

ST. JOHN'S

University Area Neighbourhood Plan

Phase 1 Engagement
What We Heard Report
January 2025



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Project Overview

The City of St. John's is developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the University Area community. 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 the University Area 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 these neighbourhoods.

The Neighbourhood Plan for University Area is being completed at the same time as the Neighbourhood Plan for Cowan Heights, 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 the first phase of engagement. The focus of Phase 2 engagement, in Spring 2025, will be validating initial recommendations for the University Area. Following this, a draft of the Neighbourhood Plan will be released publicly in fall 2025.



Figure 1. University Area Neighbourhood Plan Boundary



Phase 1 Engagement

Fall 2024



**Phase 2
Engagement**
Spring 2025



**Draft Plan
Release**
Fall 2025

Engagement Approach

Phase 1 Engagement took place between **November 12 to December 8, 2024**. This was the first opportunity to engage on both the Cowan Heights and the University Area Neighbourhood Plans. 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 November 12 to December 8, 2024. Hardcopies were available upon request.	503 responses
	Online Map Tool	The online map tool was available on EngageStJohns.ca from November 12 to December 8, 2024. Participants could provide place-specific comments on the map.	248 comments 40 participants
	Virtual Information Sessions	One information session was hosted for the University Area.	6 participants

In-Person Engagement

Activity	Description	Outputs
 Focus Group Sessions	Five Focus Group sessions were hosted jointly for both Neighbourhood Plans: • November 20 Council Committees • November 25 Youth Engagement Working Group • November 26 Social & Cultural • November 27 Economic Development • November 28 Mobility & Recreation	10 organizations and 6 Council Committees
 Interviews	One-on-one interviews were hosted with a range of interested parties throughout the week of November 25th for both Neighbourhood Plans. Some were in person and some virtual.	7 organizations interviewed
 First Light Lunch	The project team hosted a lunch with First Light staff on November 29 to discuss Indigenous perspectives on both Neighbourhood Plan areas.	10 First Light staff participants
 Open House	An open house was held on November 26, 2024 from 5-8pm at the St. John's Community Market (245 Freshwater Rd.) for the University Area Neighbourhood.	11 participants
 Pop-Ups	Two popup events were held for both Neighbourhood Plans: • November 27, from 1-5pm at the Community Market • November 29, from 11am-1pm at the Memorial University Student Centre	40+ participants

Outreach & Communications

	Activity	Description	Outputs
	Project Website	EngageStJohns.ca was available for the duration of the engagement and contained information on events, how to get involved, and all survey and map links. The project page also linked to the Cowan Heights webpage.	1600 page visits
	Email List	Three email updates were sent to EngageStJohns.ca subscribers on November 12, 15, and December 3, 2024.	Nov. 12: 4465 people, open rate 61.2% Nov. 15: 4479 people, open rate 50.7% Dec. 3: 4057 people, open rate 52.6%
	Posters	Posters were put up in various community locations throughout the two neighbourhoods.	10 posters
	Media Release	A media release was posted on the City's website on November 12 and December 4.	1 release
	Social Media	The City of St. John's posted on Facebook, Instagram, and X throughout the engagement phase from November 12 to December 8, 2024.	Link clicks: 1,383 Impressions: 66,907 Unique reach: 18,273

Key Themes

Four 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.



Housing need is growing in the neighbourhood

Engagement participants identified that there is a significant and growing affordable rental housing need in the University Area that is not being met by current market options. The main housing need identified was for students, newcomers, and smaller households (1-2 people). There is a need for smaller, high quality, and more affordable housing forms than the current low density and older housing stock that exists. Changes to student enrollment levels and infrastructure commitments are also going to put additional pressure on the surrounding neighbourhood to meet housing needs. There is also a need for better tenant and landlord protections and enforcement of property standard to ensure appropriate living conditions of rental units.



Parks, trails, and recreation are top amenities

The top amenity identified in the University Area was its network of connected greenspaces and trails. Participants appreciated recent trail improvements through Kelly's Brook Park as well as their access to Pippy Park and Long Pond. Participants wanted to see these trails and parks protected and improved.

There were some suggestions for additional amenities to support families in the area, including dog parks, playgrounds, and community gardens. In addition to the parks themselves, many participants said they valued the number of mature trees in the neighbourhood and the overall "green" feeling nature of the area.



A mobility shift is needed in the area

Mobility was a major theme within all engagement conversations. The reliance on private vehicles is contributing to traffic congestion at peak times and parking impacts across the neighbourhood. Many groups suggested there needs to be a larger focus on transit and active transportation in the area.

Several groups expressed that there should be more frequent transit service in the area and incentives for students to use it. Overnight transit service was also identified as a gap but is not currently in the plans for expansion of service.

Active transportation was another theme. Many participants identified the need for better snow clearing, sidewalk resurfacing, and removal of obstructions on sidewalks to make it easier and more accessible to walk in the neighbourhood. Improving the safety of crossings was another suggestion, with many intersections identified as currently dangerous for pedestrians. Though there were some differing opinions, feedback on the Elizabeth Avenue shared use path was generally positive, with many participants wanting more active transportation connections like this one built throughout the area. One specific gap identified was a north-south active transportation connection.



Intensification is key to help support sensitive growth

Overall, there was a desire to see additional intensification in specific locations within the University Area. These areas were identified as key locations to provide more housing and more commercial services within walking distance of residents.

The main opportunities for mixed use and density were along Elizabeth Avenue and Freshwater Road, especially where small-scale commercial is already established. There was a mix of perspectives on what level of density would be appropriate; however, 50% of survey participants identified apartments as a high priority for the neighbourhood.

With additional growth, there is also a desire to ensure parks, schools, amenities, and services are also improved and expanded to support new and existing residents. There is a particular need for additional grocery store access in the neighbourhood.

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

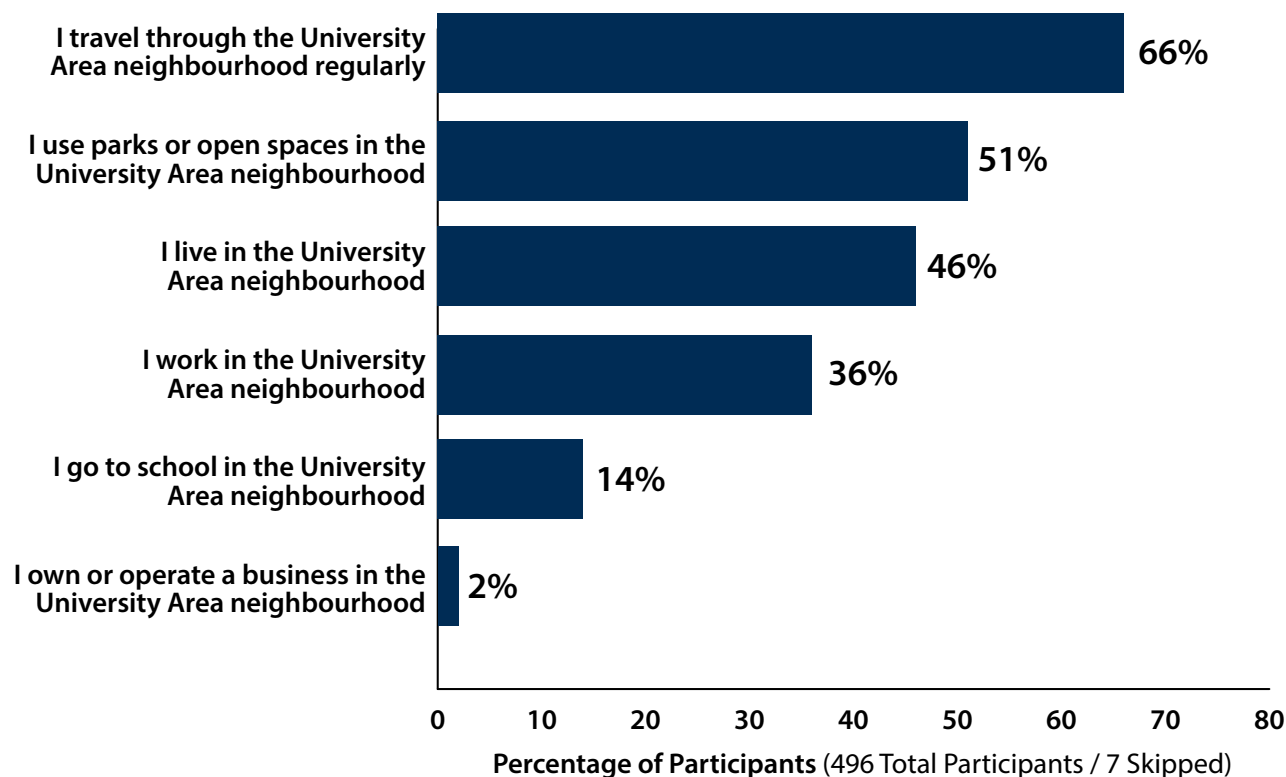
Online and in-person results have been combined in the following qualitative summaries, however the graphs and statistics reflect online survey responses only.



