



Subject: *Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy - Survey Results*
To: CAO for Planning Advisory Committee, April 16, 2024
Date Prepared: April 10, 2024
Related Motions: PAC23(59) and C23(383)
Prepared by: Debbie Uloth, Project Planner
Approved by: John Woodford, Director of Planning and Development

Summary

As part of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy staff have undertaken a community survey to help determine how residents of the Uniacke area would like to see their community grow. The survey was very successful with 470 residents responding.

A summary of the survey results has been included in this staff report.

Financial Impact Statement

Funding for the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy has been included in the 2024/2025 Budget Cycle.

Recommendation

Accept the staff report and authorize staff to hold an open house and public information meeting in Mount Uniacke.

Recommended Motion

Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- *Accept the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy Survey Results report; and*
- *Authorize staff to hold an open house and public information meeting in the community of Mount Uniacke.*

Background

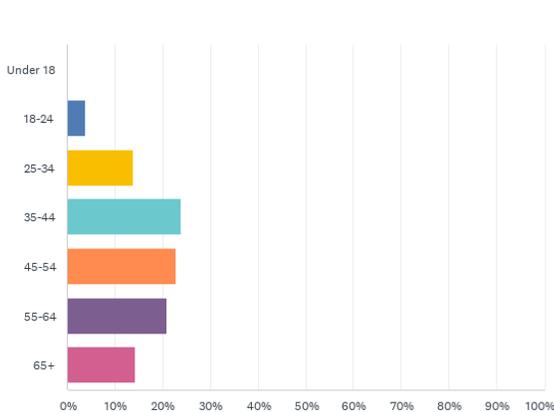
As part of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy, a community online survey was undertaken for one-month from January 23 to February 23, 2024. Over 10% of the population in the study area responded to the survey, which is considered a good response rate according to SurveyMonkey. The results have a margin of error of +/- 5%.

Planning staff have tabulated the survey responses into sections based on the survey questions and have determined some general themes from each question. Detailed responses may be found attached in Appendix A.

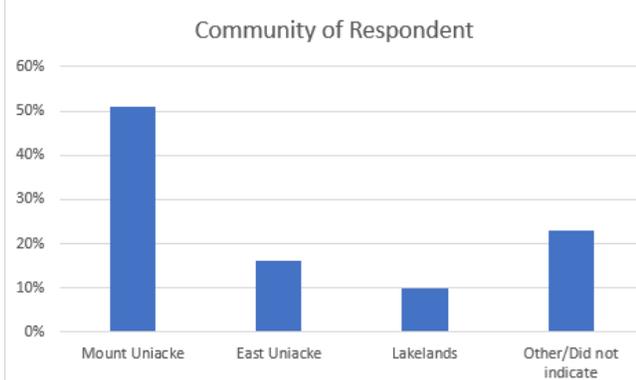
Uniacke Survey Results

The majority of the 470 residents who responded to the Uniacke Land Use Survey were from the community of Mount Uniacke. Several residents responded from outside of the study area or who did not indicate their location. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to over 65 years and represented a good age range of residents.

Q2 How old are you?



Community of Respondent



The majority of the questions in the survey were open-ended allowing residents to provide detailed responses. The following are highlights from each of the questions. Comprehensive results from each question can be found attached as Appendix A.

Q3: WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT LIVING IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

There were some very specific trends in the responses for question three. In summary, many residents indicated that they liked living in their community for the following reasons:

- Quiet
- Peaceful
- Country living
- The people - a sense of community
- Close to amenities in Halifax and Sackville
- Nature, woods, and trails
- Privacy

Below are some of the responses to Question 3:

