TOWN OF CORNWALL

OFFICIAL PLAN AND BYLAW REVIEW

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT: INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

Town of CORNWALL so much to offer...

UPLAND



JULY 2026



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INTRODUCTION



ABOUT THE PROJECT

In February 2026, the Town of Cornwall initiated a process to comprehensively review and update its Official Plan and Zoning & Development Bylaw. These planning documents play a significant role in guiding and managing growth and development in the Town, establishing the policies and regulations that determine how, where, and under what conditions development can occur.

The Town's current documents have been in effect since 2022, and have provided a framework for guiding land use and development within the community. Since these documents were adopted, Cornwall has experienced growth and change, resulting in increased demand for residential, commercial, and industrial lands. Additionally, the town has undertaken major infrastructure and policy initiatives, reflecting a transition toward a more urban, sustainable, and connected future.

HOW WILL THIS REPORT BE USED?

This project began with an extensive initial phase of engagement, which generated feedback from residents and community members. This report summarizes and explores that feedback. Feedback from the initial phase of engagement will be used to inform policy decisions in the draft documents.

The **Official Plan** serves as a high-level policy document that defines the long-term vision for land use and development in Cornwall. It establishes principles for managing growth in a sustainable way, preserving Cornwall's character, and supporting a high quality of life for residents.

The Official Plan looks at different aspects of life in the community, including (but not limited to) housing, economic development, infrastructure, sustainability, climate change, transportation, and community culture.

Official Plans are mandated under the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) and must align with the *Planning Act*.

The Official Plan informs the **Zoning and Development Bylaw**, which puts the vision, goals, and policies into action through specific regulations that have to do with development activities. The Bylaw sets out things like zoning, permitted uses, standards for development, and performance standards, among other things. These regulations are intended to protect public health and safety, enhance community aesthetics, and promote overall community well-being.

PROJECT TIMELINE



WHAT WE DID



WHAT WE DID

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Hearing from residents and stakeholders is a critical part of the planning process. Community feedback gathered during the initial phase of engagement allows the project team to better understand what key issues and opportunities are important to the people who live in and frequently visit Cornwall. Recognizing this, the project included extensive engagement at the outset. The project team hosted a series of in-person and online events and activities in May and June 2026, where participants were invited to share their perspectives and insights on land use and their vision for the future of Cornwall.

HOW WE ENGAGED

Community Pop-ups

The project team hosted three “pop-ups” around Cornwall to be able to engage with community members where they are at and talk with people who may not typically attend a community meeting. The team “popped-up” outside the Independent Grocery Store, at the Village Green Brewery, and at the weekly Seniors Lunch hosted by the Town.

The project team interacted with more than 100 community members across all of the pop-up events.

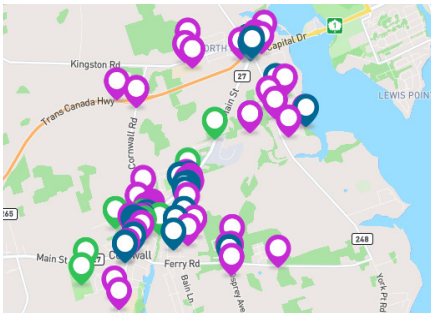
Community Meetings

Community members were invited to attend a community meeting, either in-person or online. These sessions included a presentation that introduced the project, described planning and why we are doing the project, shared background information about the Town (including information about the population, economy, and housing), and shared opportunities to participate in the planning process.

Approximately 15 people attended the community meetings.

Online Survey and Interactive Map

An online survey and interactive map were available for community members to share current challenges and concerns, as well as their vision for the future of Cornwall. Online activities were open from May 28 to June 28, 2026. The survey received 93 responses, and 77 comments were added to the interactive map.