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.

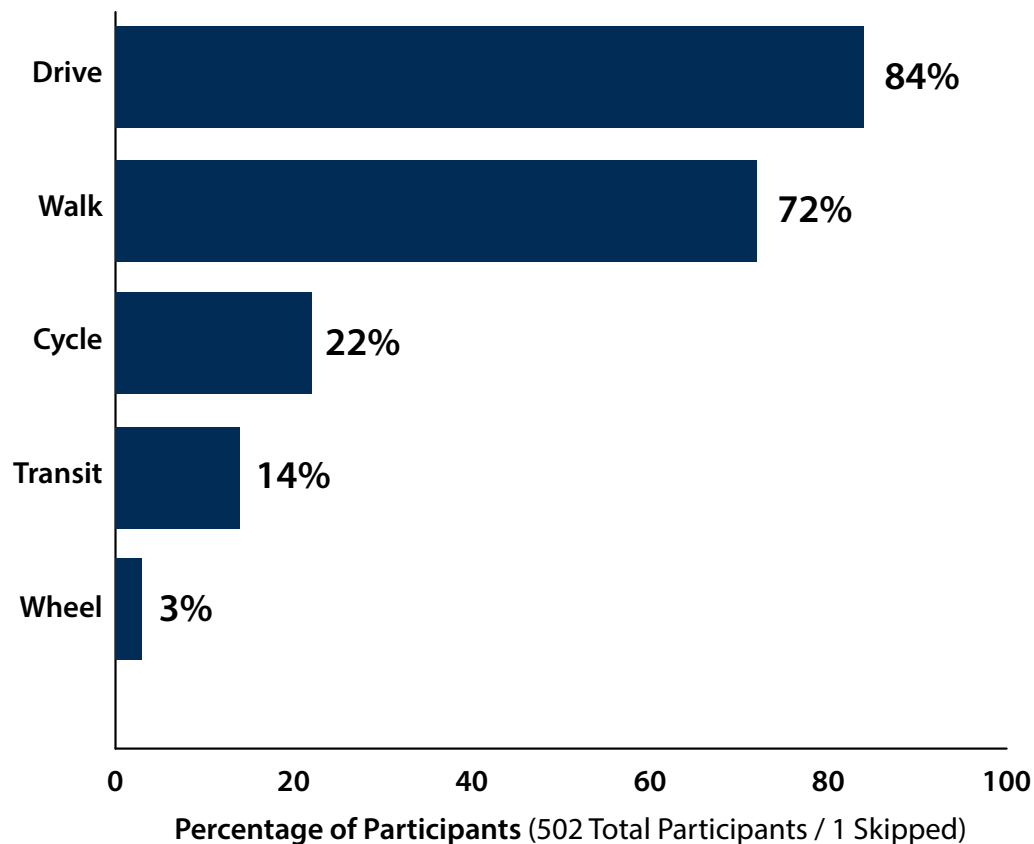
What is your connection to the University Area?



66% of survey participants said that traveling through was their primary connection to the University Area, followed by use of parks and open spaces at 51%. People who live in the area represented 46% of survey participants, followed by people who work in the area at 36%.

- The “other” responses included:
- family / friends live here
 - use programs / services here
 - previously lived here
 - want to move here
 - Live or work nearby

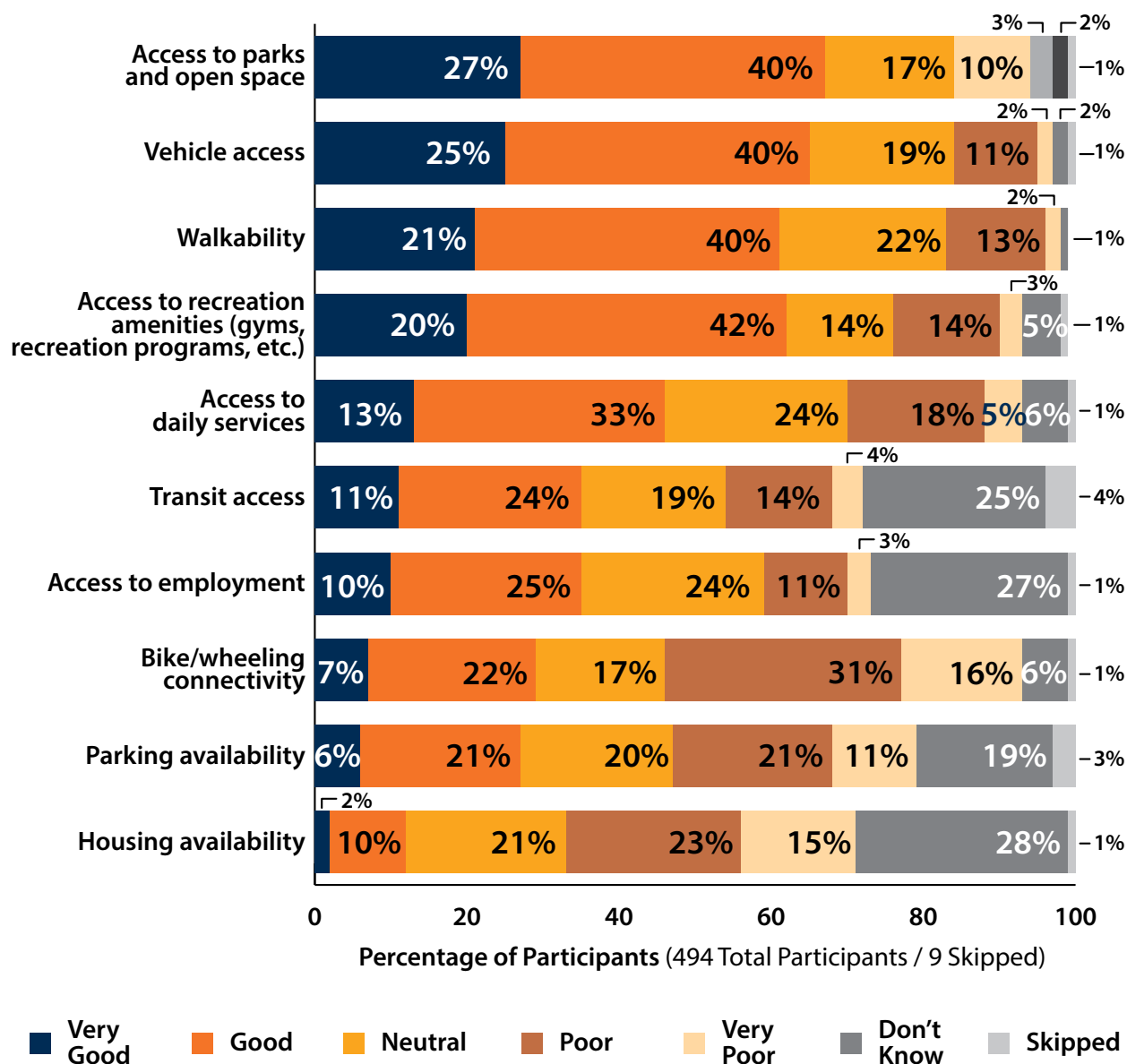
How do you typically travel in your neighbourhood?



Driving and walking were the top methods of travel selected, with 84% driving and over 72% walking. Cycling and transit were a smaller portion of the mode share, with 21% cycling and 14% using transit to travel. 10% of participants selected wheeling. Participants could select more than one response.

The main “other” responses were taking a taxi and running.

How would you rate the following in your neighbourhood?



The top three highest rated neighbourhood attributes in the University Area were access to parks and open space, vehicle access, and walkability. Access to recreation amenities also ranked highly. The lowest ranked attributes were housing availability and parking availability. The attributes with the greatest divergence of opinion and highest proportion of “don’t know” responses were transit access and access to employment.

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.

What do you value the most about your neighbourhood today that you would like protected or enhanced in the future?

368
comments

Some of the most valued features of the University Area were access to parks and green spaces and walkability. Many comments spoke to how these green spaces contribute to the overall feel of the neighbourhood. Kelly’s Brook Park was frequently mentioned as a favourite place in the community.

Many participants said they value being able to walk for their daily needs, recreation, shopping, and other amenities. The Kelly’s Brook and Elizabeth Avenue shared use paths were also mentioned as recent improvements that are appreciated in the area. Additional values are themed below.