- *Country feel, within a close commute to the city. Our parks and lakes.*

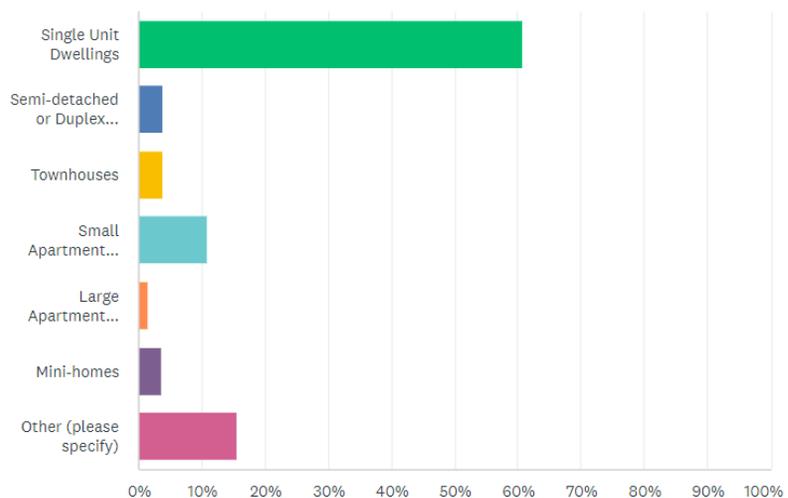
- *Very close to nature. Used to be quiet, but is definitely losing some of the quiet with the new developments. I am all for development but it should be SMART. Providing housing and services and building up the town of Mt Uniacke without trampling over the natural areas that surround it.*
- *It is a rural bedroom community where residents and children can freely enjoy the experiences of nature free from industrial filth and encumbrances.*
- *It's small, with some really great local places to visit (we love Withrows when it's open & we love all of the trails & lakes around). We are very outdoorsy so we take advantage of Uniacke House, Bell Park, Long Lake, etc. It's the perfect overall location!*
- *We have both the privacy of country life but also easy access to amenities through businesses like Eddy's and Withrows.*

Q4: WHAT TYPES OF HOUSING WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN THE COMMUNITY?

It is not surprising that the majority of residents who responded to the survey want to see single-unit dwellings to be the dominant form of housing. The Uniacke area has traditionally had low-density housing with large lots to allow for on-site services. However, there are residents in the area who recognize that alternative forms of housing are required, 40% of respondents selected an alternative form of housing other than single-unit dwelling. Approximately, 11%

What types of new housing would you like to see in the community?

Answered: 388 Skipped: 82



indicated that they would like to see small apartment buildings, up to a maximum of 8 units, and another 15% of the respondents indicated “other” form of housing, which based on the comments, was either senior housing, mixture of all housing types, or no new housing. The least selected housing option was large apartment buildings (24-units maximum).

Q5: WHAT TYPES OF HOUSING DO YOU THINK ARE NEEDED IN YOUR COMMUNITY FOR THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF LIFE?

It is not surprising that many respondents to the survey indicated that senior housing or housing to allow for downsizing is required. Much of the current housing stock in Mount Uniacke are single unit dwellings and residents want the option to stay in their community as they age. New housing options could allow for smaller footprints, with single level living. Plus, new medium-density housing could provide smaller apartment buildings and townhouses to create a more compact community form and allow for more connections for those living in the homes.

Below are some of the responses to Question 5:

- *Affordable housing \$1000 a month and under for all stages of life.*
- *I personally would like to downsize to a 1 level home, no steps. This would allow me to live in my home longer. There are lots of seniors who want to downsize but there are no options in this community.*
- *Complex for elderly providing independent living as well as different levels of care.*
- *Affordable housing for younger persons and maybe accessible apartments for seniors to stay in the community but can't look after the property anymore.*
- *There are no apartment buildings here. Young people need to leave here to find an apartment.*
- *I'm sure I am in the minority here but higher density low cost homes. I want to preserve nature here and not having sprawl will help ensure that. We also need to have more homes without basements due to the increased risk of flooding.*

Q6: WHAT COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES WOULD YOU WANT IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Question six mirrored the results of the recreation survey that was completed by the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department. Most respondents to the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy Survey indicated that they would like to have a recreation centre built in Mount Uniacke that could have a rink, pool, sports courts, and space for other activities. Some respondents indicated that they would like to have a new elementary school and that they would like to have high school students stay in the community instead of being bused to West Hants. Many respondents indicated that doctors' offices and other medical facilities would be welcome. Sidewalks were also mentioned as well as a larger library. There was also a portion of the respondents who think that the community services and facilities in Mount Uniacke are adequate and nothing new is required.