Stakeholder Conversations

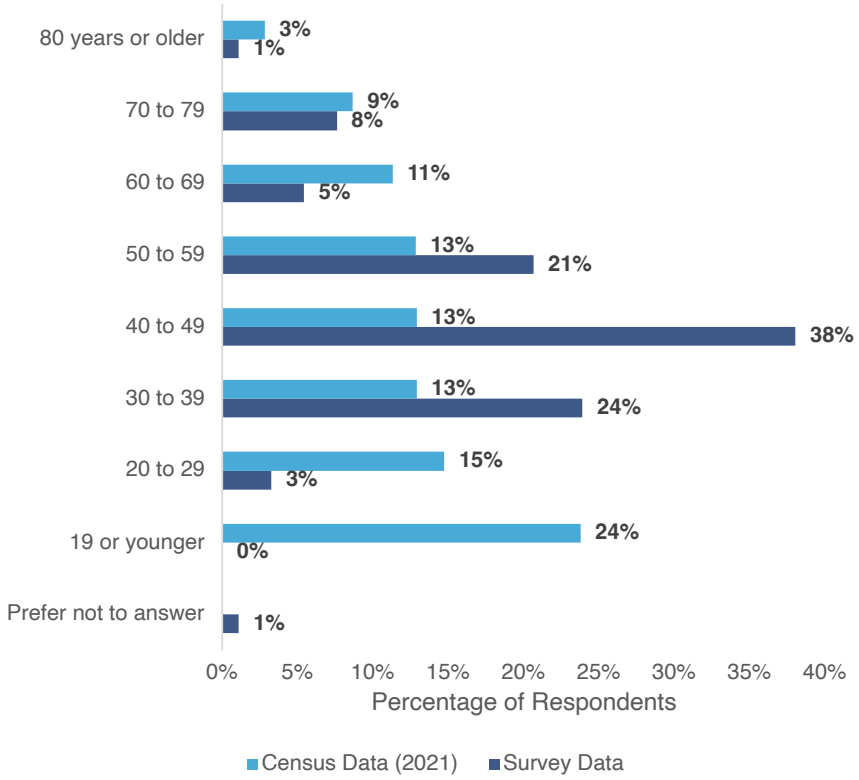
An email was sent out to key stakeholders announcing the launch of the project. Stakeholders were invited to participate in the online engagement activities or reach out for a one-on-one conversation with a member of the project team.

WHO WE HEARD FROM

It is important to understand the degree to which survey responses represent the general population. This can help us interpret the results and account for over- or under-represented demographics. Where possible, we have compared the demographic profile of the public survey respondents to the most recently available census data to determine if the feedback we received was representative of residents in the Town.

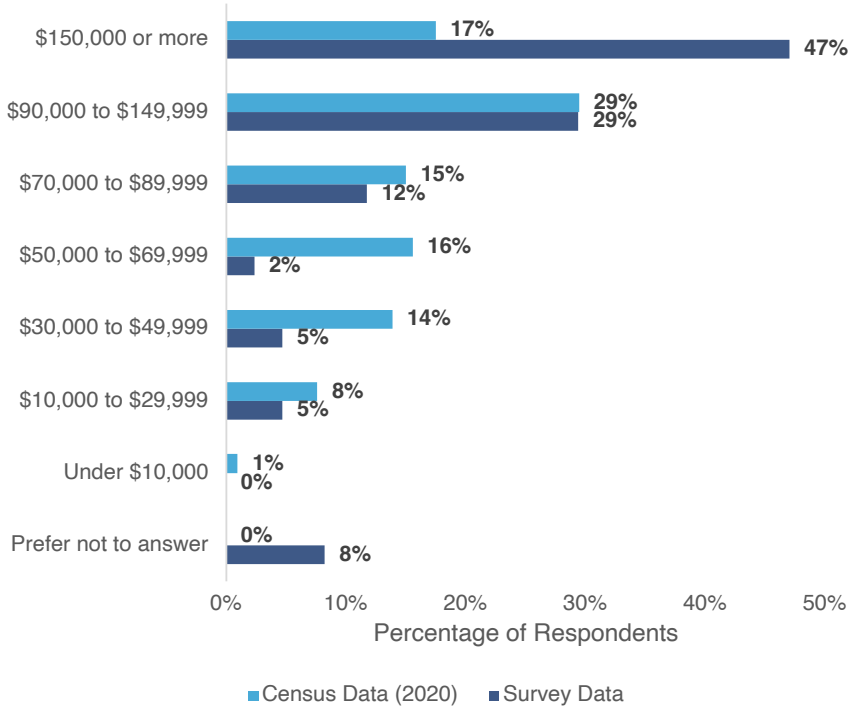
Age

The survey had no respondents under the age of 19, leaving the voices of youth in the community underrepresented in the survey. Young adults (aged 20 to 29) were also underrepresented. Respondents between the ages of 30 to 59 were overrepresented, with respondents aged 40 to 49 representing nearly 40% of all survey responses.