Parks & Recreation

- Access to green space, nature, and parks
- Kelly’s Brook Park and Pathway
- Pippy Park
- Burton Pond
- Long Pond
- Mature trees
- New recreation infrastructure
- Make parks and amenities more accessible
- Playground

Vehicle Access

- Traffic okay

Transit

- Transit access

Active Transportation

- Trails
- River walk / Grand Concourse / Rennie’s River
- Cycling paths
- Walking access to amenities
- New shared-use paths

Sense of Place

- Student community
- Green
- Low density / not crowded
- Beautiful homes / historic buildings / 1940s-1950s heritage homes
- Peaceful / quiet
- Safe
- Family friendly
- Diverse community
- Good vibes

- Accessible
- Livable
- Mix of housing types
- Churchill Park area
- Gardens

Amenities

- Independent grocery store
- Local shops / corner stores
- Schools
- University
- Hospital
- Well connected to the rest of the city
- Library
- Mixed use
- Theatre
- Markets
- Arts & Culture Centre



What are the greatest challenges in your neighbourhood today that need to be addressed?

373
comments

The greatest challenges identified in the comments for the University Area were about mobility for pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists. Though many participants said they value walkability in the area, there were many comments speaking to the continued need for pedestrian improvements, such as sidewalk surfacing, snow clearing, and safer crossings. The focus of many comments was on improving accessibility and safety for pedestrians and wanting more separation from vehicular traffic.

Other key challenges identified were traffic congestion and parking as well as the lack of grocery store options. Many comments also spoke to a lack of property maintenance and care, which impacts those renting and other property owners in the neighbourhood.

Crime & Safety

- Safety walking at night
- Vehicle and house break ins
- Drug and addiction challenges
- Rodent challenges
- Concerns about transitional housing

Cleanliness & Upkeep

- Garbage issues
- Many buildings need upkeep
- Vacant properties an eyesore

Vehicle Access

- Not enough parking for students, which impacts surrounding areas
- Vehicles speeding, especially on Allendale Road and cutting through neighbourhoods
- Noise from traffic is disruptive
- Lack of EV charging areas
- Lack of accesses from the Health Centre

Transit

- Poor transit connectivity outside of downtown and MUN
- Lack good bus connection to Marine Institute
- Bus service not frequent enough
- More bus shelters
- Want discounted bus passes for students
- Need better communication about buses being late /detours



Active transportation

- Sidewalk surfacing / barriers to accessibility
- Poor / non-equitable snow clearance
- Lack of lighting
- Not enough walking trails
- Crossings unsafe
- Lacking bike infrastructure
- Roads too car oriented
- Prince Phillip Drive is dangerous
- Need crosswalk signal near the Circle K on Freshwater Road and connecting the end of University Avenue to Oxen Pond Road
- Need another access to MUN other than Allendale or Prince Phillip Drive
- Need safer connections to adjacent neighbourhoods
- Extend Elizabeth Avenue shared use path
- More education needed

about safe ebike and
escooter use

Parks & Recreation

- Lack of social gathering spaces
- Lack of parks maintenance
- Lack of playgrounds

Land Use

- Need more density / too much density
- Get rid of dead / vacant shops
- Lack of grocery stores
- Lack of housing /need more affordable rental housing for students and low income
- Affordable housing too concentrated
- Lack of age appropriate housing
- Too many short term rentals
- Missing retail / coffee shops
- Need more jobs

Other

- NIMBYs
- Community mailbox too far away
- Stray cats
- Need more families
- Need to address poverty
- Library needs an update
- MUN tunnels need to be maintained
- Old sewer and stormwater servicing
- Constant construction
- Neighbourhood needs a better name than "University Area"
- Too much noise from Churchill Music Festival
- Better notifications for street cleaning days
- Climate change and flood concerns

If you could change one thing about your neighbourhood, what would it be?

339
comments

The most commonly suggested changes were around mobility improvements, particularly safer pedestrian and cycle connections through the neighbourhood and resolving traffic and parking issues around the University. Suggestions included improving major crossing points of high speed streets, creating safer connections to the new bike paths, and making sidewalks more accessible.

Another key change suggested was the addition of more housing and ensuring that existing properties are maintained.

Crime & Safety

- Make the area safe
- Deal with panhandling

Cleanliness & Upkeep

- More garbage cans
- Enforce property maintenance
- More beautification

Vehicle Access

- More free parking on campus
- Put parkway underground
- Stop vehicles from cutting through neighbourhoods instead of using the Parkway (Rodeney & Whiteway Streets)

- Reduce / enforce speed limits
- Add EV chargers
- Hire better companies to do roadwork
- **Transit**
- Better bus access
- Direct route to downtown and airport
- Add benches at bus stops

Active transportation

- Fix Allendale Road and Prince Phillip Drive intersection to make it safe for bikes and pedestrians
- Fix the intersection of Strawberry Marsh and

Allendale Road

- Make sidewalks accessible
- Better snow clearing
- More walking trails
- Better / dedicated active transportation connections and crosswalks
- Connect bike paths to Pippy Park and Health Centre
- Better crossings / overpasses for Prince Phillip Drive
- Formalize informal paths / shortcut routes
- More lighting



Parks & Recreation

- Dog park
- More parks and green space
- Cricket amenities, splash pad, family amenities in Kelly's Brook Park
- Community garden
- Protect mature trees / increase tree canopy
- Fix library building
- More childrens amenities
- Restore wetlands to prevent flooding

Land Use

- More housing
- More convenience stores / affordable local commercial spaces
- More family oriented
- Grocery stores
- Make better use of existing spaces / leftover spaces
- Protect heritage buildings / architecture from 40s and 50s
- Distribute affordable housing

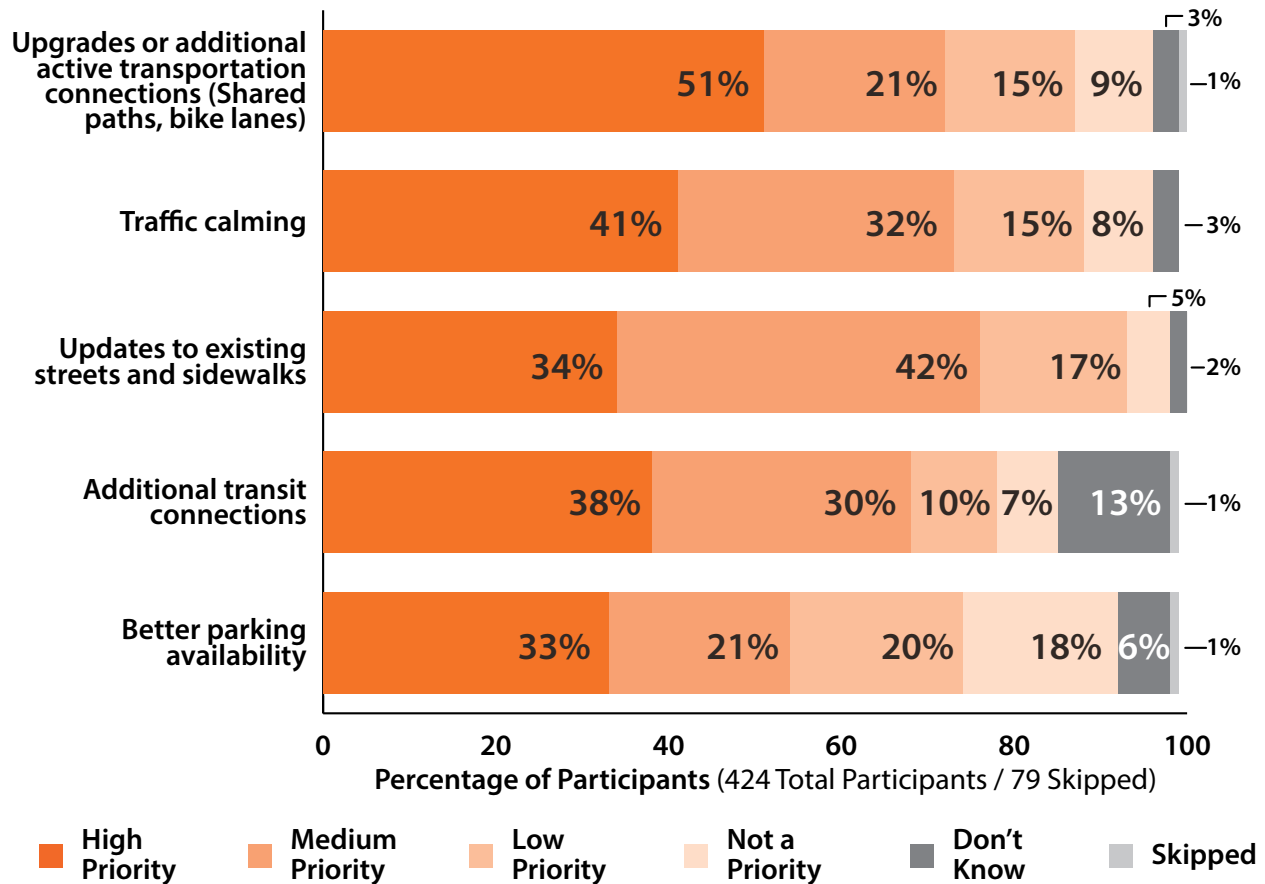
- More density and mix of uses
- Cap height of buildings

Other

- Nothing / keep the same
- Finish construction
- More native plants
- Upgrade aging infrastructure
- More mixed use
- Share the history of the area through stories and signage

Which of the following mobility and connectivity improvements should be prioritized in your neighbourhood?

