through one or more development agreements and a subdivision process.

So far, **within Phase 1 of public engagement**, several studies and two initial concept plans have been submitted:

1. Clayton Developments, on behalf of the landowner A.J. Legrow Limited, is proposing to develop 700 residential units in the form of multi-unit dwellings, four-unit dwellings, townhomes, and single-unit dwellings.
2. A.J. Legrow Limited is proposing to develop 3 4-storey multi-unit dwellings.

What we heard - Overview

Table 1, shown below summarizes public participation in the project with each engagement tool used to share information, or collect feedback.

Table 1: Tools Used to Share Information with and Collect Feedback from the Public

Shape Your City Website	
Total number of website views from the date the page was launched, January 26 to February 16	1,580
Total number of document downloads	207
Total number of questionnaires taken	146
Total number of visits to the FAQ page	95
Halifax.ca Planning Applications Website	
Number of unique visitors from the date of Regional Council’s initiation, January 11 to February 23	300
Total pageviews	484
Notices Mailed to Area Residents	
Number of notices mailed within notification area (owners & renters)	2,545
Public Meeting Participation	
Number of participants at the public meeting (February 7, 2022)	90
Direct Communication with the HRM Planner (to February 16, 2022)	
Number of calls received (unique callers)	12
Number of emails/letters received from the public (unique email addresses)	48

What positive feedback was received ?

The principal aspects of the initial proposal which received positive feedback on during Phase 1 of public engagement include:

- Increasing the supply of housing, especially “attainable” or “affordable” housing, in the Regional Centre;
- Including a variety of housing types;
- The potential for new public park and trail facilities;
- The potential for new employment and services in the development which will benefit current and future residents;
- The potential for new paths and trail connections to the surrounding area, and new cycling facilities; and
- The potential for enhanced and accessible access to the existing wetland and forested areas of the FGN.

What are the concerns?

The principal aspects which received comments and feedback of concern during Phase 1 of public engagement include:

- The health and integrity of the wetland on site;
- The importance of the wetland in the context of a very urban area and as a carbon sink;
- Ability of any development to mitigate impacts on the wetland;
- The health and integrity of the treed areas on site;
- Wildlife habitat and impacts on wildlife;
- Overcrowding in nearby schools;
- Automobile traffic volume and safety within the site and on the surrounding streets;
- Overland flooding and effects on stormwater management if the site were to be developed;
- That the development is too suburban and car-oriented including insufficient walking and cycling connections, streets that are too wide, and a surplus of surface parking; and
- That the development may not be inclusive or affordable and may result in gentrification.

Public Meeting

On February 7, 2022 a virtual public information meeting was held. The meeting was hosted by HRM staff and attended by staff of the developer, Clayton Developments, their consultant, Zzap Architecture + Planning, and approximately 90 members of the public. The meeting consisted of a presentation, followed by public participation in the form of questions and answers. HRM staff presented on the planning process and the policy which guides the development of Future

Growth Nodes. The developer presented their concept development proposal which includes approximately 700 residential units in a mix of housing types from single-unit dwellings to mid-rise, multi-unit dwellings. The discussions held that night are summarized in the “positive feedback” and “concerns” sections above, and generally aligned with feedback received from other engagement sources.

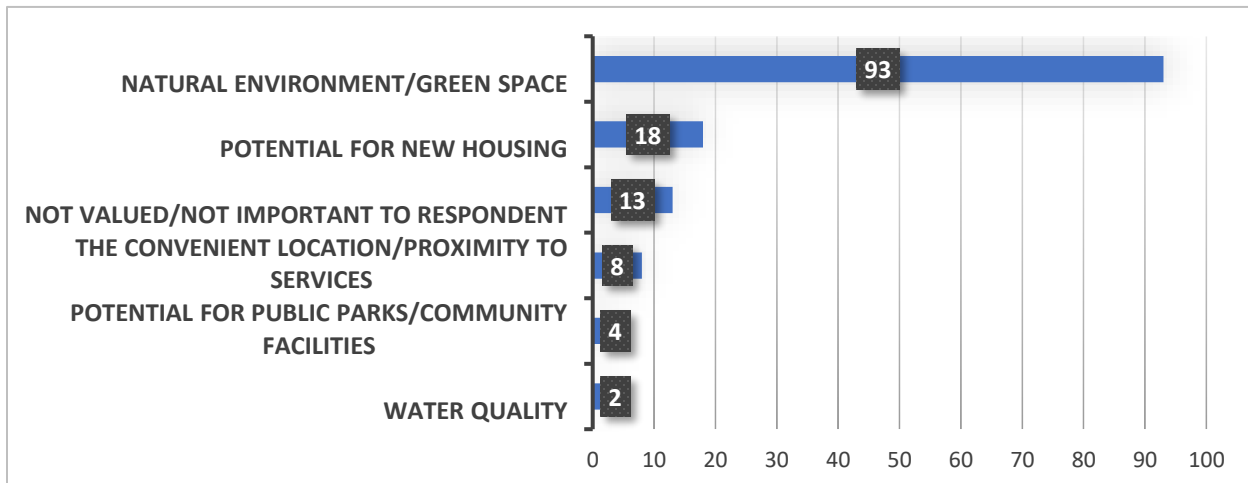
An audio recording of the meeting, official meeting minutes and the presentation can be found on the [project website](#).

