

ST. JOHN'S

Rennie's River Neighbourhood Plan

Phase 1 Engagement
What We Heard Report
November 2025



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Disclaimer: The City creates a What We Heard Report for every City-led public engagement process to be transparent about the information collected. The report is a summary of all feedback, and does not include word for word submissions. This feedback is used to inform project and Council recommendations and decisions. The City protects the privacy of those who provide feedback as per Access to Information and Privacy Legislation.

Project Overview

The City of St. John's is developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Rennie's River. The Neighbourhood Plan will set out a clear vision for land use, transportation, open space, and growth in the area. This plan will be shaped by the existing policies of the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan, analysis of local conditions, and engagement with the neighbourhood and wider community.

To be successful, the vision and plan for Rennie's River must be grounded in an understanding of the unique characteristics of the community. The plan will incorporate the needs and desires of the people who live, work, and play in the neighbourhood.

The Neighbourhood Plan for Rennie's River is being completed at the same time as the Neighbourhood Plan for the Central and Mundy Pond neighbourhoods, and engagement phases are occurring at the same time. The project involves two main phases of public engagement prior to the release of a draft plan. This is the What We Heard Report for Phase 1 Engagement. The focus of Phase 2 Engagement, in early 2026, will be validating initial recommendations for Rennie's River. Following this, a draft of the Neighbourhood Plan will be released publicly in Summer 2026.

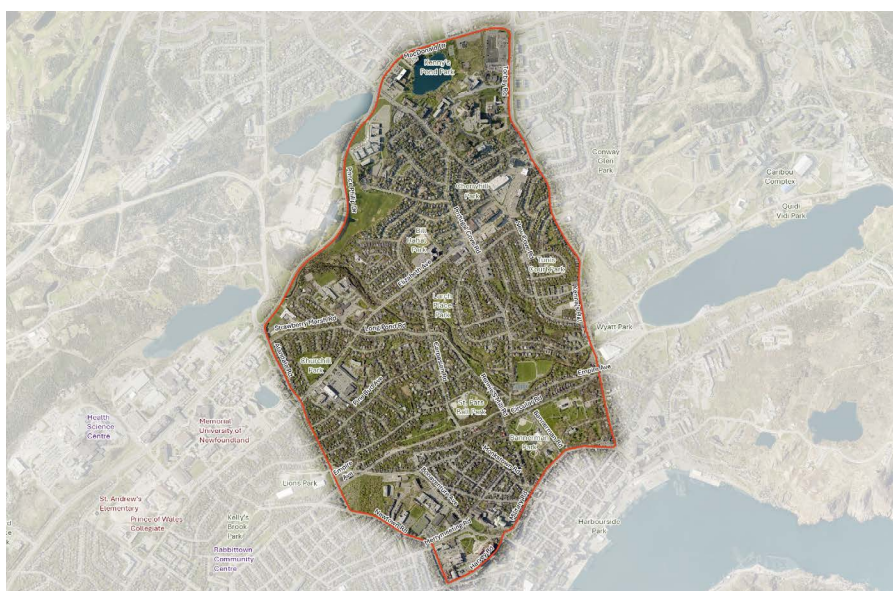


Figure 1. Rennie's River Neighbourhood Plan Boundary



**Phase 1
Engagement**
Fall 2025



**Phase 2
Engagement**
Winter 2026



**Draft Plan
Release**
Summer 2026

Engagement Approach

The Phase 1 Engagement took place between **August 26** and **September 28, 2025**. This was the first opportunity to engage on the Rennie's River, Central and Mundy Pond neighbourhoods. The focus of this engagement opportunity was to gather feedback on the strengths and challenges in each neighbourhood and foster initial ideas to help inform future recommendations for each plan.

In this phase, we asked about:

- **Your Neighbourhood Today:** What are the strengths and challenges of this neighbourhood?
- **Imagining the Future:** What are the opportunities for improvements? What do you want your neighbourhood to look like in the future?
- **Intensification Areas:** Where should intensification (mixing land uses and increased density) go and what should it look like?
- **Active Transportation:** How could the mobility network be improved in this area?



How We Engaged

A variety of methods were used to promote the project and collect feedback from the public and a diverse range of interested parties. Tactics included online engagement, in-person engagement, and a range of outreach and communications tactics. The following pages provide additional details about each of these components, including the number of participants who engaged.

Online Engagement

Activity	Description	Outputs
 Online Public Survey	The online survey was available on EngageStJohns.ca from August 26 to September 28, 2025. Hardcopies were available upon request.	784 responses
 Online Map Tool	The online map tool was available on EngageStJohns.ca from August 26 to September 28, 2025. Participants could provide place-specific responses to engagement questions on the map.	574 comments 85 participants
 Virtual Information Session	One online information session was hosted for Rennie’s River on September 25, 2025.	9 participants
 Council Committees Survey	An online survey was circulated to all Council Committees seeking feedback from their specific committee’s perspective.	12 responses 8 committees

In-Person Engagement

Activity	Description	Outputs
 Focus Group Sessions	Three Focus Group sessions were hosted jointly for both Neighbourhood Plan projects on September 15, 16, and 17, 2025 at the Bannerman Park Pool House.	8 organizations
 Interviews	One-on-one interviews were held with a range of interested parties and developers throughout the week of September 25th for both Neighbourhood Plan projects. Some were in person and some virtual.	2 organizations 6 developers
 First Light Lunch	The project team hosted a lunch with First Light staff on September 16 to discuss Indigenous perspectives on both Neighbourhood Plan projects. Two follow up meetings were held with First Light staff on October 2 and 16, 2025.	12 First Light staff participants
 Open House	An open house took place on September 17, 2025 from 5-8 p.m. at Bannerman Pool House (25 Bannerman Road) for the Rennie's River Neighbourhood.	32 participants
 Pop-Ups	Seven pop-up events were held for both Neighbourhood Plans: - September 13 at the St. John's Farmer's Market, Larch Park, and Bannerman Park - September 14 at Quidi Vidi Lake during the Terry Fox Run and at the Ches Penney YMCA - September 16 at the H.G.R Mews Community Centre - September 17 at Kenny's Pond	220+ participants

Outreach & Communications

	Activity	Description	Outputs
	Project Website	EngageStJohns.ca was available for the duration of the engagement and included information about events, how to get involved, and all survey and map links. The project page also linked to the Central and Mundy Pond project page.	2,658 page visits 24 ideas 5 questions
	Email List	Two email updates were sent to EngageStJohns.ca subscribers on August 26 and September 8, 2025.	Aug 26: 4,769 people, open rate 56% Sep 8: 4,810 people, open rate 56%
	Media Release	A media release was posted on the City's website on August 26, 2025.	1 release
	Social Media	The City of St. John's posted on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn throughout the engagement phase from August 26 to September 28, 2025.	Link clicks: 1,022 Impressions: 82,271 Reach: 23,253

Key Themes

Five main themes were identified from the feedback received across all in-person and online engagement activities, including all audiences. While all feedback received will help inform project next steps, these main takeaways represent the most significant findings from this phase of engagement, and are summarized below.



Protect and enhance greenspace and trails

The Rennie's River Neighbourhood is valued for its beautiful parks, connected trail network, and tree-lined streets—from Bannerman Park to the Rennie's River and Kelly's Brook trails. Residents value their access to nature, ability to travel through the neighbourhood by trails, and the many amenities provided in parks. Overall, the sentiment is that parks and trails should be protected, maintained, and enhanced in some cases through additional lighting or amenities, particularly in smaller parks.



Plan for safe access by all travel modes

Rennie's River is already considered very walkable, but participants did flag some opportunities for improvement when it comes to moving around the neighbourhood by different modes. A key priority is improving connectivity and safety for bike travel as well as increasing the frequency and connectivity of transit in the area. Another area for improvement is the safety of crossings and overall accessibility for pedestrians, such as new or improved crosswalks, lighting, snow clearing, and traffic calming. Feedback also highlighted tensions around whether the Rennie's River Trail should be paved and allow bikes, or remain gravel and only allow pedestrians.



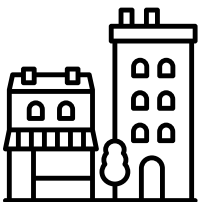
Provide safety and meet basic needs

Parts of Rennie's River are experiencing firsthand impacts of the housing and affordability crisis. The proximity to Downtown and the concentration of affordable housing and social service providers means that this neighbourhood is an important location for people who are struggling to meet their basic needs or struggling with mental health or addictions. Through engagement, we heard about the impacts of these crises on people and providers in the neighbourhood, including on perceptions of safety in public spaces. Creative solutions are needed to increase housing, supports, and safety in the area for all.



Recognize unique areas within the plan

We heard that Rennie's River is a neighbourhood of neighbourhoods. There are many unique areas within the Rennie's River neighbourhood boundary that warrant unique consideration in the Neighbourhood Plan, including Churchill Park, Georgestown, Kenny's Pond, and the Ecclesiastical District. The current neighbourhood boundary also splits the historic Ecclesiastical District across multiple plan areas. Consideration should be given to how the neighbourhood interacts with the areas around it.



Balance housing need and the pace of change

Rennie's River is a well-loved community, prized for its access to amenities, human-scale, and historic buildings. Through engagement, we heard that there is a need for more affordable and seniors' housing to support new residents and aging-in-place. There was also generally support and development interest for the existing intensification area around Kenny's Pond and Torbay Road, identified in the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan. At the same time, concerns were highlighted about the pace of change and needing to ensure that new development makes sense within the context of the neighbourhood. There was also less support for higher density housing forms overall. A balance will need to be struck between providing additional housing and amenities and maintaining the qualities of the neighbourhood that residents love.