239
comments



Upgrades or additional active transportation connections and additional transit connections were the highest ranked mobility and connectivity improvements survey participants wished to see in the University Area. Updates to existing streets and sidewalks and adding additional transit connections all scored highly. Better parking availability was the lowest priority relative to the other options.

The comments emphasized the need for an improved public transit system with more frequent and reliable buses and upgraded bus shelters. Participants advocated for improvements to pedestrian infrastructure, calling for safer crosswalks, better street lighting and improved snow clearing of sidewalks in the winter months. There was also support for bike lanes and multi-use paths in the University Area, with several participants citing the need to improve cycling connectivity to the downtown. There were also calls for traffic calming measures to slow vehicle speeds.



Public Transit

- Smaller buses to accommodate greater route frequency
- Earlier / later hours for bus routes
- Improvements to bus shelters features like seats, light, heating and winterization, accessibility, etc.
- Shuttle bus service to the mall, University, Churchill square, Coleman's, and Shoppers
- An express bus route on Columbus Drive / Prince Philip Drive, with stops at the hospital and University

Cycling

- Separated protected bike lanes
- Bike lanes to / from / through the university

- Bike racks
- Connections between existing bike lanes
- E-bike rentals
- Bike lanes on Prince Philip Drive

Pedestrian and Public Realm

- Improved pedestrian safety on: Prince Phillip Drive, Freshwater Road, Thorburn Road, Kenmount Roads
- Level sidewalks
- More pedestrian crosswalks and lighting on all crosswalks
- Prioritize sidewalks for snow clearing and de-icing
- Better pedestrian paths and trails
- More lighting on streets and trails
- Signage to remind motorists to watch their

speed

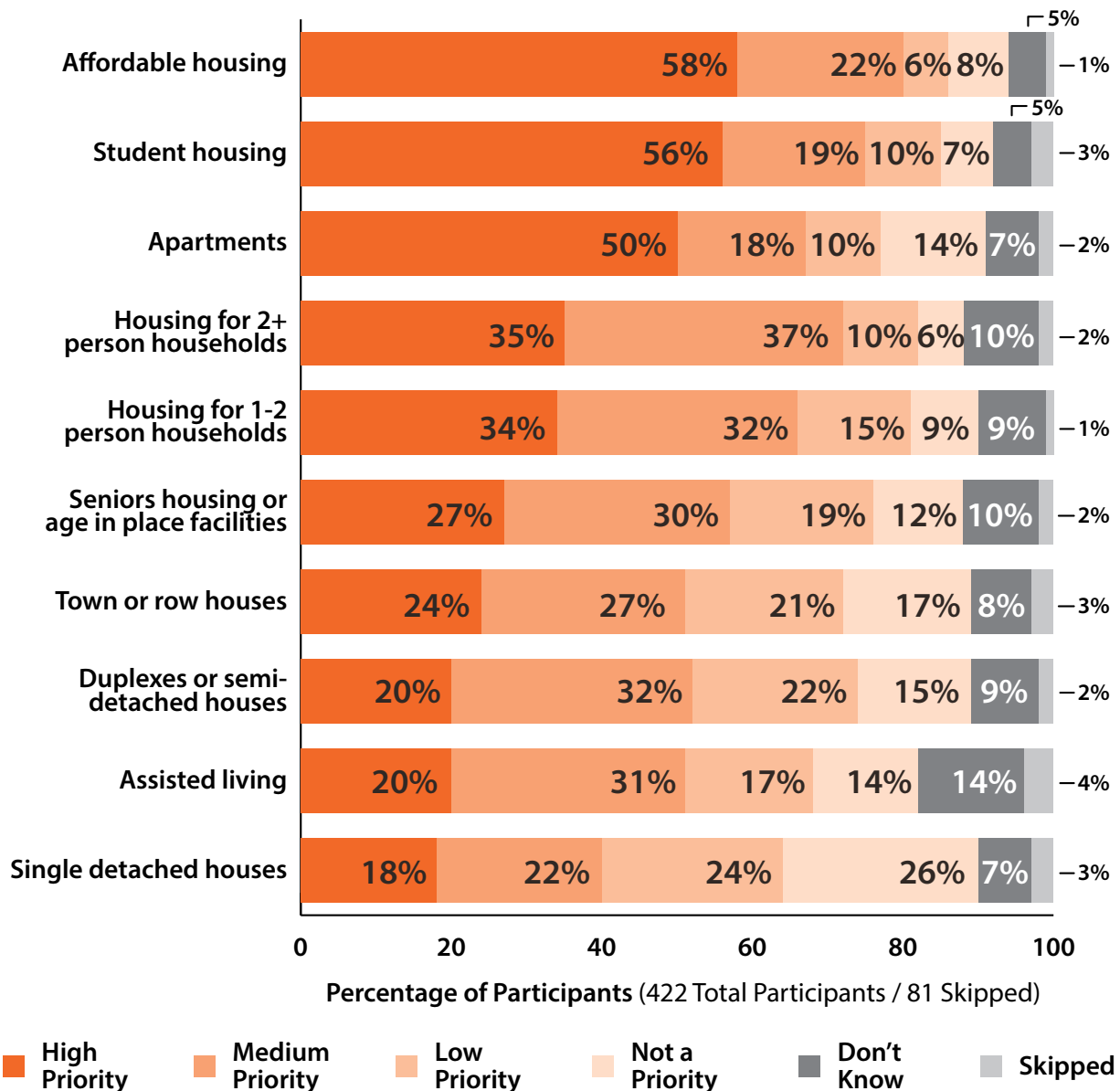
- Wayfinding signage
- More trees, green space, benches, and garbage cans.

Traffic and Safety

- Improved traffic flow
- Lower speed limits for cars
- Traffic calming measures such as speed bumps and narrowing roads
- Incentives for car-pooling
- More roundabouts
- Physical separation of pedestrians from traffic
- More frequent snow clearing and de-icing on roads

What types of housing are needed and should be a priority in your neighbourhood?

45
comments



The top housing option survey participants feel is most needed in the University Area is affordable housing with nearly 81% choosing this as a medium or high priority. Student housing and housing for 2+ person households were also selected as key housing needs in the University Area neighbourhood, each receiving support from 77% and 73% of survey participants respectively as medium or high priority options. Single detached houses received the lowest support with only 21% of participants choosing this type of housing as a medium or high priority.

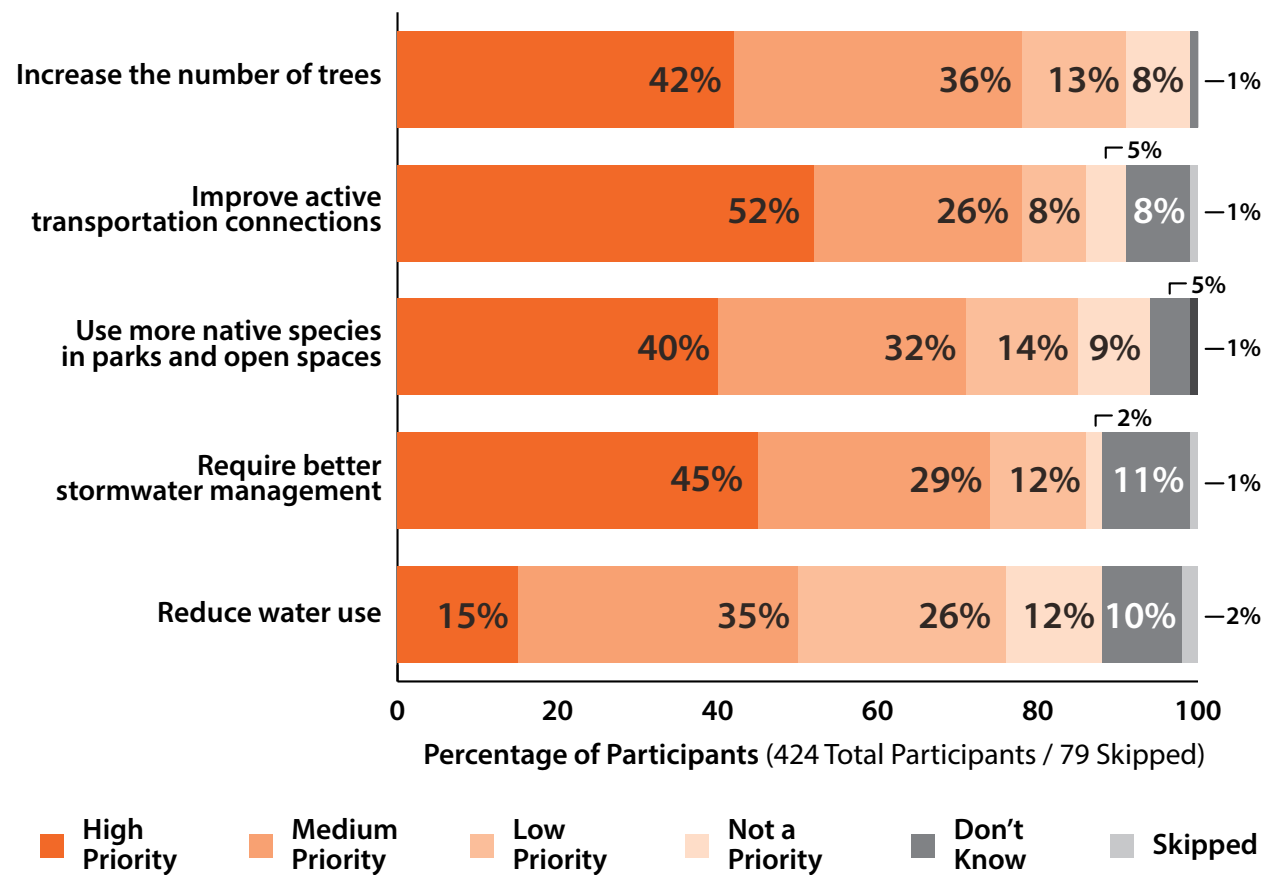


Other ideas proposed include:

- Mixed-use and mixed-density
- 2-4 story multiplexes
- Family-oriented dwellings
- High-rise developments
- Sustainable and eco-friendly housing
- Live-work housing
- Co-operative housing
- Laneway housing, garden/in-law suites and tiny homes
- Townhouses
- Do not concentrate affordable housing

Which of the following environmental and sustainability initiatives should be prioritized in your neighbourhood?

21
comments



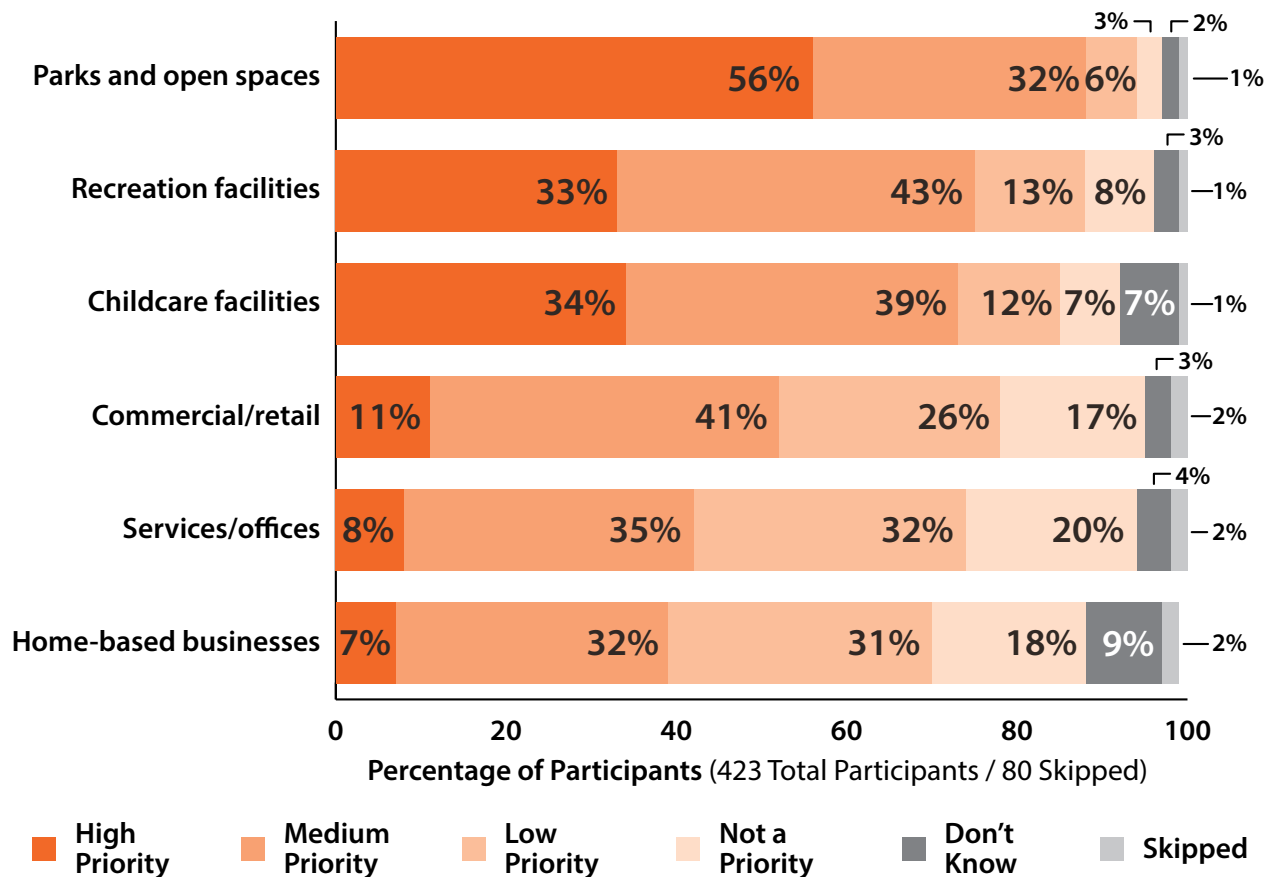
Nearly all the environmental and sustainability initiatives in this list were strongly supported by respondents. Increasing the number of trees and improving active transportation connections were both selected as medium or high priority initiative by 78% of participants. Reducing water use received the least amount of support with 26% choosing this as a low priority.

Other environmental and sustainability initiatives suggested by participants includes:

- More waste bins in high-traffic areas
- Planting and naturalization efforts
- Compost pickup
- Diversify street trees
- Wetland protection
- Green building rules for new development

What types of land uses should be prioritized in your neighbourhood?

152
comments



A combined 89% of survey participants feel that parks and open spaces are a medium or high priority land use for the University Area. Recreation facilities and childcare also received strong combined support from 75% and 72% of participants respectively who feel these are medium or high priority.

The comments indicated strong support for parks and open space land uses that provide protection and enhancement of natural areas and outdoor places for community to gather. Many survey participants highlighted the need for retail and commercial land uses integrated into a walkable neighbourhood, citing the need for groceries and essential daily needs to be located closer to home. Trails and multi-use paths to encourage active transportation in the University Area was also a popular request.



Parks and Open Spaces

- Community gardens and UK-style allotments
- Playgrounds with upgraded equipment
- Spaces for winter activities like skating and sledding
- Community open-air gathering spaces with gazebos and benches
- Educational opportunities with nature in parks
- Art installations, sculptures, and statues in public spaces

Recreational Facilities

- Soccer fields
- A larger recreation center for children
- Facilities at the Canada Games Centre for residents and students

Retail, Commercial & Daily Services

- A full-service grocery store within walking distance
- Corner stores for daily essentials

- Restaurants, pubs, and cafes
- Family-oriented businesses and entertainment zone
- A community market in Churchill Square
- Wellness centre and doctors' offices
- Market / business incubator spaces

Do you have any other suggestions for small improvements that you feel would improve your neighbourhood?

161
comments

Survey participants were invited to suggest additional ideas for improving the University Area neighbourhood. Suggestions reflected many of the key themes shared in other questions of the survey such as improved neighbourhood maintenance and waste collection, more frequent snow clearing on sidewalks, upgrades to bus stops, and enhancing traffic flow with measures like speed bumps and better signage. Participants also emphasized the need for enhanced local amenities such as recreation facilities, parks and green spaces and access to community gardens. The addition of bike lanes and shared-use paths was a common request to promote cycling and reduce traffic congestion.