Below are some of the responses to Question 6:

- *As the community grows, so does its need for more facilities. First and foremost, we need a new community doctor in our doctors office. Someone who would be able to take people who live in this community who don't have a family doctor as a first priority and then people outside the community second. We have the space, we need someone in it. And if for some reason the space isn't available, we need a larger facility. Secondly, with the currently approved development we need a high school in the community. With additional developments to come the Windsor High School is quickly going to be overpopulated. Third plans for a high school, should probably be a sporting complex / community center. The current library building is suitable for future growth by moving the RCMP dispatch into the new community center complex.*
- *Schools for all grades, not just elementary. Emergency services to suit the population size, the existing fire services seem to be in good shape. Community and recreational center spaces are needed.*
- *None. There is no money for extras as taxes increase every year and there is never much seen for it.*
- *Community/Recreational Facility. Particularly Pickleball courts which are a huge sports demand now for all ages.*
- *We could use sidewalks, a skating rink, a community hall and a high school a pool would be good in the rink as well.*
- *Library, health clinics and services, school, community centre, local shops with local products. Future bus services to city transit hubs would be ideal.*
- *Fitness centre, perhaps built within a community centre such as the Gordon Snow centre, for example.*

Q7: WHAT TYPES OF PARKS AND TRAILS WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Many of the residents feel that the existing trails and parks are great resources. Some respondents indicated that they would like to have accessible trails built, with limited elevation changes and smooth travel ways. Other trail types identified by respondents include biking, motorized vehicles, and bridle paths. Off-leash dog parks and trails are important to those who responded. Residents also indicated that they would like to walk along Highway 1 and that the road should have a sidewalk and the traffic should be slowed. A beach park was also suggested by many of the respondents in the survey.

Below are some of the responses to Question 7:

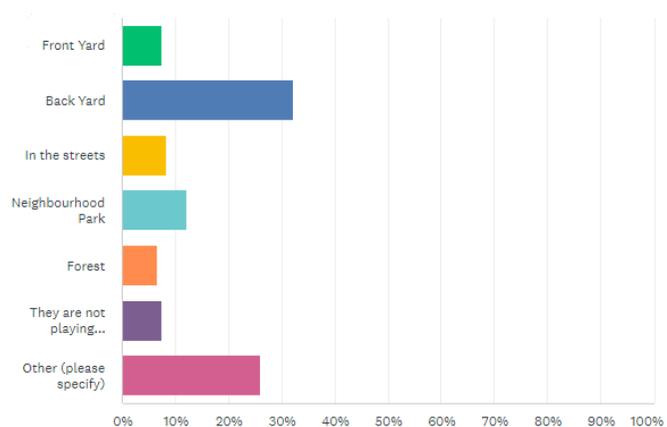
- *Cycling .. trails .. an edge on the road would be amazing .. even potholes filled would be fantastic access ... to other trail arteries .. I cycle to work .. have to park my vehicle .. purchased an e-bike to assist because cycling through Beverbank is scary ... no biking lanes traffic is awful no access trails.*
- *Love our parks and trails. Keep them protected! A rails to trails I think would be excellent for our community in terms of the old railway. Look at Tatamagouche NS for example.*
- *Off-leash dog trails. Small 9-hole golf course.*
- *Open trails with allowance for horses.*
- *Off-leash friendly trails - I currently have to drive all the way to Bedford or even into Halifax just to find a trail I can safely hike with my dogs off-leash without being worried a kid on an ATV is going to come tearing around a corner.*
- *I think we have plenty of walking trails for our community. Maybe a community beach area on one of the lakes would be nice.*
- *Stroller/wheelchair friendly ones.*
- *Hiking trails, mountain biking trails, rails to trails should be looked at again. Consideration should be given to ATV (mixed-use) trails while maintaining separation from homes and private/public roadways. There are already too many yahoos on ATVs trespassing on private, posted property.*

Q8: WHERE DO KIDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY PLAY?

The majority of people who responded indicated that most kids play in their backyard. This is to be expected considering the requirement for developments to support on-site services, which also provide ample space for kids to play. Approximately 12% of respondents indicated that kids play in Neighbourhood Parks. The majority of the respondents under 'other' indicated that they did not have kids or they didn't know where kids played. The two other options that were identified under 'other' were playing at the lake and kids playing in multiple locations.

Where do kids in your community play (e.g. front yard, back yard, in the street, at a neighbourhood park)?