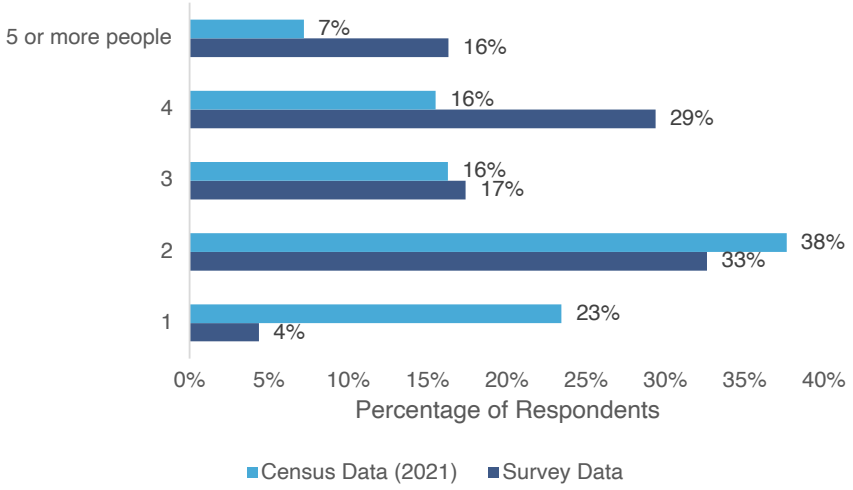
Household Income

The survey had substantial underrepresentation from households earning less than $70,000 and an overrepresentation of households earning more than $150,000.



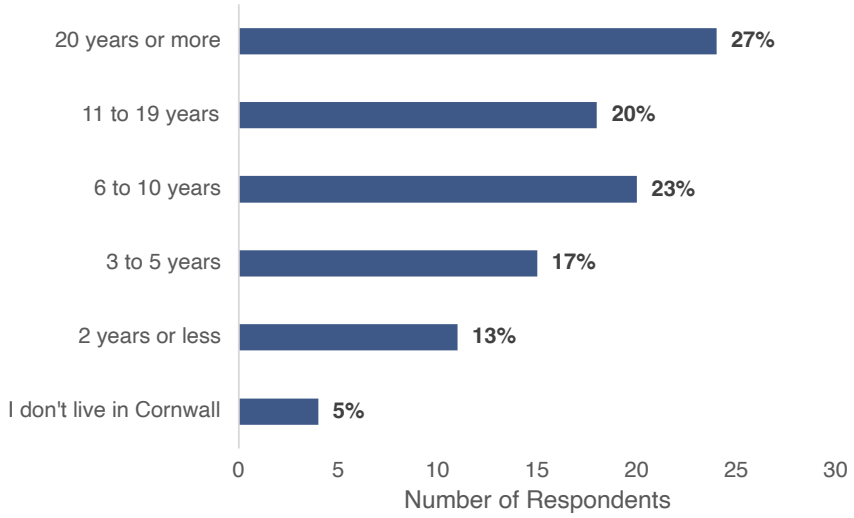
Household Size

The survey saw an underrepresentation from single-person households. Representation from 3 person households in the survey was relatively close to the general population of Cornwall. Households with 4 or more people were overrepresented.

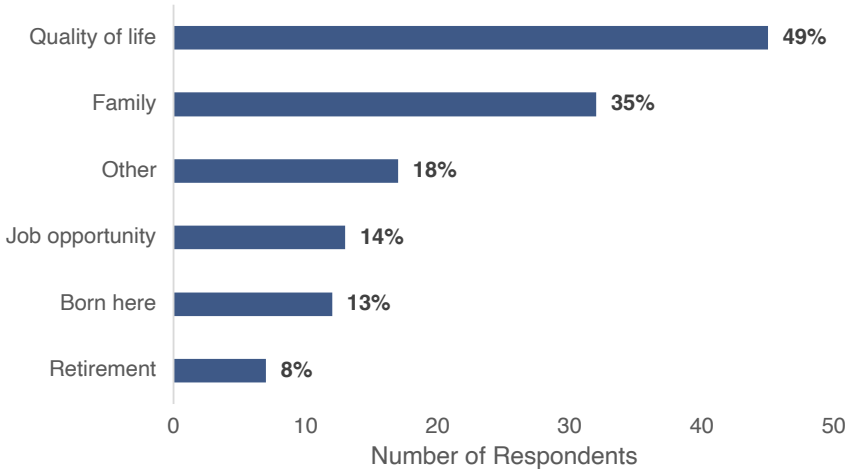


Community Connection

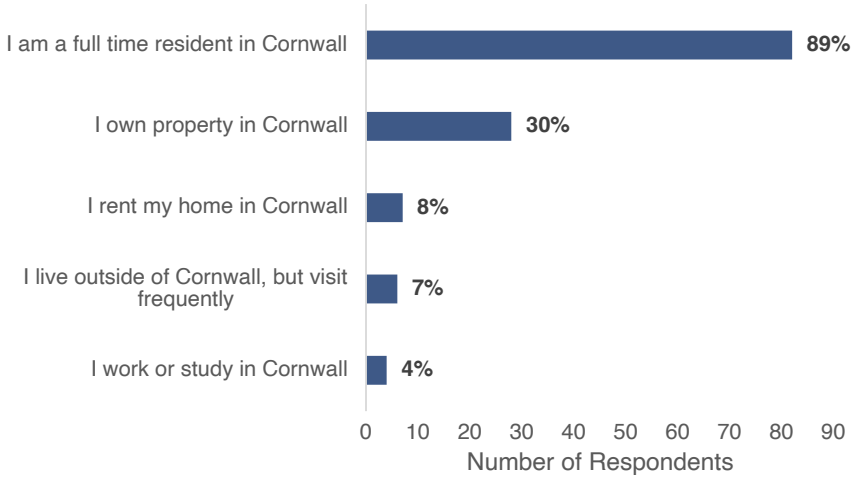
Most survey respondents (70%) have lived in the community for more than 6 years.13% of respondents are relatively new to the Town, living there for less than 2 years.