Parks & Recreation

- Upgrade playgrounds
- Community farm / gardens

Crime & Safety

- Reduce crime / more police
- More community and health services / programs

Cleanliness & Upkeep

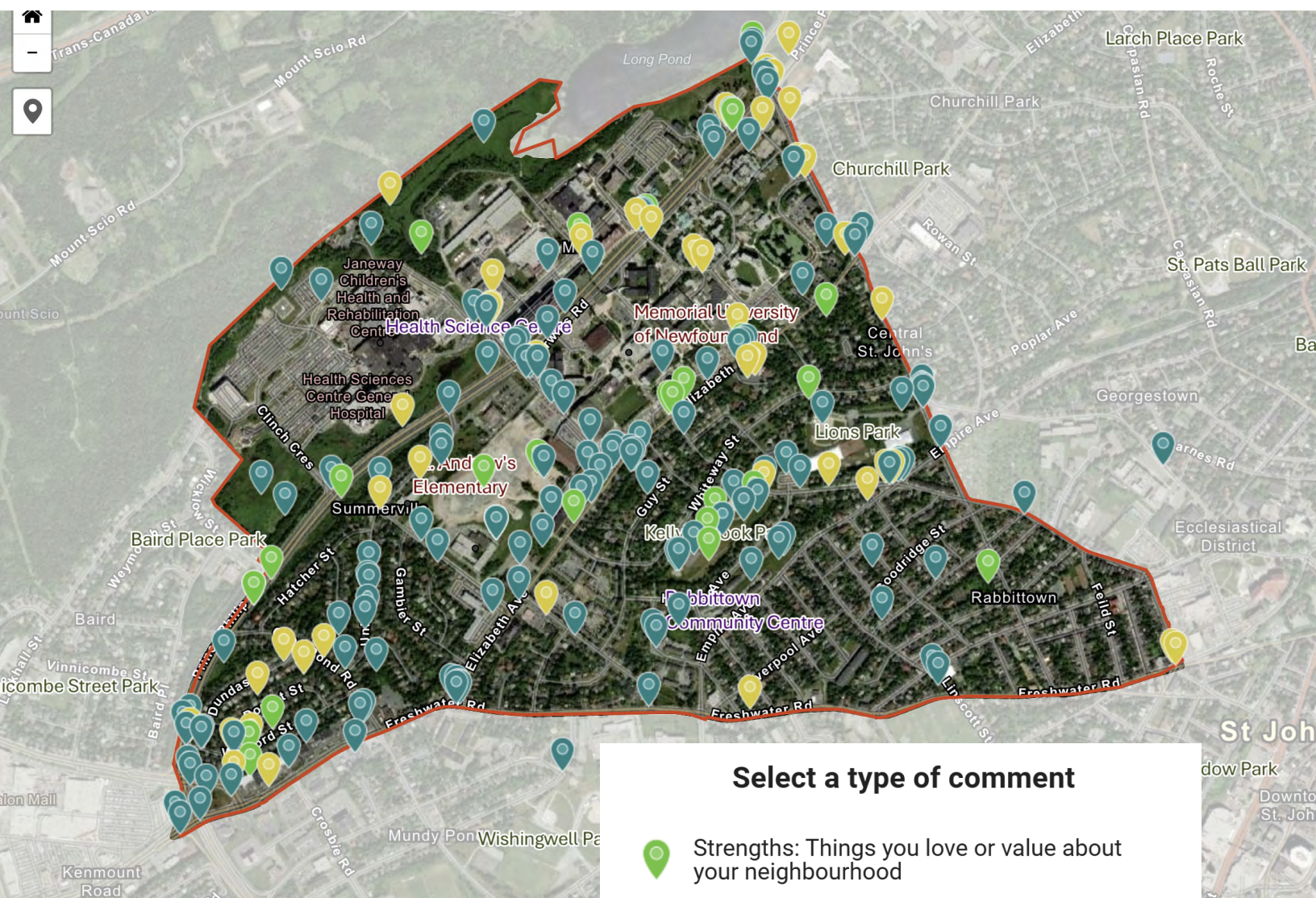
- Enforce property upkeep
- Resolve rat problem
- More street sweeping in the fall
- Landscaping and beautification
- More and nicer garbage cans

Transportation

- More bus stops / routes
- Traffic calming / reduced speed limits
- Snow clearance
- Complete pathway network
- Make sidewalks / trails accessible
- Better lighting of paths and crosswalks

Online Map Findings

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 within and surrounding the University Area as well as the proposed and existing active transportation infrastructure in the neighbourhood.



Strengths, Challenges and Ideas

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

Prince Phillip Drive

- Improve pedestrian safety by adding more pedestrian crossings and decreasing speed limits
- Like the separated pedestrian pathways / connect the pathways to other streets in neighbourhoods
- Add more seating along paths
- Fix intersections / add roundabouts at Thorburn Road, Allandale Road
- Change Wexford Street to Oxen Pond Road
- Traffic is bad between 4:30-5PM
- Add elevated crosswalk on University Ave
- Make Westerland and Allandale Road intersection safer for pedestrians
- Add sensor to intersection at Livyers Loop

Allandale Road

- Add a west lane exit to connect Annandale Road to Morrissey Road
- Create a separated paved path for bikes
- Improve safety at Strawberry Marsh Road and Burtons Pond Road intersections
- Add roundabouts at Elizabeth Avenue

Bonaventure Ave

- Separate pedestrian path from road
- Better pedestrian crossing at Mayor Avenue
- Add roundabouts at Mayor and Empire Avenues

Newtown Road

- Connect pedestrian path to downtown
- Love the new lights at Elizabeth Avenue intersection

Freshwater Road

- Fix traffic and safety at Parade, Harvey, Long's Hill, Lemarchant Road intersection
- Fix the bad parking lot entrances and pedestrian access across them
- Add roundabout with Elizabeth Avenue
- Encourage more mixed use
- Would like to see a convenience store at Oxen Pond Road intersection
- Love Manna

Wexford Street / Dundas Street Area

- Need more garbage cans
- Need better snow clearing / push back snowbanks
- Sidewalks not accessible
- Like access to schools
- Lacking corner store / grocery store
- Lacking community centre
- Improve transit access

- Eliminate parking requirements for development
- Add better signage on trails
- Use empty spaces behind houses for more housing

University Ave

- Enforce speed limits and street parking / reduce street parking
- Do not add bike lanes / add bike lanes
- Make priority for snow clearing
- Fix blind spot turning onto Paton Street

Elizabeth Ave

- Love improvements to the street
- Prioritize pedestrian access

to residences

- Make safer for pedestrians (raised crosswalks)
- Sync lights
- Intensify church lots
- Upzone on both sides / redevelop single family areas
- Create bus priority lanes
- Fix traffic islands / add traffic circle at Westerland Road intersection
- Move bus stop to just east of Halliday Place and provide a crosswalk

Anderson Ave / Rabbittown

- Great area
- Make sidewalks more accessible (fix dips, move utility poles, widen)

- Upzone area
- Need housing by community centre
- Revamp the street mural on Graves Street
- Would like to see a community garden
- Would like to see mixed use / community space across from Colemans

University

- Should be less car oriented
- Like having bus stop in front of University Centre
- Livyers should be an actual loop
- Need to align plan with MUN plans



- Like to see shared use paths on Arctic Avenue, like elevated crosswalk at Kerwin Place and Clinch Cres intersections

Canada Games Area

- Excited about new field facilities and hope they will be open to the public
- Elementary School needs to retain fields or access to the new facilities
- Excited by new apartments on Lamb's Lane
- Potential for intensification at the College

Hospital

- Add bike lanes
- Need ambulance only access route

Pippy Park / Long Pond

- Love the trails

- Would like to see disc golf here

Lions Park

- Keep access / right of way from Whiteway Street
- More soccer fields
- Add dog park
- Fix paths that end at the road

Kelly's Brook Park

- Love this park and new paths
- Support cricket playing
- Update playgrounds
- Stop park trucks driving on the grass
- Add pickleball
- Add disc golf
- Formalize connection to Rabbitown

Empire Ave

- Would like to see more density
- Improve pedestrian safety

Outside of project

- Wish Churchill Square was included
- Need safer pedestrian crossing between confederation building and trail
- Prevent students from crossing in the middle of Bonaventure Ave
- If a new housing development is created on the CRA site, have Wishingwell extend to Empire Avenue



Intensification Areas

The second mapping activity asked respondents to identify where they believed intensification areas in the University Area should be located. Feedback from in-person conversations is included in the summary below.