Answered: 338 Skipped: 132



Q9: WHAT NEW AMENITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE ADDED TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

Three amenities topped the list -daycares, grocery stores, and restaurants. Respondents indicated that there were residents who had a hard time finding childcare and that there were always posts online requesting childcare. Eddy's Variety and Withrows were mentioned as being great places but some respondents would like to see a bigger grocery store in the community. Restaurants, cafes, bakeries, and breweries were some of the types of restaurants mentioned. Gyms were also identified as an amenity that the community would like to have. Some respondents mentioned that they didn't want large box stores to come into the community which may hurt local businesses.

Below are some of the responses to Question 9:

- *Daycare is really needed for a lot of the younger working people.*
- *Fully equipped drug store with better hours. Fully stocked with multiple choices. Grocery store, meat market like Gateway.*
- *Daycares are needed. Grocery store would be sweet.*
- *IMO, MU has what it needs now. Bringing in a big box store and chain restaurants would only put the existing ones out of business. If folks want more, Lower Sackville, Bedford and Halifax aren't that far away.*
- *Our community could definitely benefit from a daycare facility. There are posts on our community groups all the time of people seeking child care.*
- *More small shops like restaurants, coffee, garden shops, would be great!*
- *We need economic development, not large companies pushing small shops like Eddies out. Help small businesses develop here.*

Q10: WHAT DOES SUSTAINABILITY MEAN TO YOU AND HOW CAN SUSTAINABILITY BE IMPLEMENTED IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

The responses to question 10 were wide, varied, and very personal to the respondent's beliefs and personal situation. There were a few common ideas, such as sidewalks to allow for walking, protection of the natural environment, the use of green energy solutions, public transit, planning for growth, fiscal sustainability, and many more ideas. However, many of the comments are different and should be reviewed in their entirety to provide more detail.

Below are some of the responses to Question 10:

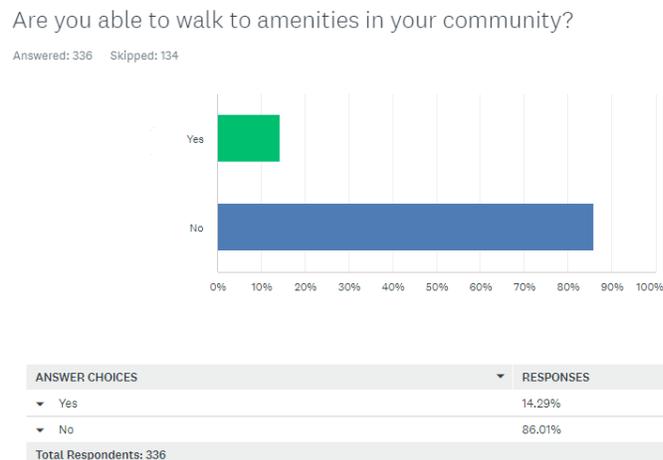
- *A sustainable community is a community with sufficient services to serve the community i.e. upgrade roads to meet the heavier traffic loads. Sidewalks so people don't walk on roads.*
- *Protection of ecological, human, and economic health and vitality. The Municipality needs to protect these resources with a view to long-term protection, and everyone needs to use these resources conservatively and wisely.*
- *Mount Uniacke isn't large enough, populated enough, or developed enough to be looked at as a sustainable community. There isn't enough opportunity for employment to make it a community that can function on its own. Serious planning should go into the future land use and development areas to make the community scalable. It won't be a small town forever, plan for tomorrow, today. When the road construction happened in front of the Irving a few years back, the new intersection should have been a roundabout. With the new development over the past 2 years, traffic bottlenecks there in the afternoons now. Eddy's is a great little grocery store, but the parking area is getting to be too small*

and traffic in and out during busy times is hectic and can be dangerous. The old, derelict building behind it could provide additional parking area and room for expansion... Once again, we have the land. It's in private hands.