Questionnaire

Note: some respondents indicated multiple ideas or choices which sometimes lead to more responses than participants in the survey. Likewise, some respondents left certain answers blank leading to less responses than participants for some questions.

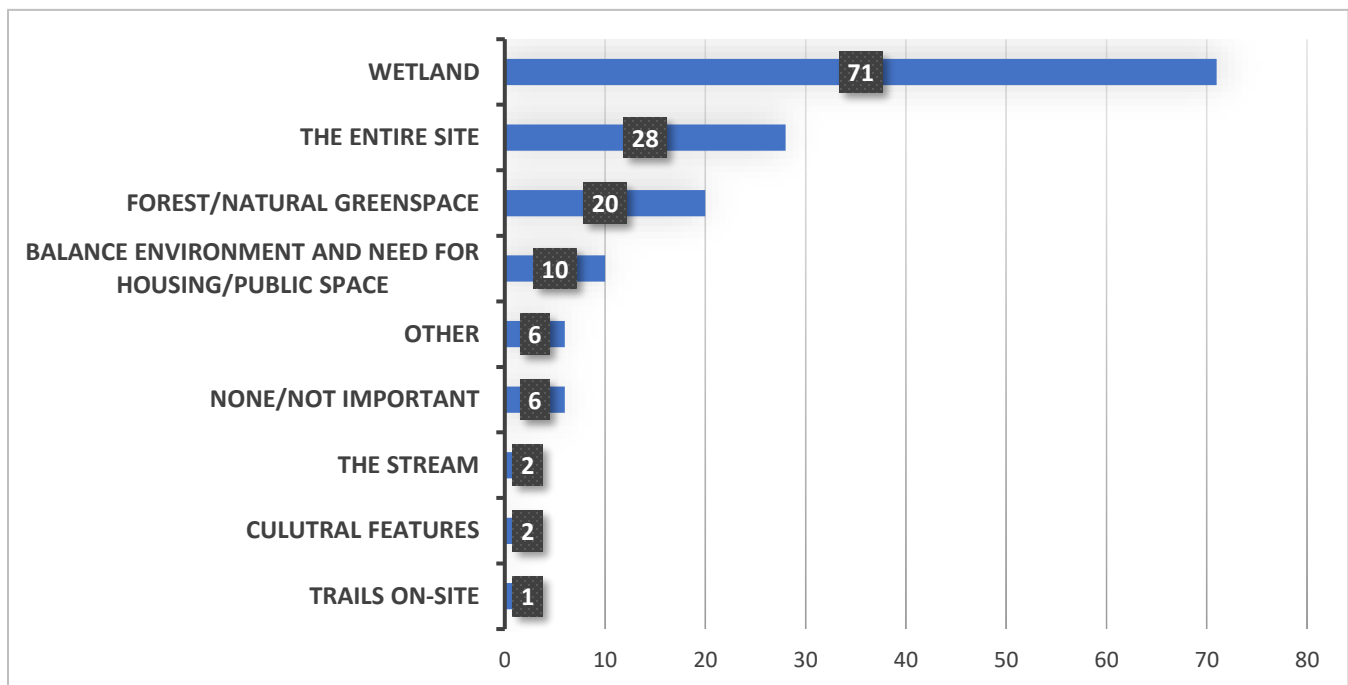
From January 27 to February 14 a questionnaire was hosted on the Shape Your City webpage. This invited the public to comment on what elements of the site are valued by the community, their concerns with the planning process, and what opportunities should be pursued through the potential development of the site. The questionnaire hosted 9 questions; each permitted open-ended responses. The responses are categorized into themes and quantified to show how frequently each theme is discussed by respondents. The overall results of each question are summarized in their respective sections below.

What about the site or its history is most important to you?



Most responses to this question indicated that the site is valued for its environmental benefits and as passive green space. Many comments cited the wetland on the site as an important natural feature. 18 respondents indicated that they think the site is a good location for housing. 13 respondents indicated that the site does not hold value to them. Other comments noted that the site is conveniently located near services (8), that it holds potential for public community facilities and parks (4), and that they value its water quality benefits (2).