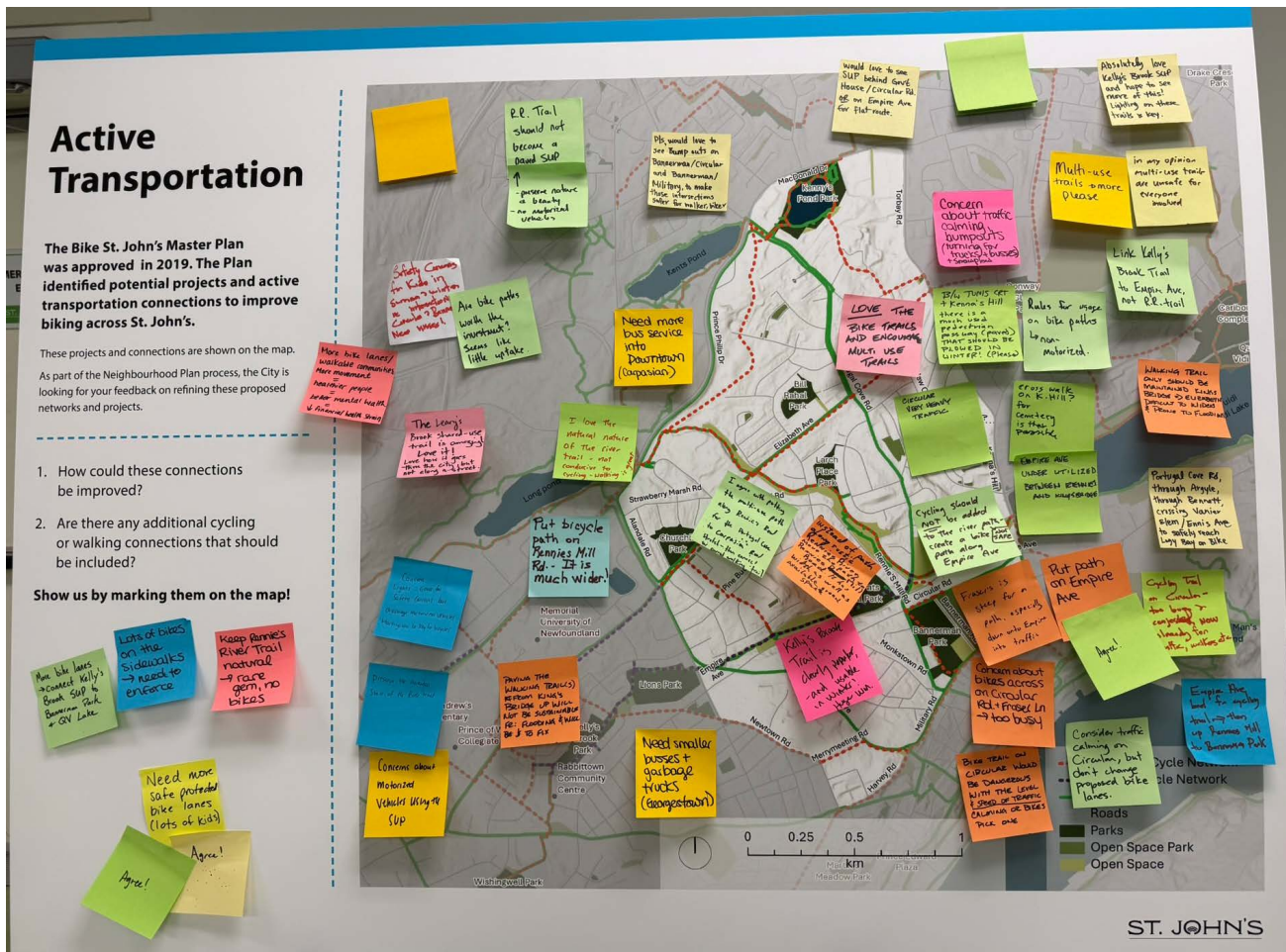
Public Engagement Findings

The following section provides the findings from the online survey, public events, and online map tool. The feedback is organized into the following sections:

- Your Neighbourhood Today
- Imagining the Future
- Online Map Tool
- Demographics

Online and in-person results have been combined in the following qualitative summaries; however, the graphs and statistics reflect online survey responses only.

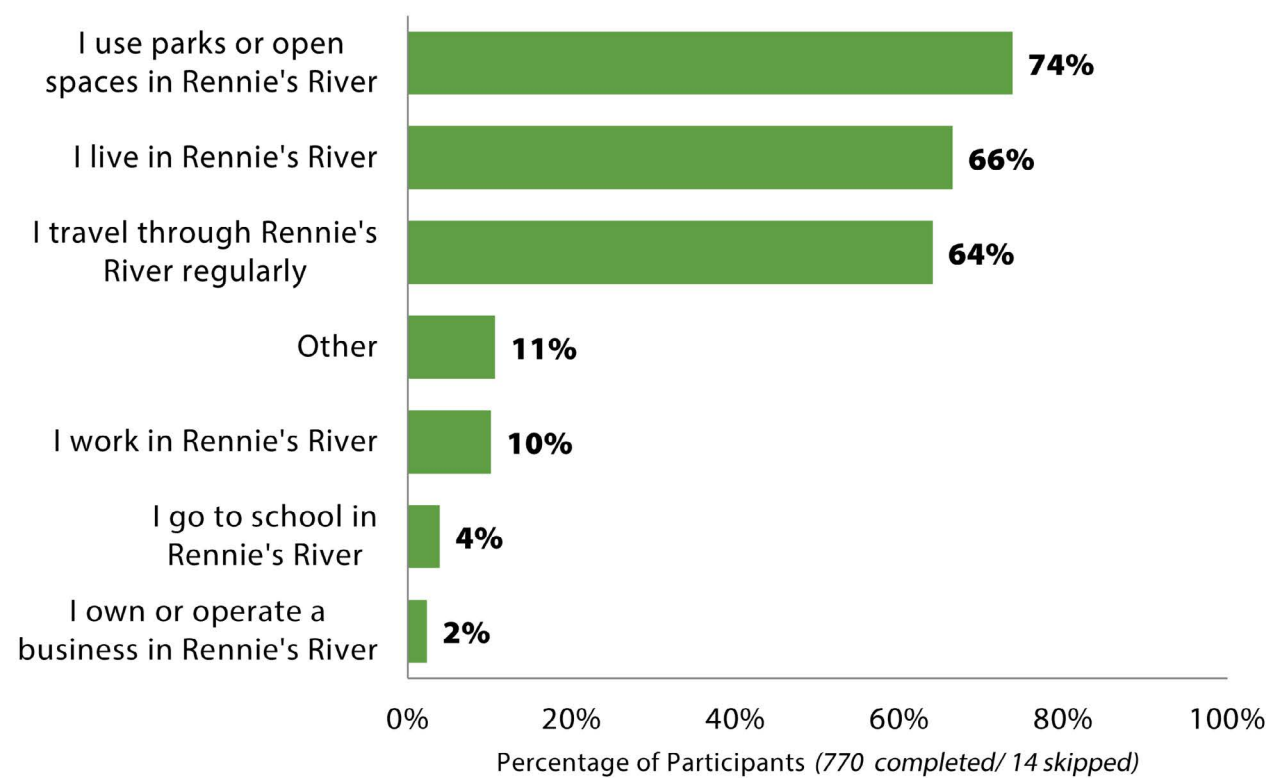
The graphs indicate the number of participants who answered or skipped each question.



Your Neighbourhood Today

The first series of questions asked respondents about Your Neighbourhood Today. In these questions, the project team sought to understand the connection participants have to the neighbourhood and how they move through and experience the area.

What is your connection to Rennie’s River?



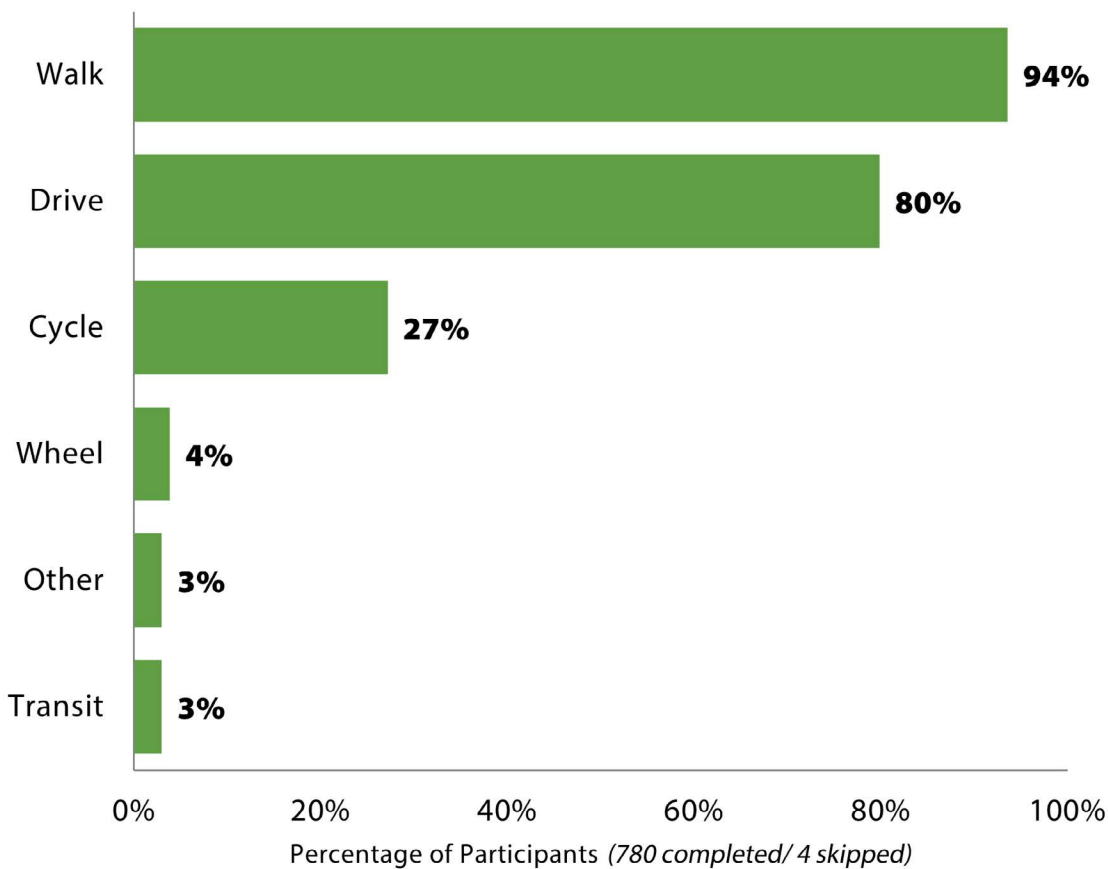
Most survey participants said that they use parks or open spaces, live in, or travel through Rennie’s River. There was little representation of business owners in the survey or those who go to school in the area.