1. South Elizabeth Avenue

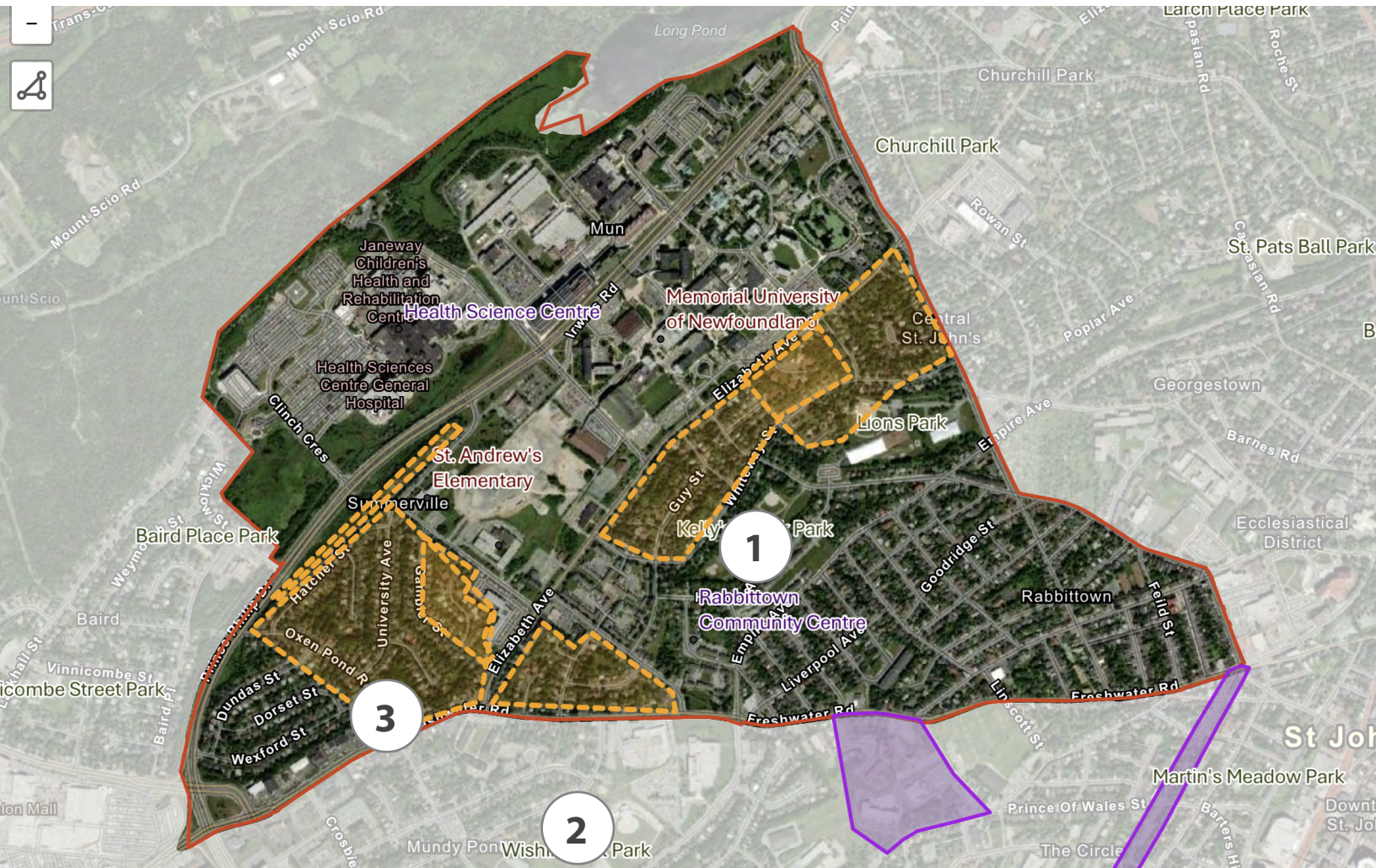
- Desire for infill such as four-plex developments along Elizabeth.
- Concerns about the potential impact on traffic and local infrastructure from increased density

2. Elizabeth & Freshwater

- Lands around the Elizabeth Avenue and Freshwater Road intersection potential areas for intensification

3. Anderson & University

- Expand the existing mixed-use area
- Land between Prince Phillip Drive and University Avenue good area for intensification



Active Transportation

The third mapping activity asked respondents to share their thoughts on the existing and proposed active transportation connections throughout the University Area. Across 30 comments, several key ideas emerged.

1. Finish Prince Philip Drive Improvements

- Prioritize active modes through wider sidewalks, bike lanes, and reducing crossing distances and speeds

2. Connect the University to Downtown

- Provide route connecting campus to downtown

3. More North-South Connections

- Need north-south connections: via Rodney Street, Whiteway Street, Bonaventure Avenue, and Allandale Road
- Need crossing lights, bike lanes, and pedestrian pathways

4. More East-West Connections

- Add bike lanes along Empire Avenue and University Avenue

General Safety Concerns

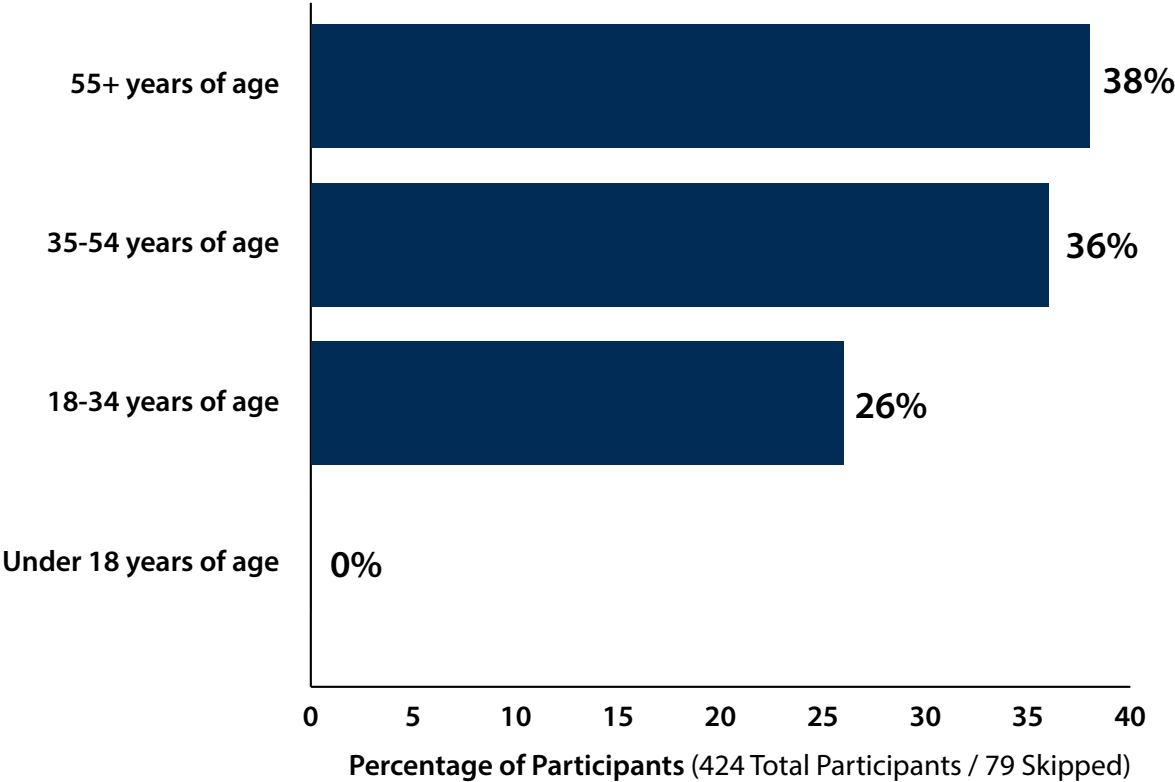
- Fix dangerous intersections



Survey Demographics

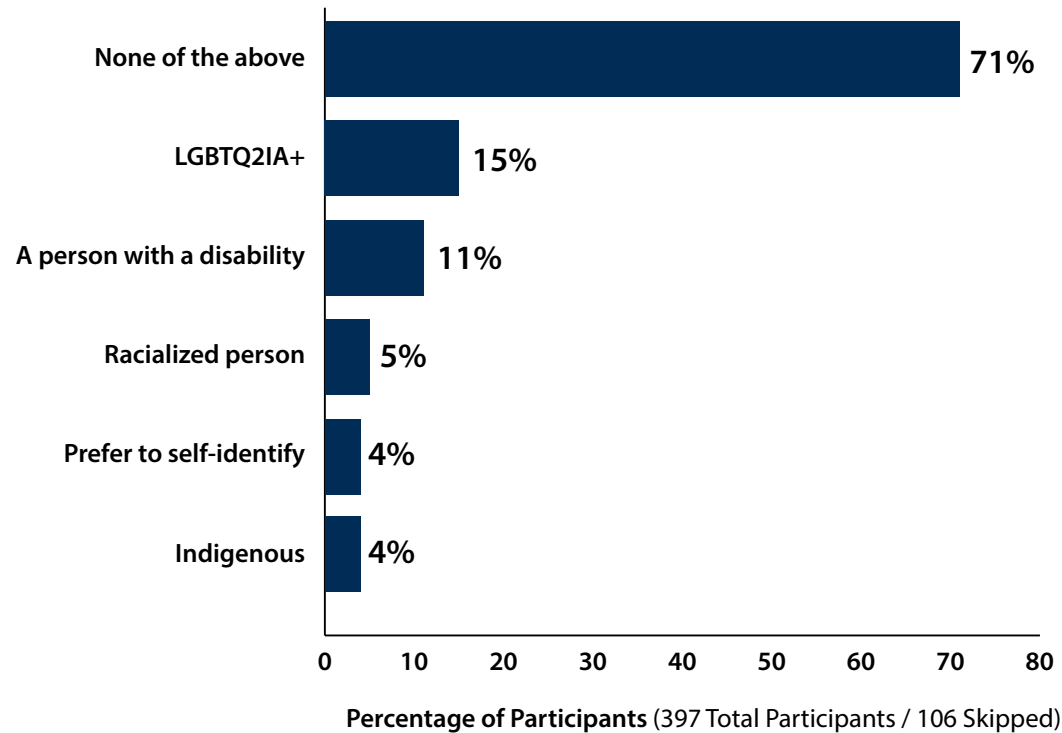
The following demographics information is drawn from the survey results. Respondents were asked to share their demographic information if they were willing. Demographic data helps the project team to better understand who respondents were and to ensure the voices of the whole community are being reflected in engagement.