When thinking about the future development of the site, are there any key features that should be maintained or preserved? (e.g. wetland, any cultural features)

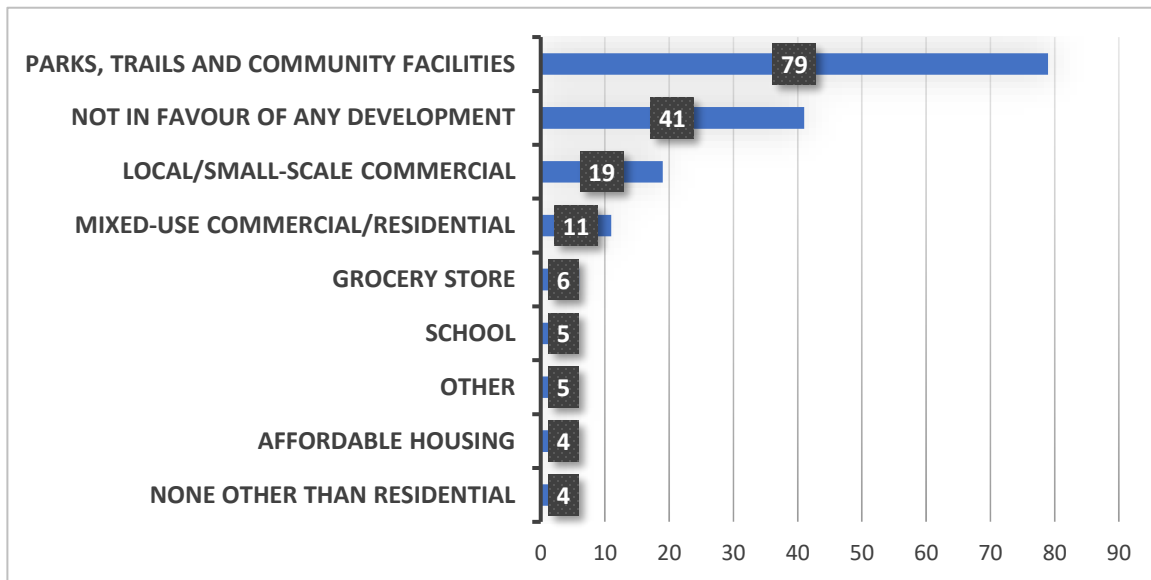


71 responses indicated that the wetland is a key feature to be maintained, while 20 responses indicated that forested or natural areas in general are also valued. Many comments in this category suggested that development should be sensitive to the wetland using buffers or other methods and acknowledged a possible balance between natural preservation and development. Some of these comments expressed an interest in allocating a portion of the site to remain as undeveloped green space if development takes place.

28 respondents indicated that the entire site should remain undeveloped. 10 respondents said that the process should balance the need for housing with environmental concerns.

Other responses said that the site is not important (6), and that the stream (2), cultural features (2) and existing trails (1) are key features.

In addition to residential uses, what other land uses or amenities would you like to see on the lands? (ex: commercial, institutional, park, etc.)