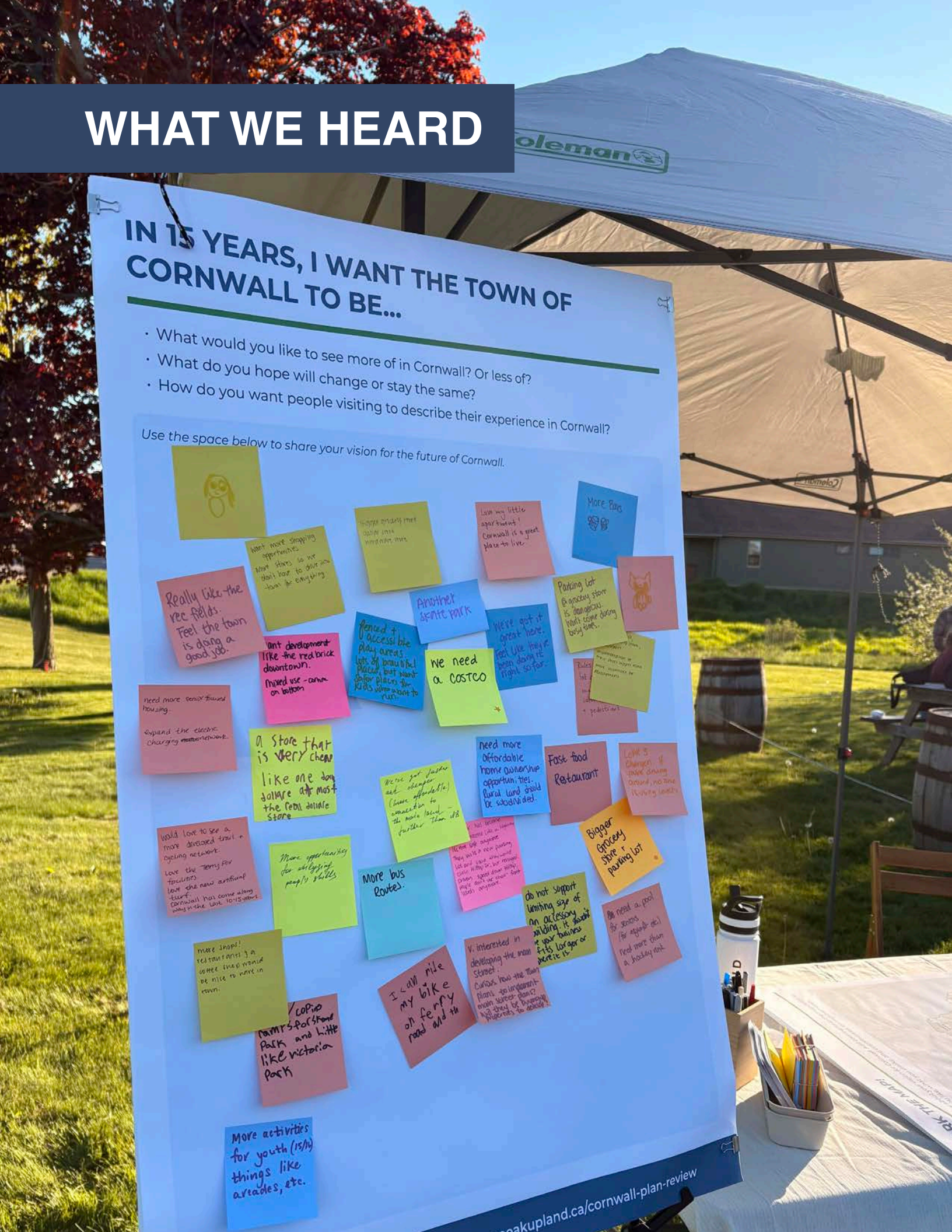
When asked what brought them to Cornwall, nearly half of survey respondents said quality of life, followed by family (35%).