Other

- Previously lived here
- Family and friends lives here
- Kids attend school here
- Attend church here
- Live nearby
- Own property here
- Shop here
- Uses recreational facilities
- Just interested in the area
- Uses parks and trails

How do you typically travel in the neighbourhood?

Most survey participants said they typically walk or drive in the neighbourhood. Just over a quarter of participants said they typically bike, but few said they typically take transit.



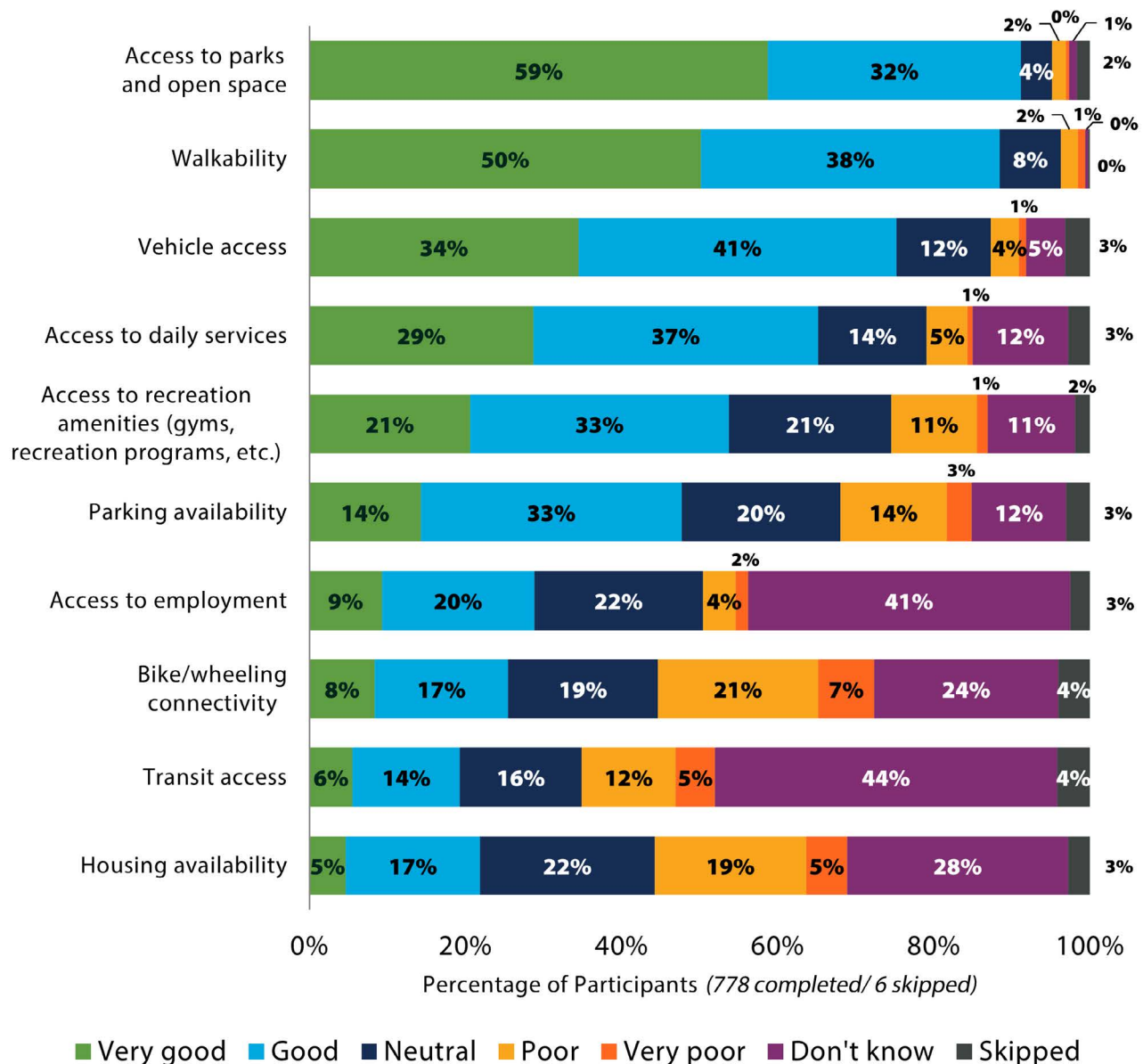
Other

- Pushing a stroller
- Running

How would you rate the following in Rennie's River?

Access to parks and open space and walkability were the highest rated features of Rennie's River in the survey. Both of these features were ranked as 'very good' by over half of participants, and 'good' by about a third of participants.

Bike and wheeling connectivity had the most 'very poor' and 'poor' rankings, followed by housing availability. Both of these features had slightly more negative rankings than positive rankings, but were a close split. Transit access had a lower ranking overall compared to other features, but primarily due to a high number of 'don't know' responses. This aligns with responses to the previous transportation question, in which only 3% of participants indicated that they typically use transit.





What do you value most about Rennie's River today?

646
comments

The top things that people said they value in Rennie's River are green spaces and the overall walkability and trails connecting the area. Many participants mentioned the Rennie's River, Quidi Vidi, and Kelly's Brook Trails as significant and highly used amenities. The neighbourhood is also appreciated for its tree-lined streets, parks, and close proximity to various commercial uses and services.

Additional themes are summarized below.

Land Use

- Like the mix of uses and number of amenities and services nearby including: restaurants, shops, drugstores, doctors' offices, clinics, physio, grocery stores, schools, daycares, places to live for the elderly, assisted living places, sports facilities, and churches.
- Feels like a 'complete community'.
- Like the low to moderate-density housing for the human-scale feel, sense of quiet, and the aesthetic.

Parks & Trails

- Great access to high quality greenspaces, trails, and natural spaces.

- Love the trails along Rennie's River and new shared-use path on Kelly's Brook Trail.
- Love Bannerman Park.

Heritage

- Appreciate the nearby historic districts and monuments provided within the neighbourhood and want to see this character maintained.

Mobility

- Like the walkability to all necessary daily essentials such as work, restaurants, and other services and amenities.
- Like walkability to core downtown areas, parks, MUN, and heritage sites.

- Easy to drive to where you need to go.
- Like lower traffic areas, particularly when walking on trails and sidewalks.

Sense of Community

- Value the community and social connections in the neighbourhood.
- Value diversity of ages, families, and ethnicities in the area.
- Good place to raise a family.

Imagining The Future

In the Imagining The Future section of the survey, respondents were asked to share what they value most about the neighbourhood, what they would like to see changed, and what their ideas are for the future of the area.

If you could change one thing about Rennie’s River, what would it be?

545
comments

Similar to the things people said they value, many suggested changes for the neighbourhood were focused on parks, trails, and overall walkability of the area.

One of the key differences of opinion in the comments was whether bikes should be allowed or not on the Rennie’s River Trail. Some participants want to see the trails remain as gravel paths for pedestrians only, while others want to see the trails paved as a commuting route.

From a land use perspective, there were also mixed opinions about housing and density. Several comments noted a need for more housing, particularly affordable housing and seniors’ housing. Some participants wanted to see more density in the area, while others were concerned about losing the current residential character and other impacts, such as traffic, if more density is introduced. There were also a few comments noting that the Neighbourhood Plan boundary actually contains several distinct areas, that should be giving unique planning treatment.

Additional themes are summarized below.

Land Use

- More facilities and services catering towards the elderly population such as senior housing.
- Different opinions on more or less density
- Need more affordable housing, though some don’t want to see it clustered in one neighbourhood.
- More grocery stores as most are only accessible by vehicles.

- Improvements to Churchill Square to improve pedestrian walkability, aesthetics, and the services/amenities provided.
- Need flood control along Rennie’s River.

Park & Trails

- More biking and shared trails.
- Different opinions on whether Rennie’s River and other trails should allow bikes or not.

- Different opinions on whether trails should be paved or gravel (accessibility versus more natural experience).
- Enhance maintenance of parks and trails.
- More lighting in parks and on trails to address safety and crime.
- More shaded seating in parks and trails.
- Want to see more amenities provided in Churchill Park.



Heritage

- Some concerns about development in historic areas.
- Want to see more upkeep of heritage buildings.

Mobility

- Concerns about speeding and desire for traffic calming measures such as speed bumps, cameras, or speed limits. (Especially Carpasian Road, Portugal Cove Road, and Circular Road).

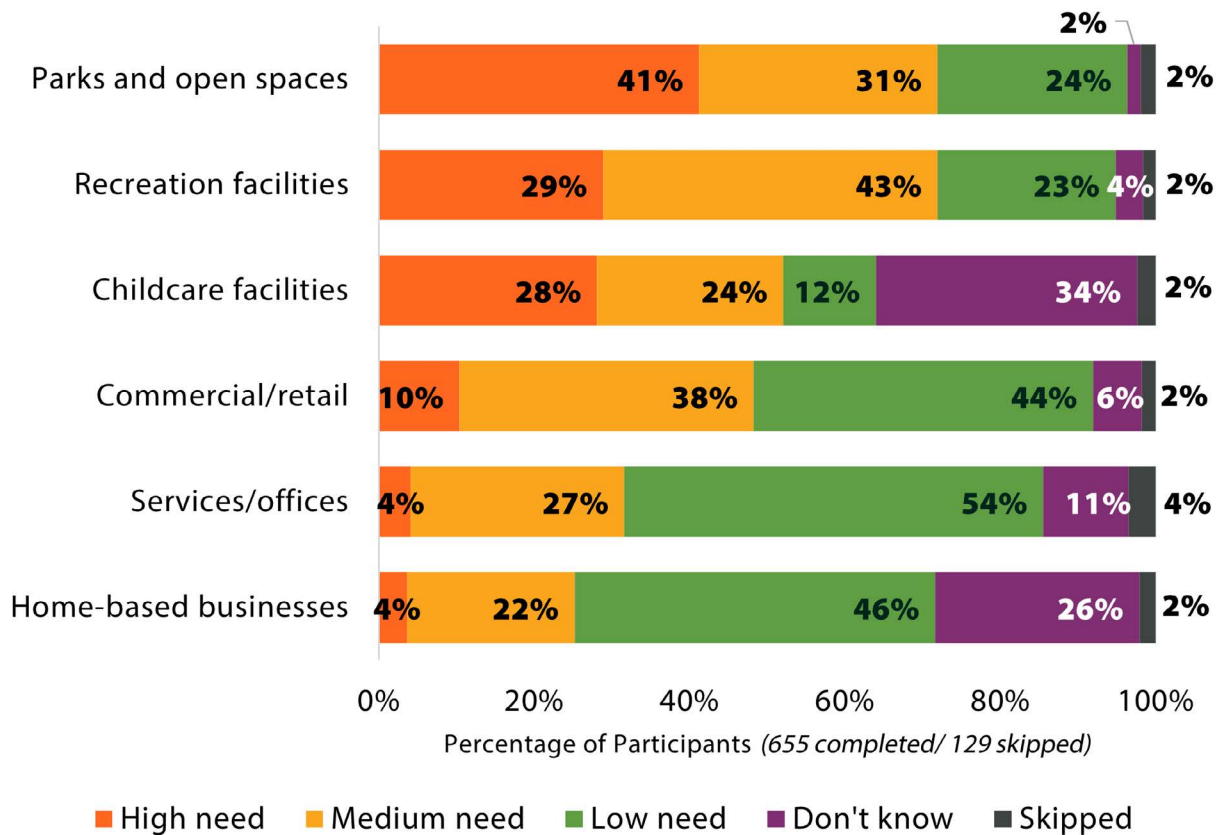
- Want to see safety measures and and maintenance on pedestrian sidewalks such as paving, lighting and adequate snow clearing.
- Increase the availability and frequency of public transportation.
- Some need for more parking.
- More garbage cans along streets.