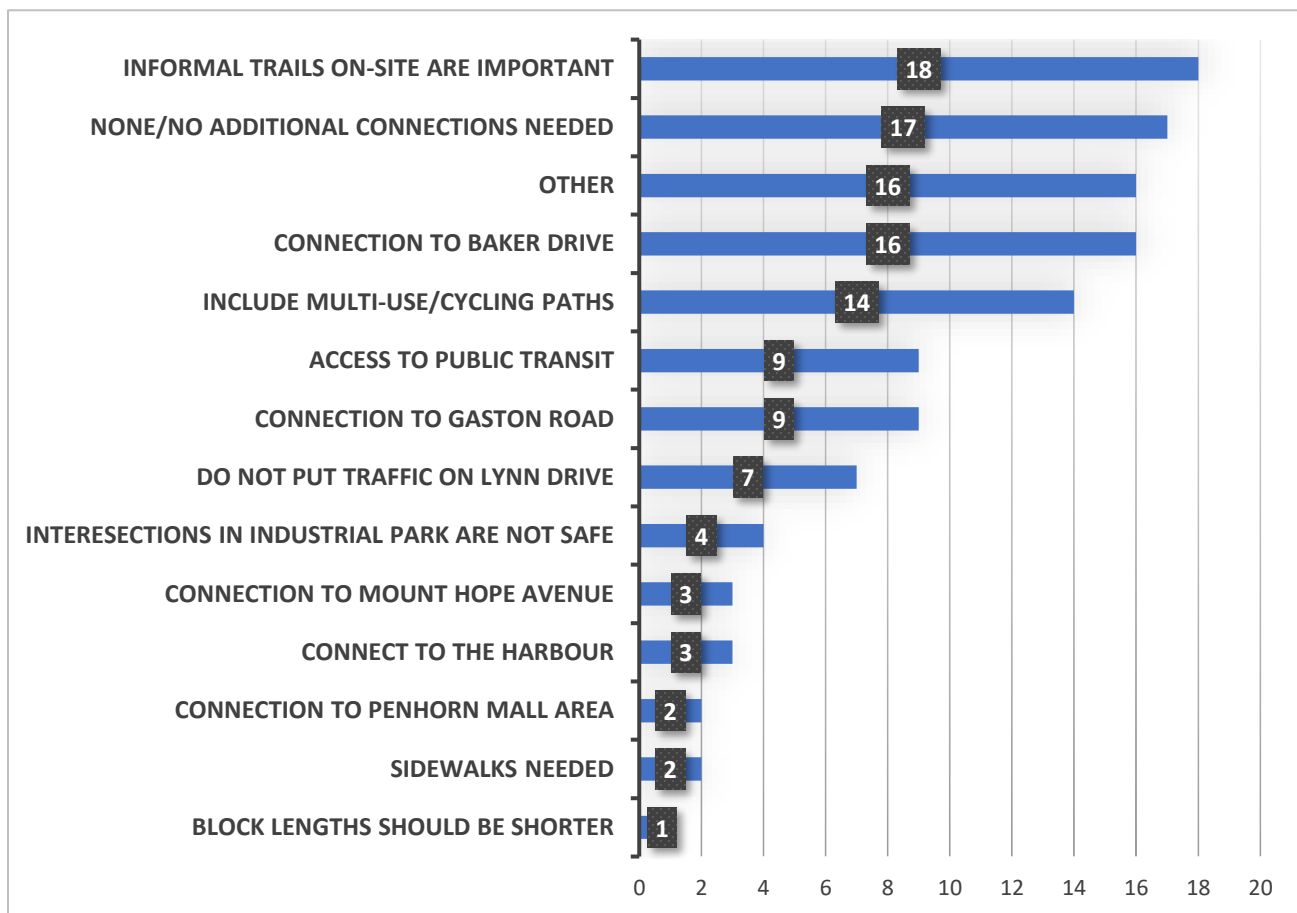
79 responses suggested that parks, trails, and community facilities should be provided on the site. Many of these comments suggested specific park and community facilities for the site including tennis courts, a dog park, a community centre, interpretive trails and connections to the surrounding street and path network.

41 responses were not in favour of any development on the site. Many of these comments suggested that the site be recognized as wilderness space, or that only passive recreation uses, such as a boardwalk, be allowed.

Responses also suggested that small-scale commercial (19), mixed-use commercial (11), and a grocery store (6) be provided on-site. Multiple responses in these three categories emphasized the need for a walkable, mixed-use community and the need to decrease dependence on automobiles.