When asked about their connection to Cornwall, 89% said they are a full time resident. 30% of survey respondents own property in Cornwall, and 8% rent in Cornwall. 7% of survey respondents live outside of Cornwall, but are frequent visitors.



WHAT WE HEARD



WHAT WE HEARD

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Throughout our engagement activities, we heard firsthand how much residents and visitors alike love being a part of Cornwall. Participants shared a deep appreciation for the town's scenic rural character, its proximity to Charlottetown (without actually being in the city), and the quality of recreation facilities and activities. Community members also expressed sincere gratitude to the Town for actively seeking community input on this project.

Looking to the future, there is a clear interest for thoughtful growth and development. Top priorities we heard through all of the engagement activities include:

- **Become an independent, self-sufficient community:** Residents are frustrated about the need to travel outside of Cornwall for basic needs and family activities. Participants hope that one day they will not need to drive to Charlottetown as frequently.
- **Improved infrastructure and amenities:** Many residents compared Cornwall to Stratford and the services they offer. Survey respondents would like to see similar services, stores, and restaurants in Cornwall.
- **A walkable community:** Many survey respondents shared their desire for more sidewalks and trails. They do not want Cornwall to be a town that people drive through, but somewhere that is easily walkable with continuous active transportation infrastructure. Along with walking, there is a strong call to expand the transit service in Cornwall.
- **Intentional Growth:** There is a desire for growth and development to be balanced and thoughtfully planned. Many residents emphasized the need to protect the town's scenic agricultural land and natural green spaces.
- **Improved Accessibility:** We heard a general need for improved accessibility in Cornwall, whether it be accessible housing or accessible playgrounds for children with disabilities.

The most common words residents used to describe the Town today were:

1. Growing
2. Safe
3. Friendly
4. Community
5. Quiet
6. Family-friendly

When asked how living in Cornwall has met their expectations on a scale of 1 to 10, respondents gave an average answer of 6.93.



According to survey respondents, these are the top qualities that make Cornwall a great place to live:

- Close to Charlottetown
- Good place to raise a family
- Safe community
- Small-town feel
- Quiet neighbourhoods
- Schools and educational opportunities

Top challenges residents have:

- Limited shopping, dining, and entertainment
- Lack of sidewalks, trails, or bike lanes
- Need for more community amenities and recreation facilities
- Pressure from rapid growth and development

HOUSING

As Cornwall continues to grow, housing has emerged as a critical topic of discussion among residents. Feedback from all engagement activities highlights the challenges of transitioning from a quiet town with a rural feel to a rapidly expanding suburb. While there is excitement for the amenities that come with growth, residents shared concerns about maintaining the affordability, safety, and accessibility of Cornwall's housing market.

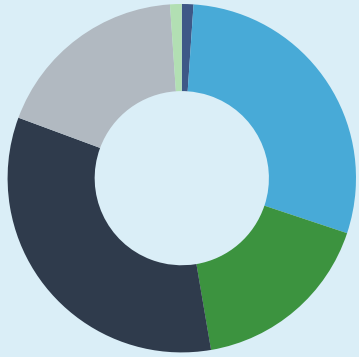
In general, residents expressed a relatively neutral stance on the availability of housing, with the majority of survey responses ranging between housing being somewhat easy to find to somewhat difficult. However, we also heard a critical demand for senior housing and long-term care facilities so aging residents do not have to leave Cornwall.

We heard frustrations about the lack of rental options in Cornwall. There is a shortage of affordable rental housing within the town, and even less that is accessible or appropriate for aging in place.

With the rapid growth happening in Cornwall, residents shared their anxiety over rising housing costs. We heard concerns that there will be no genuinely affordable homes for young families trying to establish roots in the community.