Safety

- Concerns about overall safety of the area due to crime, drug abuse, and high unhoused population.
- Need more safe needle (Sharps) disposals.

What types of services and amenities are needed in Rennie's River?

128
comments



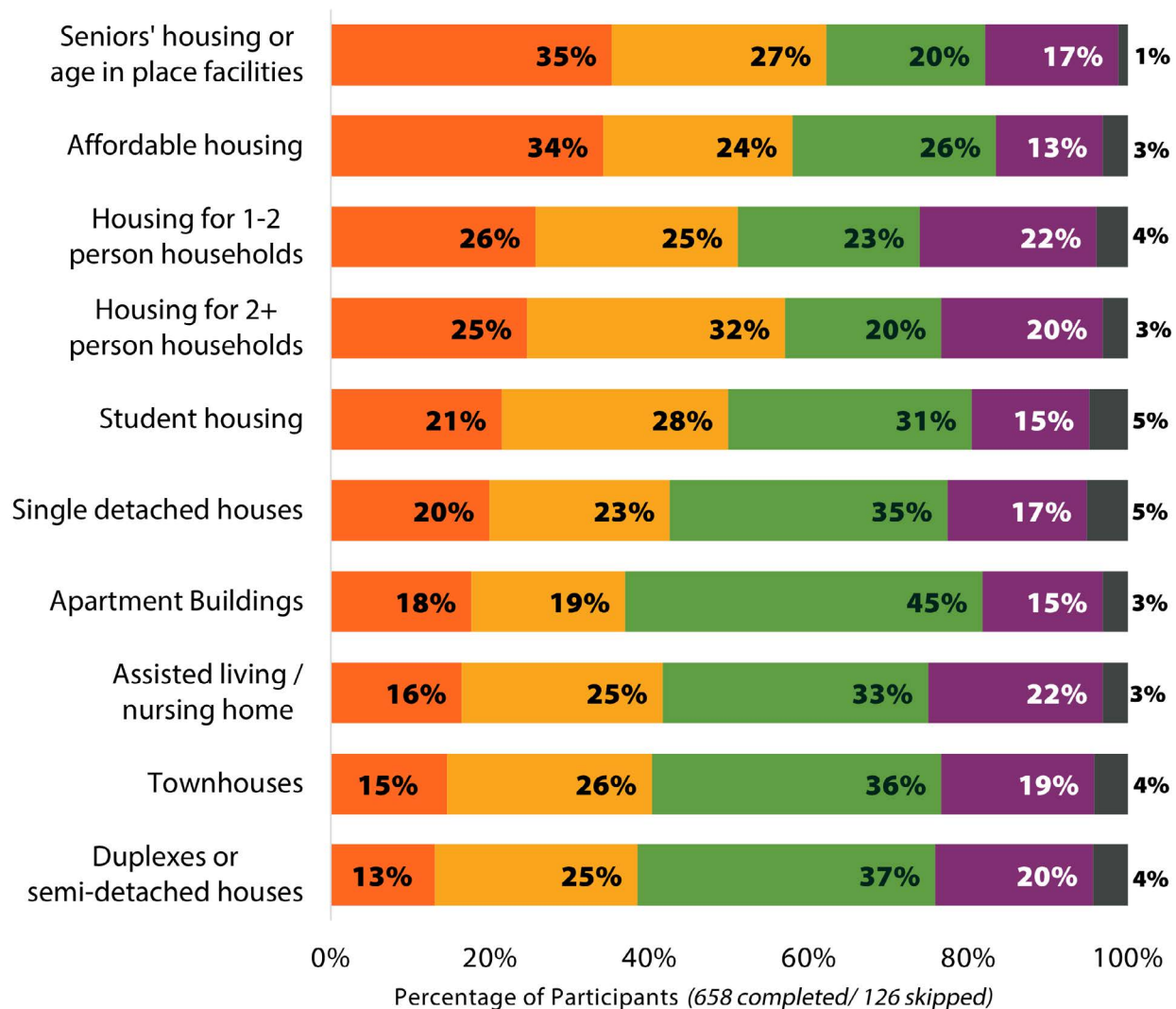
Parks and open spaces were considered a high need by 41% of survey participants, which aligns with the high value we heard about parks and open spaces in the rest of the survey results. Recreation facilities were a 'medium need' for 43% of participants. The lower priorities were services/offices and home-based businesses.

Other

- Retain existing parks and trails
- Washroom facilities on trails & in parks
- More lighting in parks and trails
- Increase multi-use trail connectivity
- Better active transit infrastructure
- Enhance public transit network
- Dog park
- Medical facilities
- Community centre / gathering place and programming
- Pickleball courts
- Affordable retail spaces
- Restaurants
- Want to see / don't want to see high density housing
- Snow clearing
- Mixed use
- Public drinking fountain
- Grocery store
- Hardware store
- Policing for residents well-being
- Coffee shops

What types of housing are needed in Rennie's River?

75
comments



■ High need ■ Medium need ■ Low need ■ Don't know ■ Skipped

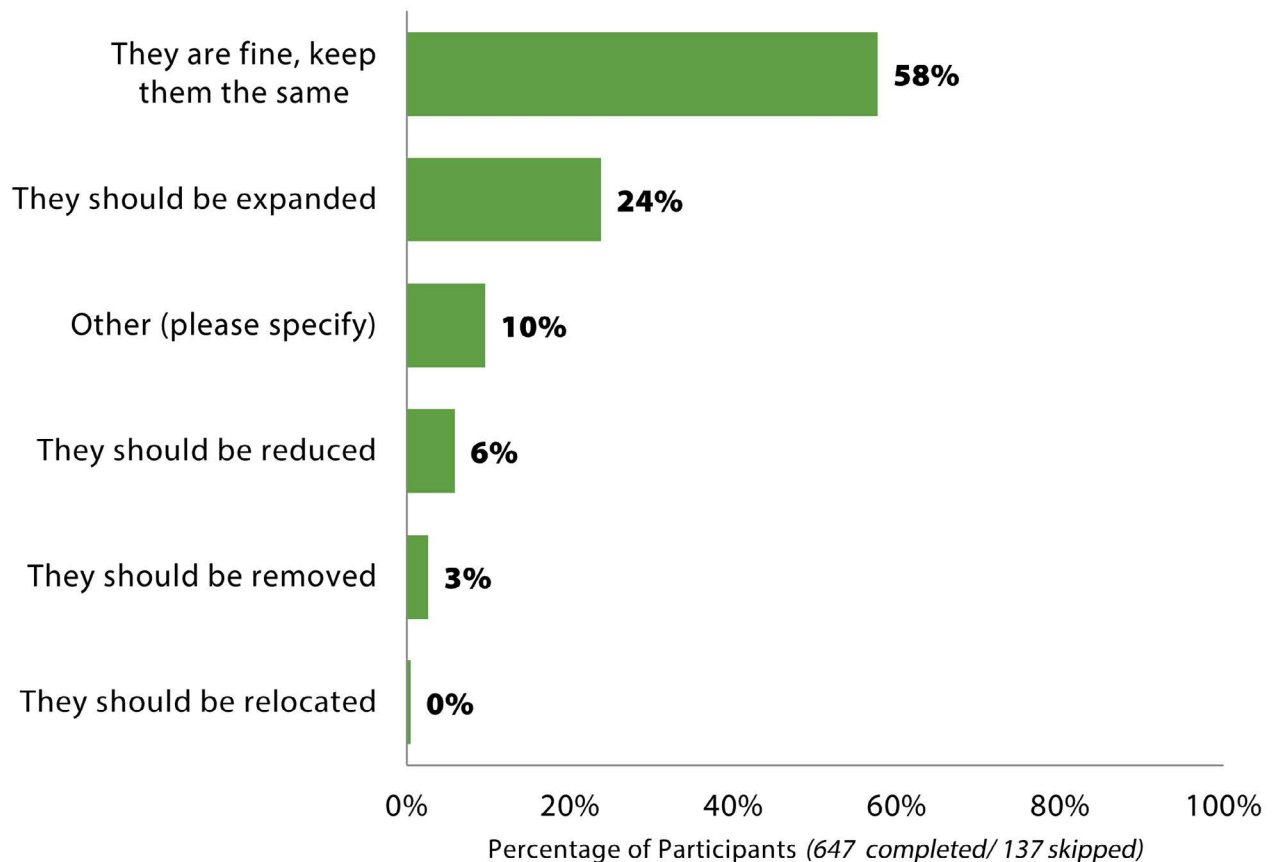
Housing was a key theme throughout the survey. The greatest housing needs identified were for seniors' housing and age in place facilities as well as affordable housing. Lower priorities included duplexes or semi-detached houses, townhouses, and assisted living/ nursing homes. Apartments were considered a 'low need' by just under half of survey participants.

Other

- Loss of greenspace for housing
- Want to see a ban on Airbnbs
- Affordable housing
- Too much affordable housing in one area
- Seniors' Housing
- Co-op housing
- Too much density
- Need more density

What are your thoughts on the areas proposed for intensification?