- *Cutting down on unnecessary emissions, with solutions such as public transit.*
- *Green spaces, living with nature, not turning everything into a concrete jungle, green energy (solar, wind if feasible, energy storage), new buildings should be designed to capture as much solar energy as possible and go beyond net zero.*
- *Ensuring environmental concerns are considered with all initiatives. Implementing new projects that address community populations needs.*
- *Community development to support growth that is well planned and thoughtful to its residents.*
- *Not allowing population growth to outpace amenities in our area.*

Q11: ARE YOU ABLE TO WALK TO AMENITIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Eighty-six percent of the respondents cannot walk to amenities in their community, while 14% can walk to amenities. This statistic is not surprising given the size of the study area and that most of the Uniacke area is not easily walkable. The distances between neighbourhoods and amenities on Highway 1 are great and lot sizes are large. Respondents who can walk to amenities are likely living close to the core of the community.



Q12: WHAT SUSTAINABLE IDEAS CAN BE IMPLEMENTED ON A COMMUNITY-WIDE BASIS?

Respondents had a diverse range of comments on what sustainable ideas could be implemented in their community. Ideas included locating amenities close by housing to reduce the carbon footprint of homeowners. Providing seniors homes and daycares in the community. Creating a good mixture of housing. Providing recreation facilities in the community so residents don't have to commute out of their community. Having community gardens for food security and sidewalks so residents feel safer walking along Highway 1 to amenities. Bus service that would connect into Halifax to reduce traffic on the road.

Below are some of the responses to Question 12:

- *Slow but steady growth, having lots of green natural areas as that is why people want to live there.*
- *Anything that encourages active living and reconnecting with nature. Fit and healthy populations lead to lower health care costs over the long term.*
- *Green spaces, solar, energy storage, protection of the lakes, wetlands, and water courses. Push new developments into net zero or better designs.*

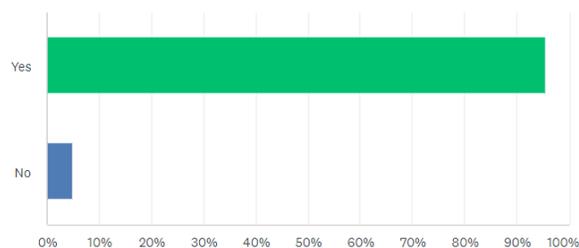
- *Community gardens, recycling programs, etc.*
- *Bus service - train service ... to Lower Sackville and Windsor.*
- *I'm a big fan of small businesses and small farms. Food co-ops or a grocery store that brings in local produce and meat products. Help fund these smaller operations so they can support the community they are feeding but keep it on a small scale so we don't drift into the dangers/problems of industrial agriculture.*
- *Connecting subdivisions and streets off the main road, more emphasis on long term planning of trails and green areas.*

Q13: DO YOU FEEL THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO PROTECT WETLANDS AND WATERWAYS?

There are significant wetlands and waterways located in Mount Uniacke. The headwaters of the Sackville River are located in the community and are important in helping to control downstream water quality and flooding events. Many lakes in the study area are enjoyed by residents; therefore, it is understandable that 95% of respondents indicated that it is important to protect wetlands and waterways.

Do you feel that it is important to protect wetlands and waterways?

Answered: 331 Skipped: 139



Q14: WHAT KIND OF BIKING AND WALKING FACILITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

Several respondents are interested in seeing the old rail line developed into a multi-use trail. Either widening Highway 1 or adding a sidewalk as mentioned by several respondents to allow for safe bike use and walking. Other respondents mentioned new mountain biking and ATV trails. Creating trails that connect to other communities and trails that connect to the lakes. Off-leash trails and trails that permit horseback riding were also mentioned. Indoor walking tracks were mentioned.

Below are some of the responses to Question 14:

- *I'm looking forward to the development of the rail line into a trail. It provides a lengthy trail that also has less elevation changes than many of the local trails currently available.*
- *Groomed trails to accommodate walking, biking, ATV's.*
- *Rails to trails, bike tracks at local area businesses, maybe a tire pump repair station at the parks.*
- *Bigger walking areas next to roadways so kids can safely ride bikes off the road.*
- *We already have beautiful biking and walking trails, but biking lanes on the main road from Uniacke Pizza to Uniacke House would provide a much safer way for commuters and children alike to access what our community does have to offer.*
- *Mountain biking trails would be fantastic. Off-leash dog walking trails would be great.*
- *I don't believe this is what's important to the community right now. We need recreational facilities and a high school.*

- *Biking trails that will take the community to other communities, such as removing the rail ties in Mount Uniacke and connecting the trails to Windsor and east to Sackville. Trails that take you through the woods and ensure a greater connection to our vast forests and lakes.*

Q15: WHAT LOCATIONS OR DESTINATIONS SHOULD THESE CONNECT TO?