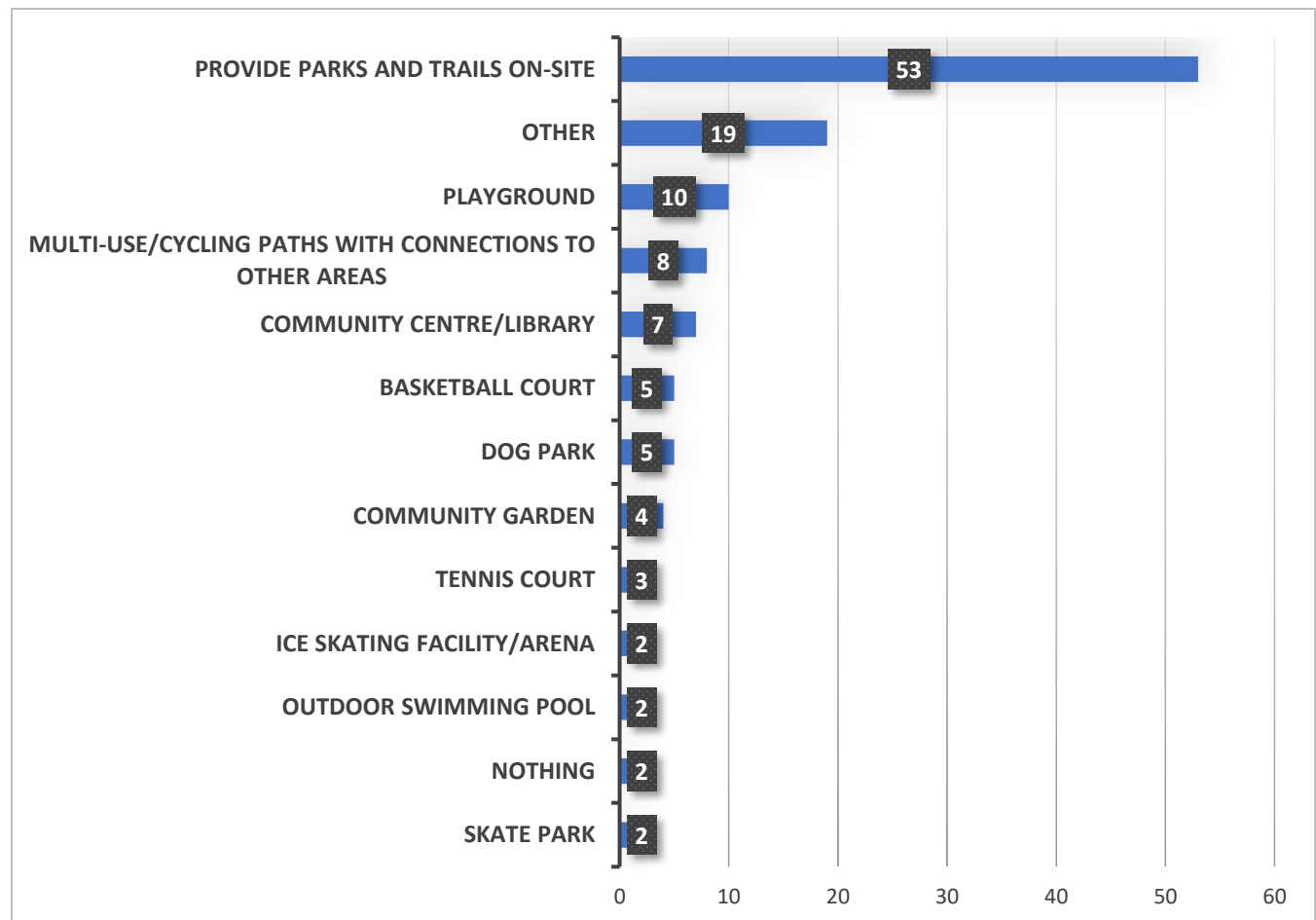
Other responses include a school (5), affordable housing (4), only residential uses (4) and other comments (6).

How can the site be connected to the surrounding community? Are there any transportation gaps, barriers, unsafe places, or informal trails that the municipality should be aware of?



18 responses indicate that the existing informal path network is well-connected to the surrounding area and an important feature to the community. 17 responses indicate that no further connections are needed within the area, or that the proposed connections within the development plans are appropriate. 16 responses fall in the other category; many of these responses said that the site should not be developed and did not offer comments on transportation. 14 responses are interested in expanding access to multi-use and cycling paths. Increased access to transit, and to Gaston Road through the site each had 9 responses. 7 responses expressed concern with permitting more traffic on Lynn Drive. Other responses said that the industrial park intersections are not safe (4), a connection to Mount Hope Avenue is important (3), a connection to the Harbour is important (3), a connection to Penhorn Mall is important (2), more sidewalks are needed (2) and that the proposed development has block lengths which are too large (1).

Do you have any thoughts on how the site can support the recreational needs of current and future residents?



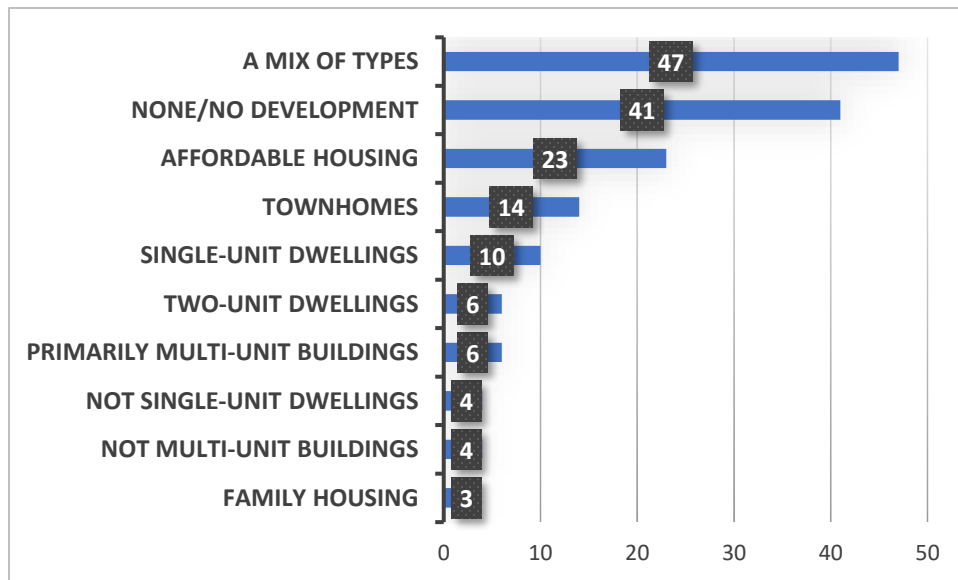
53 responses indicate that parks and on-site trails will provide recreational opportunities for current and future residents. Comments in this category expressed interest in formalizing the existing path network on the lands; many comments also focused on direct trail access to the wetland.