82
comments

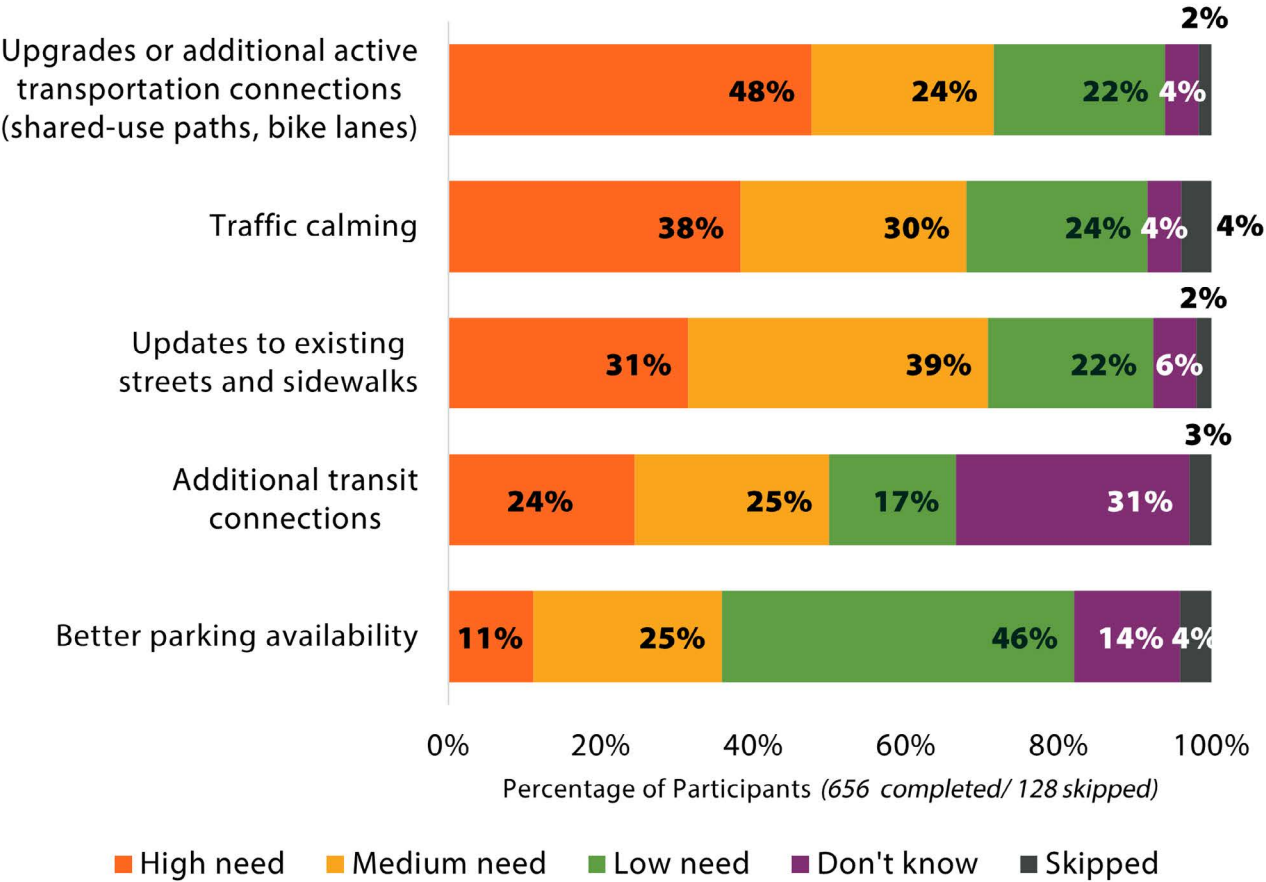


Overall, there was 58% support for keeping the existing intensification areas, without changes. An additional 24% of survey participants felt the intensification areas should be expanded. Under 10% of participants felt they should be either reduced or removed.

Other

- Retain heritage districts
- Redevelop vacant properties
- Concerned about vehicle congestion
- Preference for low-density
- Support for intensification on Elizabeth Ave
- Retain density at Kenny's Pond
- Mid-rise buildings in proximity to services and amenities

How could mobility be improved in Rennie’s River?



The main mobility priorities identified were upgrades or additional active transportation connections (shared-use paths, bike lanes) and traffic calming. Updates to existing streets and sidewalks was most frequently selected as ‘medium need’. Better parking availability was the lowest priority, with just under half of participants selecting ‘low need’.

146
comments

Other

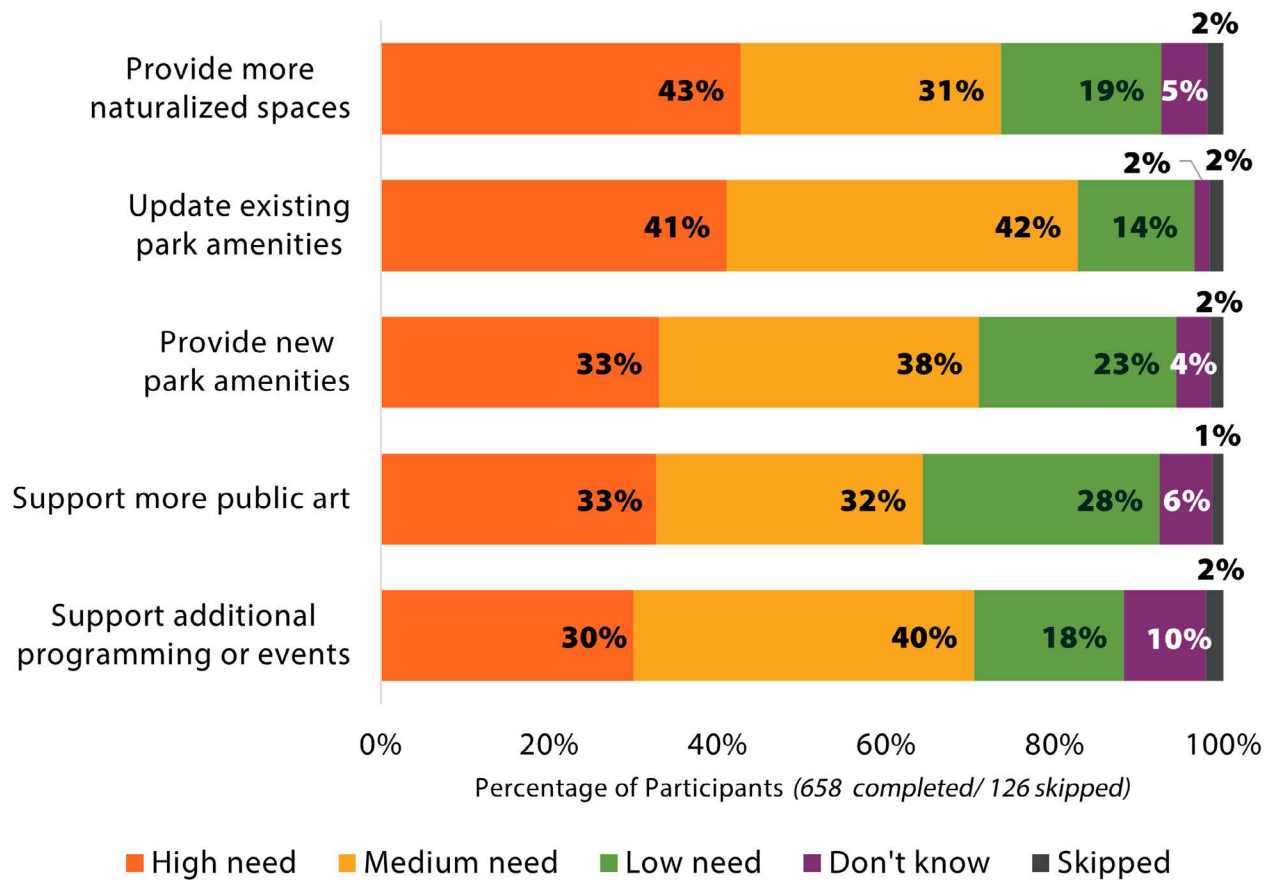
- Better snow clearing
- Resurface trails and sidewalks
- Ensure trails are accessible to wheelchairs and strollers
- Separate different users on shared-use paths
- Make crosswalks safer, lit, and aligned with pathway connections
- Increase the visibility of pedestrians & cyclists at crosswalks
- Disagree with bike lanes & trail widening
- Continue to expand bike lane network
- Disagree with e-scooter and e-bikes on paths
- Advance green lights for cyclists



- Add bus shelters
- More frequent and express routes
- Snow clearing at bus stops
- Up-keep maintenance on bus shelter
- Enforce speed limits
- Traffic calming near schools and in residential areas
- Make intersections safer / not too narrow
- Allow more street parking in Downtown, Georgetown & Bond Street
- Disagree with street parking
- More garbage clean up & bins
- Maintain greenspace

How could the City improve parks and recreation in Rennie's River?