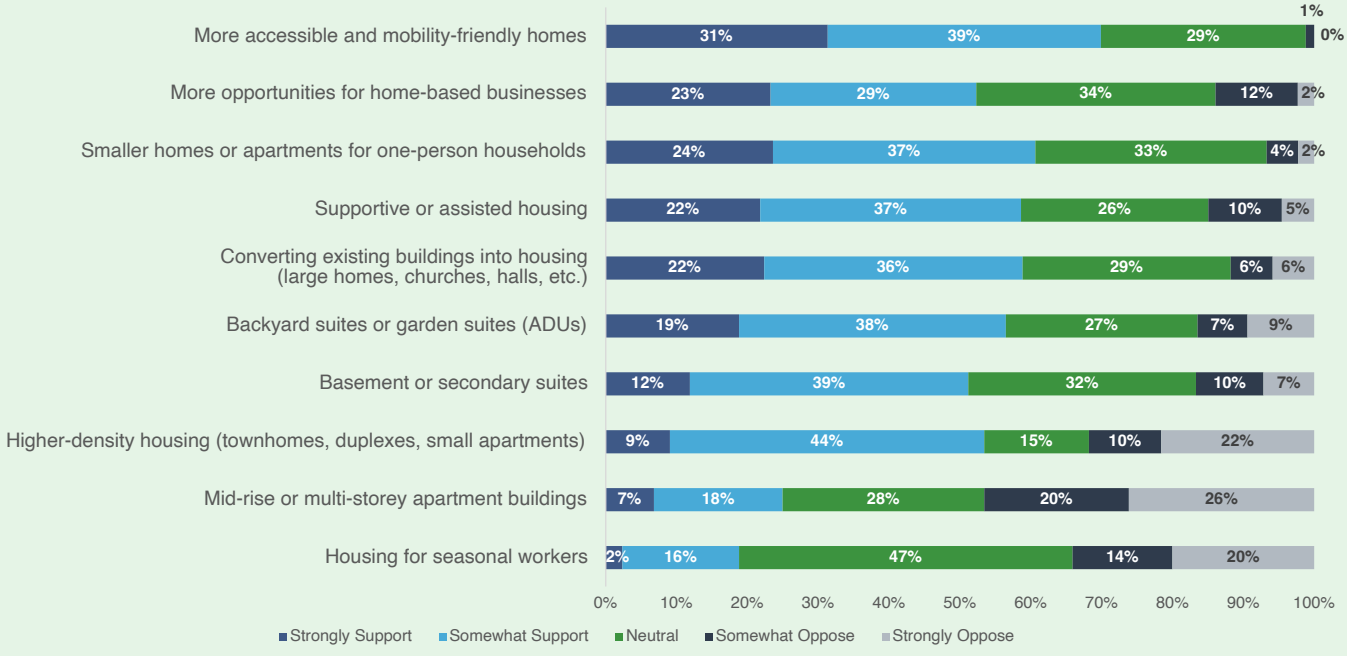
To help address the limited housing options, residents shared support for more diverse housing options, including tiny homes and secondary suites on existing properties. However, some residents shared strong opinions about maintaining single-family neighbourhoods.

When survey participants were asked how affordable they consider housing to be in Cornwall, 33% responded with "somewhat unaffordable; housing is a financial strain for many people".



- Very affordable
- Somewhat affordable
- Neutral
- Somewhat unaffordable
- Very unaffordable
- Not sure / No answer

Survey responses to the question "What is your level of support for the following approaches to improving housing availability and affordability in Cornwall?"



TRANSPORTATION AND RECREATION

Cornwall's natural beauty and active lifestyle are among its greatest assets, yet the way residents move around town remains heavily reliant on personal vehicles. Currently, the vast majority of community members primarily travel around Cornwall by personal vehicle, either driving alone or as a passenger. While 41% of survey respondents noted they can access amenities they need for daily life by walking, biking, or rolling, a significant portion still choose to drive. The top barriers preventing residents from choosing active transportation are that destinations feel too far, there is a lack of appropriate infrastructure (such as sidewalks and bike lanes), and driving is simply more convenient.

Residents also expressed growing frustration with traffic and congestion, especially with bottlenecks at the town's roundabouts, and noted a strong desire for better public transit options, including more routes and more frequent service. Several comments were left on the interactive map sharing concerns about congestion at the roundabouts and asking for improvements including safer pedestrian crossings and more signage to prevent transport trucks heading into residential neighbourhoods.

There is a strong call for a more connected trail system, new sidewalks, and more crosswalks to safely connect growing subdivisions to key destinations. Comments on the interactive map specifically mention connecting the Primrose and Elliot Park subdivisions.

We heard a desire for general road improvements, such as adding 4-way stops or enhancing intersections, to improve road safety for all road users, whether driving, walking, biking, or rolling.

Residents also want to see the town move away from car-centric designs and focus on creating a distinct downtown with a vibrant and visually exciting Main Street. We heard comments across all engagement activities asking for the Town to support more businesses and services along Main Street to create a downtown core.

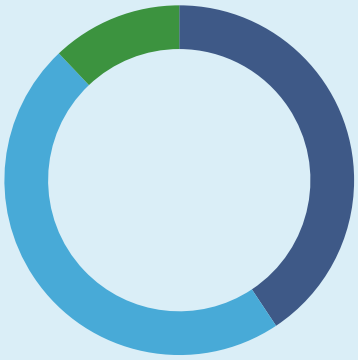
Many residents shared their appreciation for the town's existing recreation facilities, including the Terry Fox Sports Complex, Dream Park, and the APM Centre. However, many noted that these facilities are at capacity and there is a need for more facilities, including a second ice surface, more indoor facilities, and more youth- and family-focused amenities (such as a splash pad).