What is your age bracket?



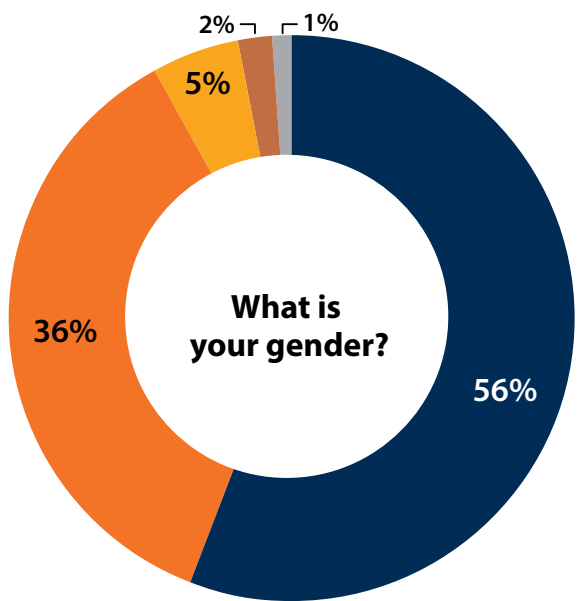
There was a slightly higher proportion of participants in the 55+ age category, closely followed by 36% in the 35-54 year old category. There was only one survey participant under the age of 18.

Do you identify as any of the following?



In addition to the options in the survey, some participants identified as:

- international student
- immigrant
- Newfie
- senior citizen
- patient



There was a higher proportion of survey participants that identified as female.

Percentage of Participants (422 Total Participants / 81 Skipped)

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to share
- Nonbinary
- Prefer to self-identify

Interested Parties Summary

In addition to the broad public engagement opportunities, the project team met with various community organizations and groups representing different interests in both the University Area and Cowan Heights. A general overview presentation was provided to groups about the two 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

- Healthy City Committee
- Affordable Housing Working Group
- Sustainable & Active Mobility Advisory Committee
- Environment & Sustainability Expert Panel
- Building Safer Communities Steering Committee

- Senior's Advisory Committee.
- City of St. John's Youth Engagement Working Group

Organizations

- NL Housing Corporation
- NL Hydro
- NL Schools
- Stella's Circle
- Heritage NL
- Association for New Canadians
- College of the North Atlantic
- Food First NL
- Ordinary Spokes
- Memorial University
- Grand Concourse Authority
- Ultimate NL
- Metrobus
- Advantage St. John's

Across the various organizations, the key topics raised for the University Area were housing, active mobility, transit, land uses and intensification, and Memorial University.

Housing

Interested parties identified an increasing need for affordable rental housing in the University Area, particularly for students and newcomers to Canada. Housing providers are seeing increased demand for smaller units to accommodate 1-2 person households, but current housing supply is primarily older single-detached housing. Providers are investigating opportunities for dividing existing housing or divesting of older housing stock to focus on building denser micro-unit type housing or tiny homes. In addition to the need for rental housing, there is a lack of affordable ownership opportunities and missing middle housing. Due to shifting enrollment and infrastructure priorities at Memorial University, this housing pressure is expected to increase as more students look off-campus for housing.

Through most discussions, multiple groups emphasized that it is important to ensure new housing is human-scale, high quality, and that adequate new amenities are provided to support growth.

Parks & Recreation

Participating groups listed many existing park and open space amenities as assets in the area, particularly Kelly's Brook Park and trail system, and Long Pond. There were suggestions for adding more seating to parks and trails, updating wayfinding signage for the Grand Concourse network, and adding a disc golf course to Kelly's Brook Park. Some groups felt that additional parks should be created in areas where there is less access to these larger park spaces.

Active Transportation

There was a general level of appreciation for the existing shared-use pathway work in the neighbourhood, although a few groups did not think cycling infrastructure was valuable or were concerned about its ongoing upkeep. Most groups expressed a desire to see streets made safer for active transportation, especially crossings at busy intersections. Specifically, there was a desire to see better connections to Mount Scio / Botanical Gardens, between the Marine Institute and the West End of St. John's, and to and from the Health Centre to the rest of the University Area.

Traffic & Transit

There was a consensus among groups that a mode shift is needed from cars to transit and active transportation. Traffic issues have been increasing during peak times and with construction, and have had knock-on impacts for bus and school bus networks. While transit ridership has been increasing, with most new users also new Canadians, students still prefer personal vehicles to transit. To make transit use more viable, interested parties outlined that there is a need for more frequent transit service, transit accessibility, better bus shelters, and overnight service. Importantly, this service and improvements should be regionally coordinated. Operationally, the transit hub at the University is not well-located and would be better suited on Prince Philip Drive. There is also a gap in regular transit service in the southeast corner of the neighbourhood, which only has on-demand transit service.

Land Use & Intensification

There was an interest in seeing more mixed use and higher density development in the University Area, particularly along Elizabeth Avenue, near the Health Centre, and along Freshwater Road. Several institutional sites were also identified as having potential for higher density development. There was a desire to ensure that new density remains human-scaled and focuses on enhancing walkability. Several organizations identified servicing constraints that will be a challenge for redevelopment. There is also a particular need for more walkable amenities and services to support new growth, especially access to grocery stores.

Memorial University

Memorial University (MUN) is a significant part of the University Area. Plans for MUN will have impacts on all of the other subjects mentioned, especially housing, mobility, and neighbourhood intensification. Due to shifting enrollment, infrastructure priorities, and student needs, it is likely that more students will need to find off-campus housing in the coming years, putting further pressure the neighbourhood to accommodate. Lack of parking and increasing traffic congestion are also challenges tied to the university, which is having spillover effects on surrounding areas. There is a need for better connections to MUN by all modes of transportation. Students and staff would also benefit from increased amenities in the neighbourhood, especially access to groceries and daily services. Finally, there is opportunity to share new Canada Games recreation facilities to benefit the broader community.



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 both the University Area and Cowan Heights. The session started with a high level overview of the project and process which then led into a discussion about community needs in each neighbourhoods.

Key themes from the conversation were about the value of natural and green spaces, the significance of including arts and culture in planning, and the significant housing and transportation needs amongst the Indigenous community in both neighbourhoods.

The project team committed to returning to First Light in Phase 2 of engagement on the Plan to present initial plan directions and recommendations for feedback.

Housing & Growth

Housing was a key theme within the discussion with First Light Staff. In the University Area, there is significant need for more affordable and higher-quality rental housing. Staff expressed concerns about predatory landlords and students being taken advantage of or ending up in poor living conditions.

An additional affordability challenge that was noted was the high cost of utilities. There is a need for smaller, newer, and easier to heat homes with better insulation and windows. However, reliance on the private market for this is not enough, especially for accessible housing which is more expensive to build. Providing housing is difficult because it is easier to acquire capital funding, but hard to support ongoing operating costs.

There is also a need for affordable and walkable grocery access in the area. The Farmer's Market is expensive for some people and the other stores are difficult to access without a vehicle.

Arts & Culture

Access to arts and culture was identified as an important quality of life aspect that must be part of neighbourhood planning. There are many art spaces Downtown such as pottery studios and prints shops, but less that are publicly available in the University Area. Often these spaces are also cost-prohibitive to use, like dance studios. There are some opportunities to partner with the AC Hunter Library, Tool

Library, and underutilized community spaces, but not many places that would allow for specific types of art or cultural activities like preparing seal skins.

There is also an identified lack of visible Indigeneity in the area. Juniper House is a good cultural resource, but only for MUN students. First Light Staff identified opportunities for using art throughout the community as a way to start conversations, make Indigenous People feel welcome, and provide education opportunities. There could be citywide initiatives, such as partnering to provide Indigenous art on electrical boxes. There are also opportunities to incorporate medicine gardens, berry bushes, and food forests into new development and landscaping.

Parks & Recreation

Green spaces in the area are very important to quality of life for the community. First Light staff flagged that not a lot of people know that parks and recreation spaces are bookable, or how they can book them. There was a desire to see a reduction in red tape for bookings and more education and awareness building around available facilities. There was also a desire to see parks become better connected in a complete network and for more food spaces to be provided within them and any new developments. First Light Staff also suggested daylighting Kelly's Brook. More spaces like Bannerman Park that can host large outdoor events like Pow Wows would also be appreciated.

Transit

First Light staff noted that it is challenging for students to get home at night from service jobs Downtown because there is no overnight bus service. There is also a need for more frequent bus service to make relying on transit more viable. It would also be helpful to have transit joined with another card such as a student ID, rather than having to carry a separate pass.

Next Steps

Thank you everyone who participated in this engagement. The findings from this phase of engagement will inform the policy ideas and plan content for the Draft Neighbourhood Plan. Phase 2 engagement will take place in the spring of 2025 and focus on confirming key policy decisions implementation initiatives.

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 **engagstjohns.ca/university-area-neighbourhood-plan**.





ST. JOHN'S