73
comments



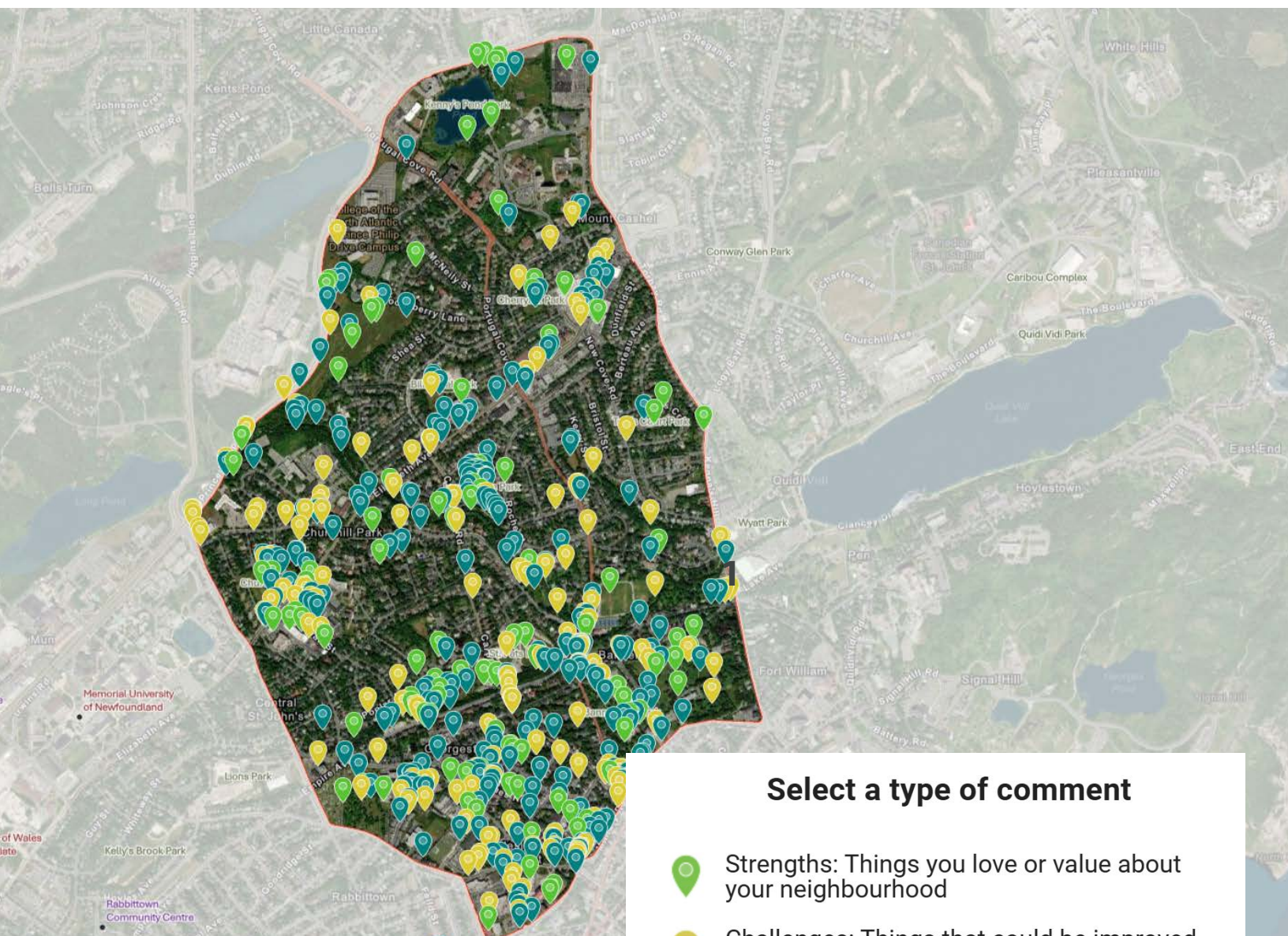
Other

- Retain greenspaces, trails & parks
- Increase number of parks
- Maintenance in existing park's facilities and amenities
- Re-pave courts
- Ensure park cleanliness
- Enhance lighting
- Dog parks
- Extension of hours for services and amenities including pool & washrooms
- Public fountains
- Snow clearing on trails
- Multi-use paths
- More policing
- Functional disposal for needles

Online Map Findings

572
comments

The second main engagement tactic was an online mapping tool. This platform allowed respondents to share location-specific information with the project team that responded to a range of questions. Some questions were similar to those posed in the Imagining The Future portion of the survey, while additional questions asked respondents their thoughts on the identified Intensification Areas as well as the proposed and existing active transportation infrastructure in the neighbourhood.



Select a type of comment

-  Strengths: Things you love or value about your neighbourhood
-  Challenges: Things that could be improved about your neighbourhood
-  Ideas: Ideas for how to improve or enhance your neighbourhood

Strengths, Challenges and Ideas

The first mapping activity asked respondents to identify the strengths, challenges, and big ideas they had for Rennie’s River. This activity helped the project team to capture location-specific comments about areas and opportunities for change throughout the community.

Bannerman Park

- Add lighting
- Pave trails and extend the Loop
- Add all-seasonal services to the canteen
- Maintain the landscape surrounding the Colonial Building

Churchill Park

- Replace stairs with a ramp at the Dartmouth Place entrance
- Add garbage cans
- Upgrade current park equipment to suit all demographics
- Formalize paths through the park to connect to the North residences
- Improve sport courts
- Beautify with art and gardens

Churchill Park Plaza

- Continue the Churchill redevelopment plan
- Add affordable housing
- Add pedestrian walkways down the center of the plaza

- Add grocery stores
- Enhance environment with seating, public art and trees

Ecclesiastical District

- Continue sidewalks across driveways
- Ensure bus shelter maintenance
- Ensure maintenance of heritage buildings
- Make pedestrians visible at intersections
- Increase in policing
- Reduce vehicle congestion on Bonaventure Ave

Elizabeth Avenue

- Continue the multi-use path for entire length of Elizabeth Avenue
- Increase transit services frequencies
- Change zoning to allow apartments / mixed use in commercial areas
- Permit food trucks
- Increase pedestrian infrastructure such as crosswalks
- Add greenery

- Increase intensification area farther South-west
- Reduce vehicle infrastructure such as lanes, parking spaces and redundant lot access

Empire Avenue

- Add painted crosswalks
- Increase pedestrian visibility at intersections
- Add Traffic calming at Rennie Mill Road and Carpasian Road intersection
- Increase pedestrian safety at crosswalks

Georgetown

- Needs traffic calming
- Add road signage to create less conflict between cyclist, pedestrians and vehicles
- Add snow storage

Government Building

- Space is underutilized
- Add seating & public garden
- Increase access points

Larch Park

- Trail connection from Roche Street to Carpasian Road
- Add signage for park entrances
- Additional trees for shade
- Add soccer field
- Add picnic areas for seating
- Upgrade playground equipment

Schools

- Opportunity to increase nearby housing density

- Increase student outdoor spaces
- Create public spaces for nearby community and events
- Increase parking spaces

Trail Systems

- Trails are located near the Rennie's River
- Add lighting
- Add shared-use paths
- Increase pedestrian visibility when exiting trails onto oncoming traffic
- Remove steps for ramp on trails for wheeling
- Snow clearing
- Trail maintenance and widening

- Should not be multi-use or paved
- Add bridge across the River for access to the St. Pat's Mercy Home, Rennie's River Elementary and Gonzaga Highschool

Other Roads

- Multi-use path needed along Prince Philip Drive
- Need crosswalk across from Harvey Road

Pippy Park Area

- Add dog park
- Pave path from Gooseberry Lane to Prince Philip Drive for wheeling accessibility
- Add buffer to separate Prince Philip Drive from park users



Intensification Areas

The second mapping activity asked respondents to identify where they believed intensification areas in Rennie's River should be located.

Churchill Park & Plaza

- Support for this area to be considered as a potential intensification candidate

Elizabeth Avenue

- Support for existing intensification plans
- Would like to see mixed-use and mid-rise developments along the stretch of Elizabeth Avenue

- Would like to see intensification to facilitate active transit orientated development
- Concerns for loss of green spaces

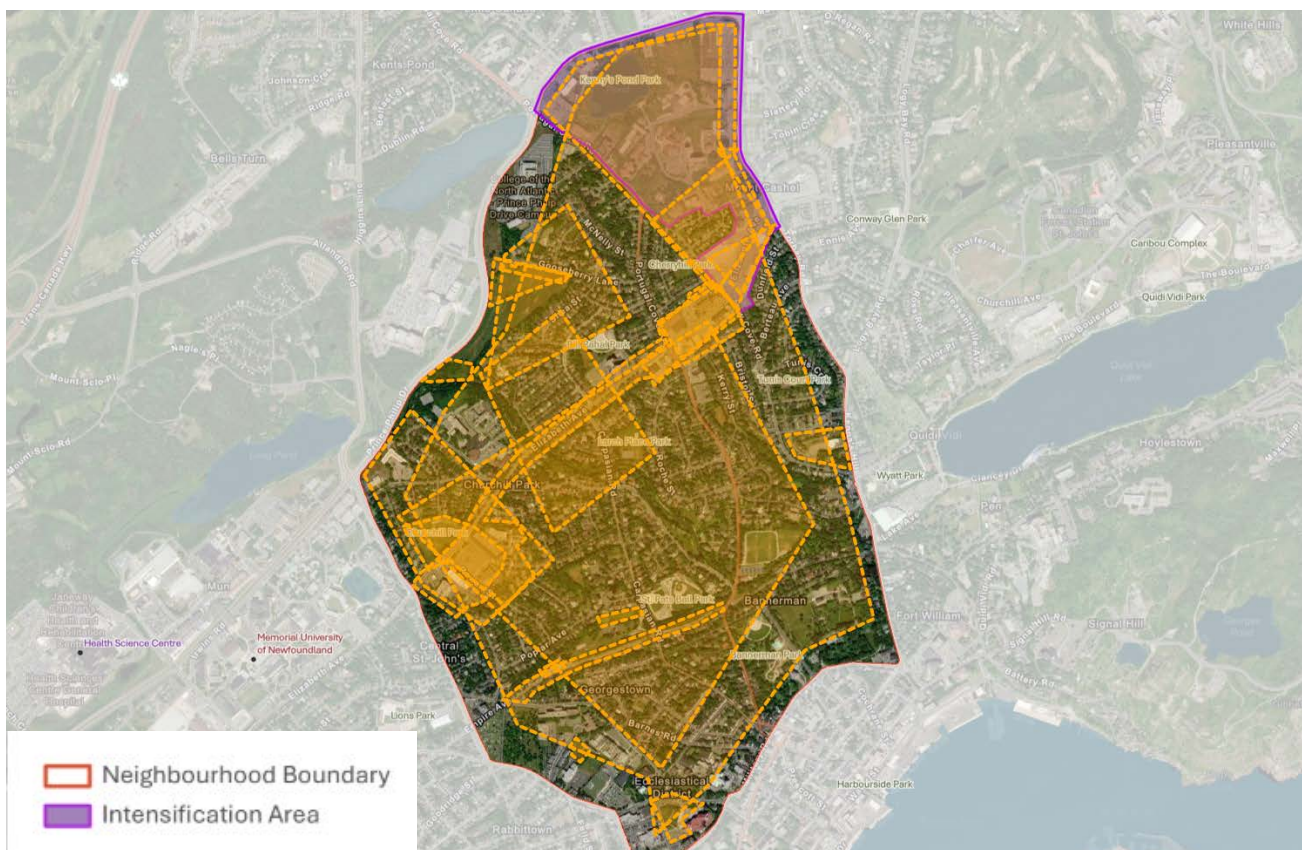
Pippy Park area (outside City jurisdiction)

- Concerns with underutilized spaces and would like to see multi-

unit affordable housing developments.