19 responses fall into the “other” category; many of these comments said that development should not take place on the site, but offered no feedback on recreational opportunities.

10 responses suggested that the site is a suitable location for a playground. Some of these comments noted that nearby playgrounds are often overcrowded.

Other responses said that the site should have cycling paths with connections to other areas (8), that the site should have a community centre or library (7), that the site should have a basketball court (5), the site should have a dog park (5), the site should have community garden (4), and that the site should have a tennis court (3). Ice skating facility, swimming pool, skatepark and “nothing” each had 2 responses.

What types of housing do you think is needed in this area (example: apartments, single detached houses, townhomes, duplexes, etc.).



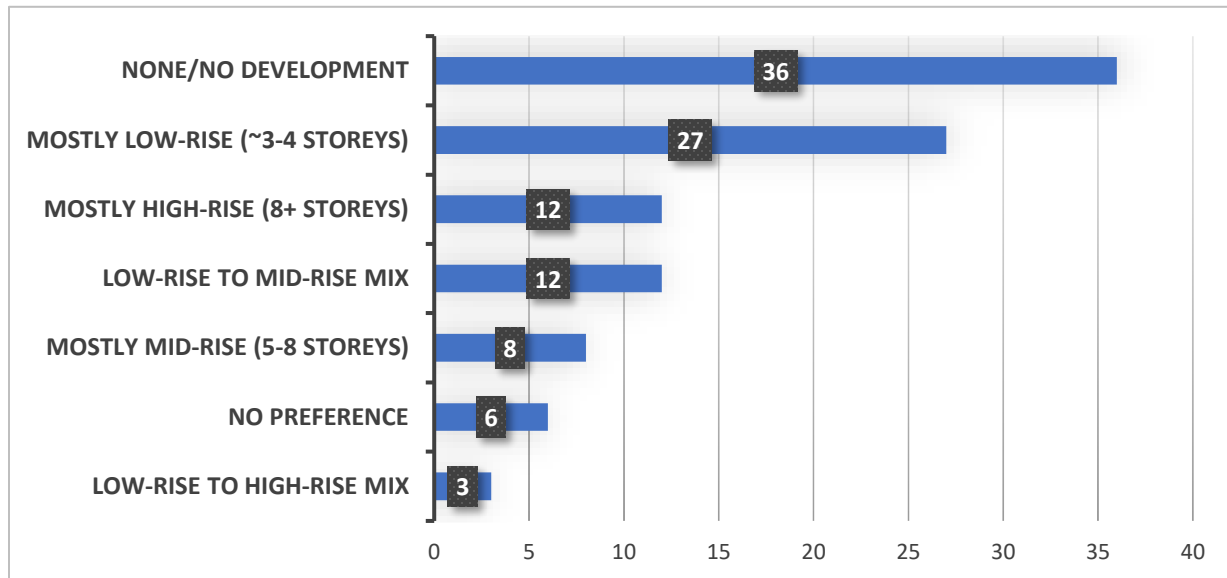
The most common response, at 47 responses, suggests that a mix of housing types should be developed on site. Common types cited in this answer included single-unit dwellings, two-unit dwellings, townhomes, and multi-unit dwellings.

41 respondents suggested that the site should not be developed at all and offered no comment on housing.

23 responses suggested that “affordable housing” is the type of housing most needed in the area. Many of these responses suggested that housing specifically designed for families with children, or single-parent families with children, would be most appropriate.

Other responses included townhomes (14), single-unit dwellings (10), two-unit dwellings (6), primarily multi-unit dwellings (6), not single unit dwellings (4), not multi-unit buildings (4), “family housing” (3).

What size of buildings (i.e.: height, length, number of units) are appropriate for the site, and what design elements should be included?