The combination of safer and more connected active transportation routes, a vibrant downtown corridor, and expanded recreation facilities would all contribute to helping Cornwall residents stay active, connected, and local.

To make walking, biking, and rolling a more convenient option, survey respondents suggested:

- improving the pedestrian crossings at roundabouts
- creating a buffer between pedestrians and motor vehicles along Main Street
- filling gaps in the existing trail network
- installing more pedestrian lighting along trails and roads
- installing end-of-trip bike infrastructure (such as bike parking) at key destinations

When survey respondents were asked if they can access the amenities they need for daily life by using active transportation, 41% said yes, and 47% said no.





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

A central theme throughout the engagement phase was the clear desire to transform Cornwall into a more independent, economically vibrant community. Residents expressed a strong appetite for local commercial growth, specifically calling for more diverse dining and retail options, including practical additions like a hardware store, dollar store, and clothing shops.

This push for local commerce is also closely tied to the town's tourism and events potential. Interactive Map participants noted that Cornwall is losing out on significant tourism dollars because of the lack of accommodations. When there are events in or near the town, visitors are forced to stay outside of Cornwall (often in Charlottetown), taking their spending on food, entertainment, and hospitality with them. Residents strongly advocated for the development of a local hotel, more sit down and fast food restaurants, and shopping options. These improvements would not only allow Cornwall to capture these tourism dollars, but also generate meaningful jobs for local residents.

As the town considers how to expand its commercial footprint, the community is navigating a lively debate regarding large-scale corporate retail, such as Costco. The prospect of bringing a Costco to Cornwall was a major talking point both online and in person. While many residents are eager to welcome larger retailers to the area, others are concerned how "big-box stores" will impact the town's character. Balancing this desire for commercial convenience with the preservation of local identity will be a key priority for future planning.

INFRASTRUCTURE

As the town is rapidly growing, some participants shared concerns about the Town's ability to manage the increased demand on water and sewer systems.

We also heard a desire for more developer regulations. Survey participants shared their concerns about drainage issues in new subdivisions and private roads not being properly maintained.

ENVIRONMENT

Several residents shared their concerns about the need to protect the town's natural assets. Often times new development is coming at the cost of losing important farmland and greenspaces. Participants would like to see new policies to help balance building new development and protecting agricultural lands.

We also heard a desire to require developers to incorporate more trees and green space into developments to help maintain the rural character of the town.



POLICY AND PLANNING PRIORITIES

Throughout the engagement activities, we saw how engaged and invested in the town Cornwall residents are. This high level of civic engagement also came through in the survey results; more than half of the survey respondents noted that they have previously engaged with the Town regarding land use and development matters, demonstrating a strong foundation of community involvement.

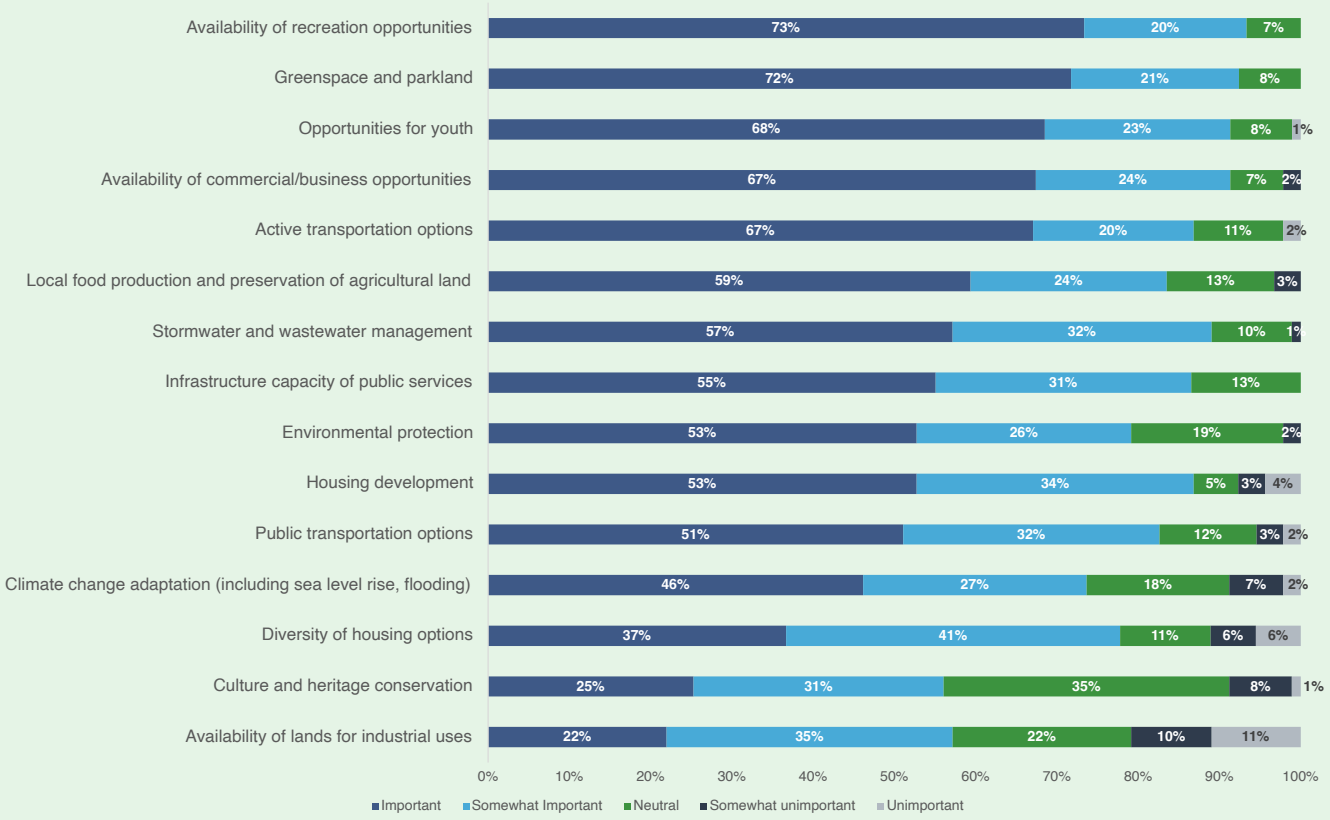
When asked about the town's current planning and development rules, a large segment of the community expressed comfort with the status quo, while others feel the current regulations can be confusing, feel out of date, or are being inconsistently applied.