Existing intensification area

- Concern with residential development compromising neighbourhood character



Active Transportation

The third mapping activity asked respondents to share their thoughts on the existing and proposed active transportation connections throughout Rennie's River.

Empire Avenue

- Would like to see shared-use path along Empire Avenue to connect to Quidi Vidi
- Concerns with the development of shared-use paths and the negative impact on the natural environment

- Concerns with traffic interfering with proposed shared-use paths, and should be rerouted farther into the woods
- Would like to see shared-use path connection to the Confederation Building

Rennie's River Trail

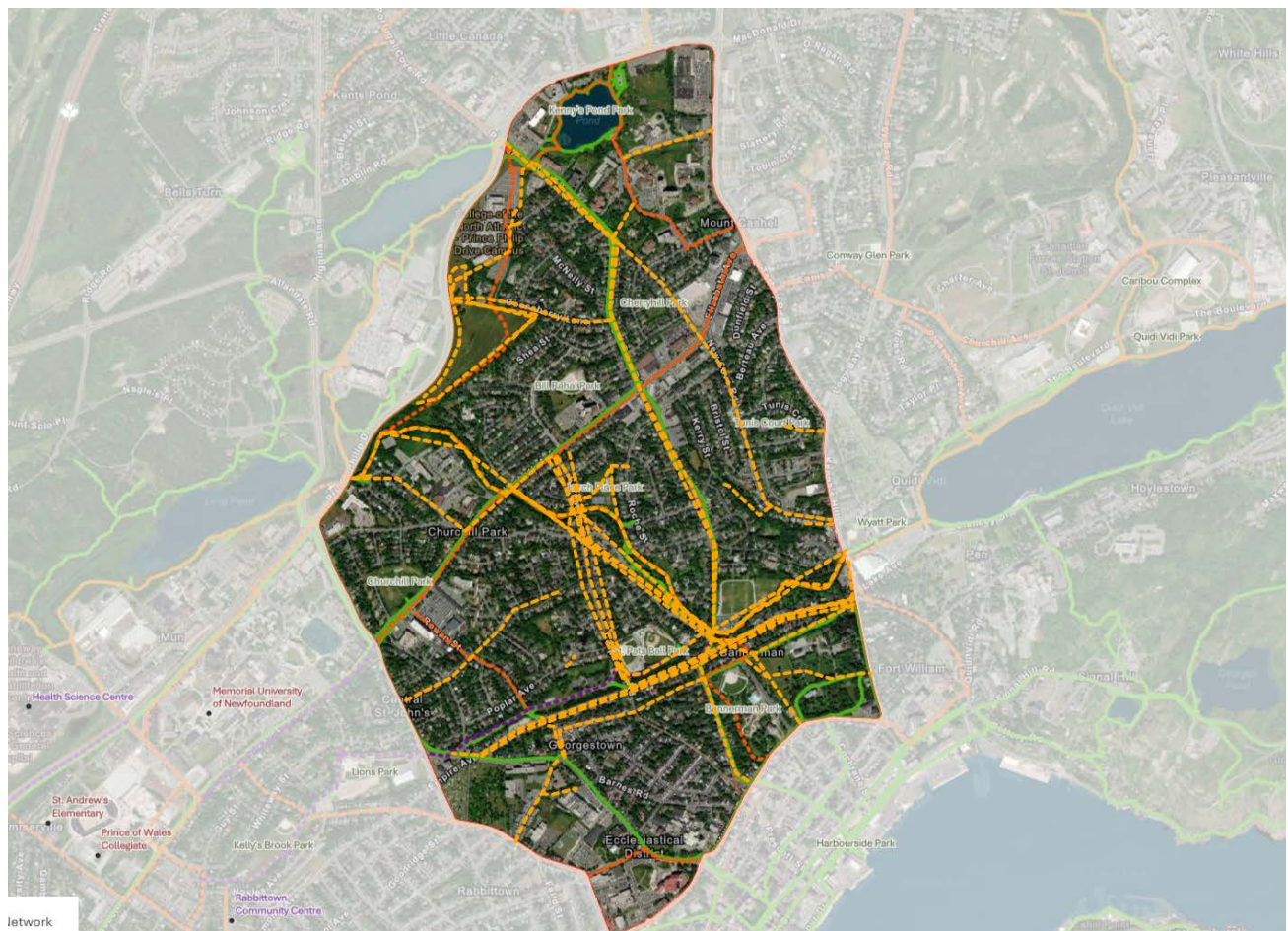
- Would like to see paved, widened and shared-use path along the entire trail.
- Concerns regarding paving and widening of natural trail as individuals are against bikes on the trails.

Portugal Cove Road

- Would like to see bike lanes located here

Pippy Park area

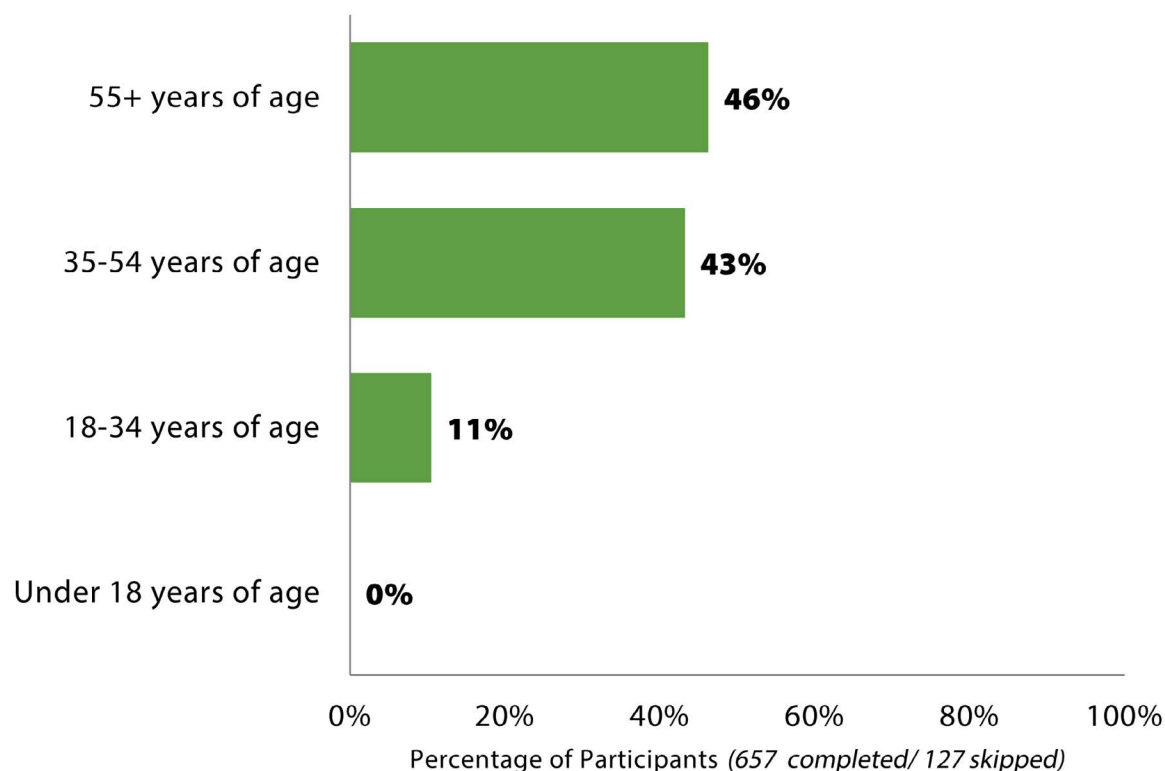
- Would like to see biking loops along the greenspace



Survey Demographics

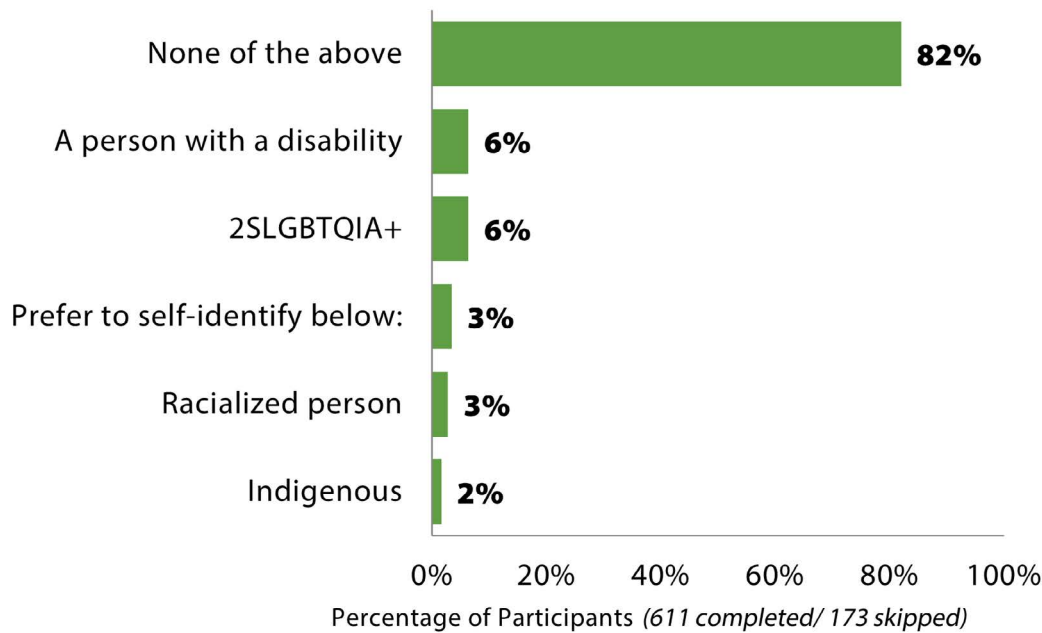
The following demographic questions were only asked in the online survey.

What is your age bracket?