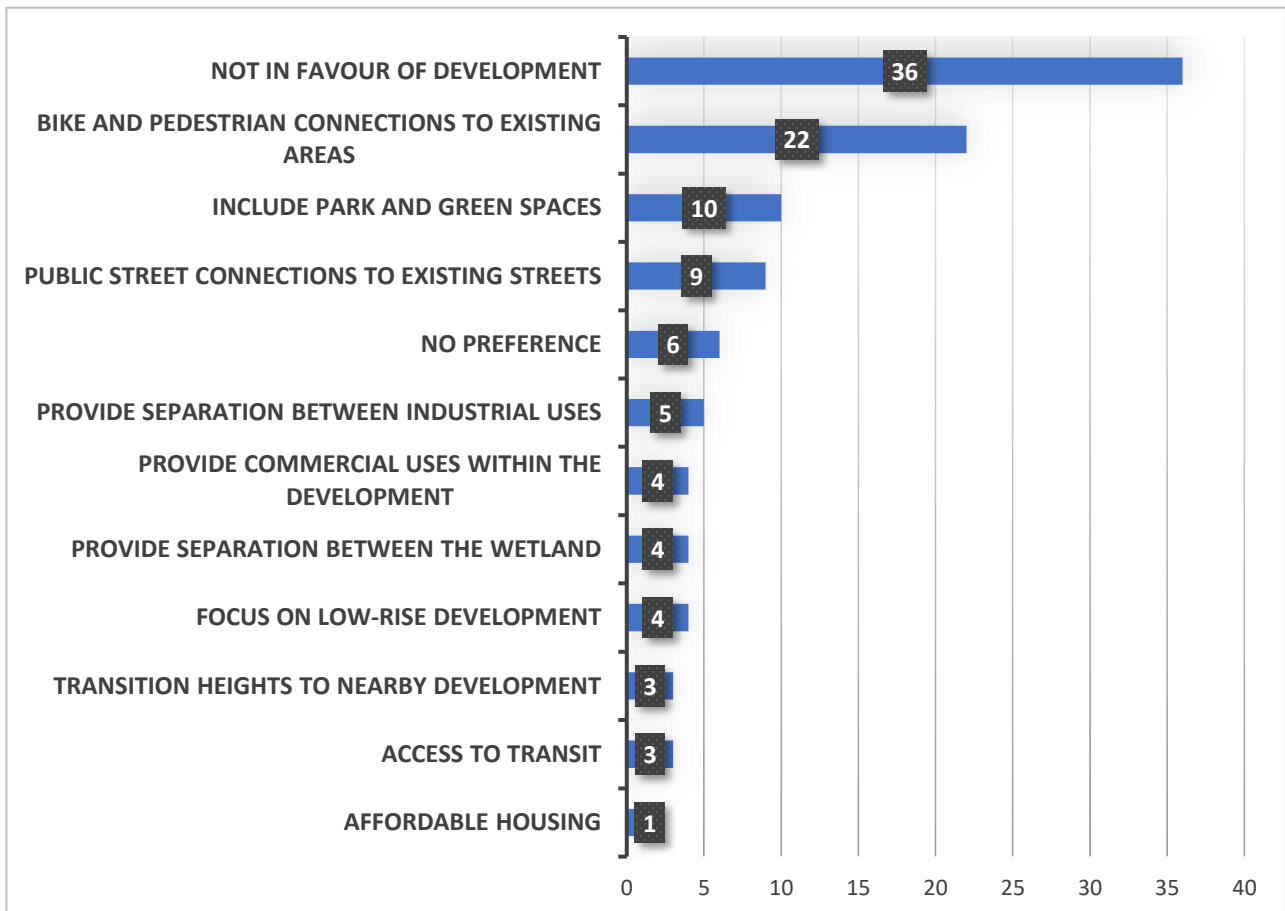
36 respondents indicated that no development is appropriate on the site and did not offer comment on building size.

27 respondents indicated that mostly low-rise development of 2-4 storeys should be the predominant form. Many of these comments said housing should be of a similar scale to the existing development surrounding the site.

12 respondents each said that development should be mostly high-rise and a mix of low to mid-rise. Several of the comments speaking for high-rise development noted a desire to increase the height and density of individual buildings in exchange for increased open space and preservation of forest and tree cover.

Other responses included mostly mid-rise (8), no preference on building height or bulk (6), and a low-rise to high-rise mix (3).

How can development on the site transition to the surrounding residential and industrial areas?



36 respondents indicated that no development is appropriate on the site and offered no comments on transition.