A prominent concern among residents is that development is happening too quickly without a clear, phased plan. Participants said they would like to see thoughtful zoning to accommodate a variety of housing types, with appropriate buffers around residential neighbourhoods.

The top 3 priorities residents want to see addressed through this project:

- Economic development and business opportunities
- Greenspace and parkland
- Infrastructure and Public Services

Survey responses to the question "How important is it that the Official Plan addresses the following issues?"



KEY DIRECTIONS



KEY DIRECTIONS

Key directions are preliminary ideas for how the Official Plan and Zoning and Development Bylaw could be adjusted to respond to the ideas and concerns we received during initial engagement. They will be used to help guide initial discussions with Town decision-makers regarding the new planning documents. The outcome of those discussions will help shape the first drafts of the Official Plan and Zoning and Development Bylaw, which will then be brought back out for community review and adjustments.



Provide a spectrum of housing options, including affordable, accessible, and aging in place housing

- Review residential zone standards to ensure they enable housing designs from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Housing Catalogue (more information on the Catalogue can be found here: https://www.housingcatalogue.cmhc-schl.gc.ca)
- Consider allowing smaller lots and/or two units per lot in all new residential subdivisions, while maintaining current zoning requirements for existing Single-Detached Residential (R1) subdivisions.
- Allow larger apartment dwellings as a permitted use in the Multiple Unit Residential (R4) Zone (rather than as a special permit use), with specific massing and design requirements to manage their impact on surrounding areas.
- Replace the Planned Unit Residential Development (PURD) Zone with specific design standards that provide more predictability for the community and the developer.
- Investigate options for development regulations that incentivize or encourage units that support “aging in place”.



Enhance active transportation

- Require sidewalks or active transportation trails for all new subdivisions.
- Establish requirements for the provision of secure bicycle parking for new commercial, institutional, recreational, and multi-unit residential development.
- Provide policy support to establish an active transportation plan for Cornwall, building on the work of the Town of Cornwall Recreation Plan, 2019.
- Plan for parks, recreation and community facilities as Cornwall grows.



Encourage development that provides a full range of day-to-day services within Cornwall

- Establish a large-format commercial zone for the areas of Cornwall Road leading to the Trans-Canada Highway, with form-based requirements to manage the aesthetics and connectivity of such development.
- Review the standards of the General Commercial (C1) Zone to ensure this zone is doing all it can to enable and encourage local businesses, a range of services, and an attractive and walkable Main Street.



Provide a framework for thoughtful development

- Establish high level policies for prioritizing the order in which undeveloped lands within the town are considered for development.
- Explore opportunities to better align growth and future development with infrastructure capacity.
- Update the planning documents for clarity, precision, and ease-of-use.



Explore environmental protections

- Explore policy options for the preservation of Cornwall's natural assets, including coastal areas, watersheds and tree canopy.
- Examine appropriate policy options for the preservation of agricultural lands within the Town's boundary.



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