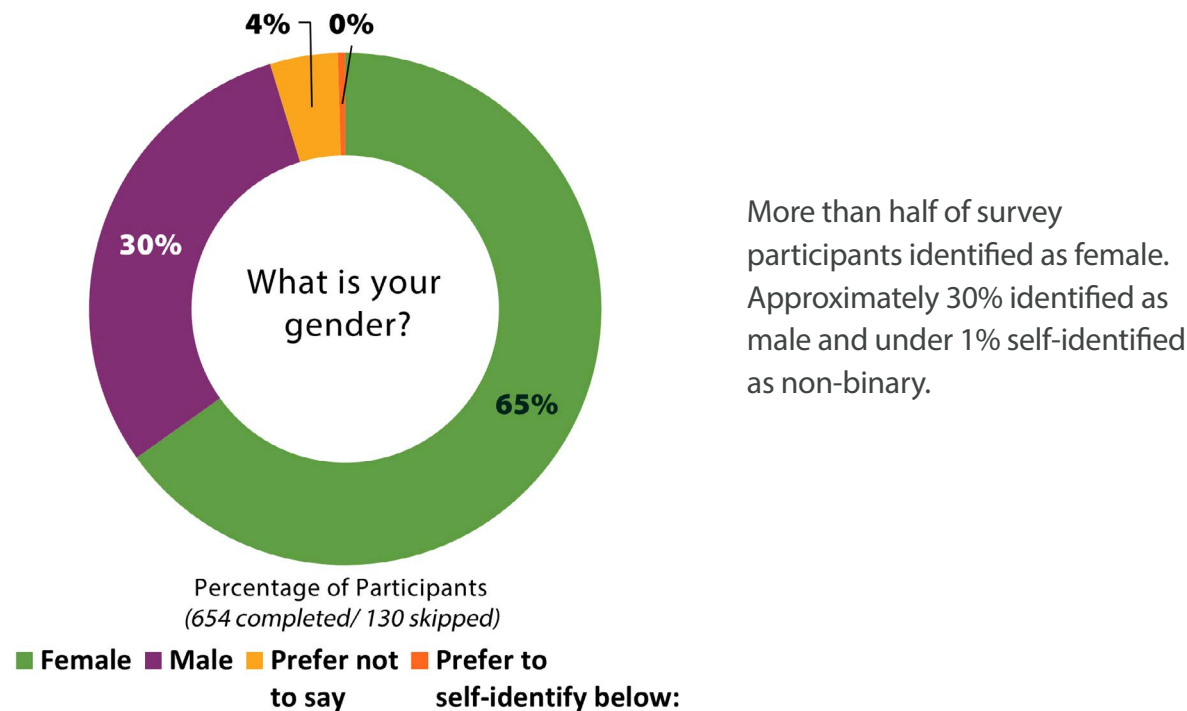
Survey participants were almost evenly split between the 35-54 years and 55+ years of age brackets. There was 11% representation from those between 18-34 years of age, and no representation from anyone under that age of 18.

Do you identify as any of the following?



The majority of respondents did not identify as any of the listed categories. There were 6% who identified as a person with a disability and belonging to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, 3% as a racialized person, and 2% as Indigenous.

In addition to the presented options, some participants also identified as: Senior, Retired, or Taxpayer.



Indigenous Engagement

The project team met with staff members from First Light to share a meal and talk about the needs of the Indigenous Community in the Rennie's River and Central and Mundy Pond Neighbourhoods. The session started with a high-level overview of the project and process which then led into a discussion about community needs in both neighbourhoods. There were two follow up conversations with program staff from Harvey House (716 Water Street) and the First Light Childcare Centre (97 Elizabeth Avenue), and First Light School Age Childcare Program (25 Buckmaster Circle).

The key themes from the conversation are summarized below. The project team committed to returning to First Light in Phase 2 of engagement on the Plans to present initial plan directions and recommendations for feedback.

Housing

- There is a housing crisis and a need for more affordable, transitional, and supportive housing.
- Many people are sleeping rough. The lack of appropriate housing strains existing housing providers and shelters as well as the healthcare system, especially in the winter when the need is greatest.
- Housing should be safe, culturally appropriate, and trauma informed.
- Need to implement the housing first model. When basic needs are met this increases safety for all.
- Increased density of housing should be accompanied by increased green spaces.
- Find creative ways to repurpose vacant or underutilized buildings to provide housing.

Access to Basic Needs

- Need safe injection sites (these are supervised, provide safe supply, and save lives) as well as more safe Sharps disposal sites in public places.
- Need walkable and affordable access to food. In Rennie's River, the loss of a grocery store at Churchill Square left a gap.
- Overall cost of living is a challenge. Food and basic needs are not affordable if you are on income support, disability, or even minimum wage. Need more grocery stores, food bank support, food programs, and community gardens.

- Need more public drinking water access.

Access to Culturally Appropriate Spaces

- Need the ability to practice cultural activities in indoor and outdoor public spaces. There are barriers to be able to smudge and Light a Kullik in municipal facilities.
- Currently only one sweat lodge location, and its not accessible to all.
- Ability to have separate spaces for youth and spaces for recovering offenders.
- More foraging opportunities in public spaces.
- Keep more spaces natural, including the Rennie's River Trail.
- Need more trees.
- Many Indigenous community members are coming from more rural places and this is their first time experiencing a city. Need spaces that feel more natural and grounding for health and wellbeing.

Children and Daycare Needs

- Need larger childcare spaces.
- Playground spaces along Rennie's River trail network should be updated to provide play opportunities for all ages. Currently, they are not safe for younger children.
- Need more nature-based, accessible, and sensory playgrounds.
- Concerns about safety in Bannerman Park.

Transportation

- Increase bike safety, but prioritize pedestrian safety first. Need for better lighting and crosswalks.
- Need better crosswalks across Elizabeth Avenue. People don't stop at the existing ones.
- Need increased transit frequency to ensure community members can access basic care and services.
- Need to address bottlenecks of traffic on Elizabeth Avenue with the bus stops.
- Need improved sidewalk clearing for winter access.
- Encourage more micro mobility rentals (scooters / ebikes shares).
- Address flooding issues, as the bridge on the Rennie's River Trail gets washed out during heavy rain.

Interested Parties

In addition to the broad public engagement opportunities, the project team met with various community organizations and groups representing different interests in Rennie’s River, as well as Central and Mundy Pond. A general overview was provided to groups about the neighbourhoods and participants were asked to share their feedback on strengths, challenges, and opportunities as well as active transportation and intensification areas.

The following groups participated in Phase 1 Engagement:

Council Committees

- Affordable Housing Working Group
- Arts and Culture Advisory Committee
- Building Safer Communities Steering Committee
- Built Heritage Experts Panel
- Environment and Sustainability Experts Panel
- St. John’s Transportation Commission

- Sustainable and Active Mobility Advisory Committee
- Youth Engagement Working Group

Organizations

- Stella’s Circle
- NL Public Libraries
- Food First NL
- Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

- Georgestown Neighbourhood Association
- Metrobus
- Advantage St. John’s
- Ecclesiastical District National Historic Site Working Committee
- Royal Newfoundland Constabulary
- Buckmaster’s Circle Community Centre
- Ordinary Spokes

Housing

Participants noted an ongoing gap in affordable and supportive housing options, and expressed openness to taller or higher-density buildings where it would help address the specific housing needs of the groups they represent. There is significant homelessness throughout St. John’s, and providing support through the Neighbourhood Plan that could help deliver more affordable housing would improve this situation. There was also an identified shortage of daycare capacity, with interest in larger or purpose-built facilities that serve local families.

Accessible Daily Needs

The closure of the Churchill Square Dominion many years ago was identified as a major loss for residents in that area of Rennie's River, particularly for those who walk or rely on transit. More generally, there was recognition that depending on where residents are located in Rennie's River, it is necessary to drive to access daily needs. There is appetite for more neighbourhood-serving retail and food access closer to where people live, rather than niche or boutique offerings.

Parks and Public Spaces

The Rennie's River Trail network is viewed as a major asset and a core feature of the neighbourhood's character. Community organizations want to see upgrades that encourage safe and welcoming use, particularly given recent increases in perceptions of crime. At the same time, some interested parties representing vulnerable populations identified concerns of their own with the lack of community services throughout Rennie's River that could help to address some of the challenges their clientele experiences.

Bannerman Park was repeatedly raised as a location where safety issues have escalated, including reports of violence. Participants stressed the need for public spaces that remain welcoming to all users, especially families and seniors, and suggested more intentional park stewardship in high-use areas.

Mobility

Investments in the Torbay Mall transit hub are necessary to help improve safety of this highly-used transfer hub in the Metrobus network. Crossings for Torbay Road and Macdonald Drive should also be improved as there is substantial supportive and more affordable housing in this area, driving more pedestrian traffic through the intersection than in most parts of the city.

Walkability generally was also identified as a barrier in Rennie's River, particularly in the winter time if sidewalks have not been cleared.

Heritage

There are opportunities to leverage the preservation of heritage to support economic development, through film and tourism initiatives. Rennie's River contains the Irish precinct of the Ecclesiastical District as well as other notable heritage buildings. Participants expressed a desire to see an overall Growth Management Plan for the full Ecclesiastical District, to provide a clear strategy and action plan for how this area is managed and promoted.

Property Owners and Developers

The project team also met with several members of the development community and landowners in Rennie's River as well as Central and Mundy Pond. These conversations helped the project team understand the specific interests and challenges of this group, and where strategic alignment with the City's interests exist. Findings have been generalized across plan areas.

Transportation

- St. John's parking standards are considered high compared to other cities. Achieving the parking rates can be cost prohibitive, especially for interior parking. Some developers have to apply to Council for relaxations, which adds time and uncertainty to the process. Would like to see reduced parking rates in areas where there is access to transit / active transportation routes.
- Need better bike and transit connections to support higher density development.

Servicing

- Servicing, especially stormwater requirements and upgrades, can be a barrier to development.

Housing

- There is general interest in developing higher density housing forms such as townhouses and apartments, including seniors' apartments.

Process

- There are some barriers with existing zoning or with development standards to developing, including setbacks to being able to develop on particular sites.
- There is a desire to see the development permit process sped up, particularly for big economic development projects (or they will go elsewhere).

Next Steps

Thank you everyone who participated in this engagement. The findings from this phase of engagement will inform the Draft Neighbourhood Plan. Phase 2 Engagement will take place in early 2026 and focus on confirming the overall Neighbourhood Strategy and initial plan direction.

Prior to Phase 2 Engagement, the project team will be:

- Updating Council on the Phase 1 Engagement findings
- Developing the neighbourhood plan vision and guiding principles
- Identifying key focus areas for further technical analysis and review
- Drafting preliminary policy options and implementation initiatives

Project updates and information will continue to be posted to the project website at engagestjohns.ca/rennies-river-neighbourhood-plan.





ST. JOHN'S