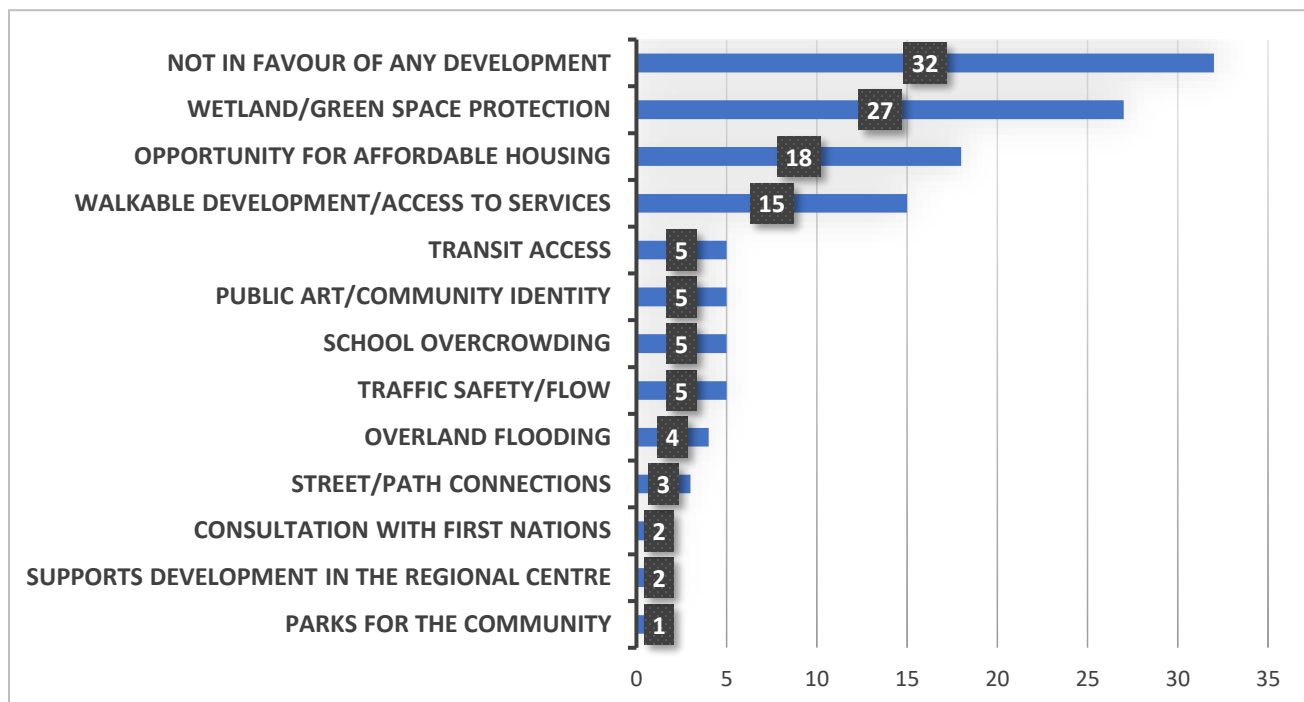
22 responses suggested that active transportation connections to existing neighbourhoods, paths, and shopping areas would help transition to the new community.

10 responses suggested that the area needs park and green space, and that park space would offer a suitable transition to existing areas.

9 respondents suggested that public street connections are needed. Many of these comments suggested that connections to Gaston Road, Mount Hope Avenue, and Baker Drive are important.

Other responses include no preference (6), provide separation between industrial uses (5), provide commercial uses in the development (4), provide separation between the wetland and development (4), focus on low-rise development (4), transition heights to nearby development (3), access to transit (3) and affordable housing to allow people in the area to live there (1).

What else is important to the planning of the site?



32 responses indicated they are not in favour of any development and offered no other comment.

27 responses suggested that wetland and greenspace protection are important, however, similar to previous responses, many respondents suggested that a balance between development and environmental protection is possible or desirable.

18 respondents indicated support for affordable housing, with many comments suggesting that the municipality should require units in the development to remain affordable for the long term.

15 responses indicated a preference that the development be walkable with access to services. Some of these comments expressed support in providing commercial uses within the development.

Transit access, public art and community identity, school overcrowding and traffic safety and flow each had 5 responses. Comments around community identity suggested that a public art installation, or unique building designs, would contribute to a sense of place.

Other feedback included overland flooding (4), street and path connections (3), consultation and engagement with First Nations (2), general support for development within the Regional Centre (2) and park space for the community (1).

Engagement Phase 2 – You are invited!

In the next phase of engagement, to take place later in 2022, the following additional forms of engagement are planned. If you or your group are interested in participating in a stakeholder session, please reach out to grantro@halifax.ca.



Meetings with Stakeholder Groups



Public Meeting



Shape Your City Website



Survey or Questionnaire



Direct Mailout and Email List



Responses to Public Questions and Concerns



Future Public Hearing Prior to a Decision

Conclusion

Between January 11, 2022 and February 14, 2022, we invited the public to provide feedback on the initial concepts for the Southdale Future Growth Node planning process to help inform policies for the site. Key feedback from public meetings, an online questionnaire, and direct email and phone discussions is included in this engagement summary. This feedback will be used to inform and guide the planning process as it advances. The next phase of public engagement will commence later in 2022 and the public will be invited to participate via direct mailouts and emails, social media and the Shape Your City website. We would like to thank everyone who provided feedback so far.