There were several responses, below is a sample of the more popular responses:

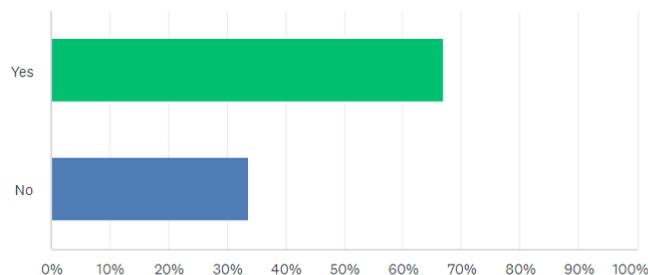
- Connect to the school.
- Connect to the skate park.
- Connect to amenities to allow people to stop for a snack and to use the washroom facilities when on their adventure.
- Connect to our waterways.
- Connect municipalities - from West Hants to the HRM boarder.
- Connect to local parks.
- Have all trails connected to the centre of the community.
- Connect to the business park and other businesses in the community.

Q16: DO YOU COMMUTE OUT OF YOUR COMMUNITY FOR WORK?

Sixty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they commute out of their community for work. While 33% indicated that they did not commute out of their community for work.

Do you commute out of your community for work?

Answered: 317 Skipped: 153



Q17: WHAT WOULD YOUR IDEA COMMUTE TO WORK LOOK LIKE?

Several respondents mentioned improvements to the road network that would improve their commute such as upgrades to the existing interchange connection with Highway 1, road condition improvements, and another interchange with Highway 101 to service the Lakelands end of the study area. Transit options were also mentioned - connecting Mount Uniacke with the Halifax transit routes. Other respondents mentioned more opportunities to work locally. For remote working, respondents indicated the required availability of high-quality internet and cell phone coverage.

Below are some of the responses to Question 17:

- *I carpool with 2 others to work in Halifax every day. Like most in this community I work in the city. More public transportation options to and from the city would be desirable I'm sure.*
- *We need a new highway exit/entrance to our community and need to reduce the heavy truck traffic from the gravel pits in our community.*
- *A less stressful ride to work with better control of those speeding both on the #1 and 101. Especially in the early morning between 530-700 am never in 18 years traveling at that time of day do I see police.*

- *Properly paved roads and properly maintained roads in the winter.*
- *Remote working. Everyone should have access to high quality internet service.*
- *Not waiting forever to turn on to Highway 1 from Etter Rd because the traffic is constant with no breaks. We need a round about, stop light, or 4 way stop.*
- *I'm retired now, but when I did work in the downtown core of Halifax. It would've been nice to have had a community transit system with ample stops throughout the Village and maybe one at the park 'n ride area, the one that currently exists across from the Irving adjacent to the entrance to Hwy 101 into Sackville to catch a connecting bus either through Sackville or into Halifax.*

Q18: WHAT NEIGHBOURHOODS OR COMMUNITIES IN NOVA SCOTIA DO YOU LIKE THE MOST?

Respondents selected a wide range of communities in their responses to question 18. Wolfville was mentioned the most frequently by respondents, followed by a wide variety of communities in the Valley and along the South Shore. Mount Uniacke, Windsor and parts of Sackville were also mentioned often. Respondents mentioned the small town feel with lots of amenities being within walking distance.

Below are some of the responses to Question 18:

- *Any place with sidewalks and street lights.*
- *Elmsdale/Enfield is a beautiful community. We'll laid out and quite diverse in services and housing. Fall River is also developing into a very nice community. Ideally I think Mount Uniacke should be modeled after the Elmsdale/Enfield area for future development.*
- *Small towns where amenities and services are within the community. We don't have that here at all.*
- *Annapolis Valley communities of Kentville and Berwick.*
- *Chester, Lunenburg, Tatamagouche, Lahave.*
- *Bear River, Tatamagouche, Pictou, Baddeck, Mahone Bay, Lunenburg, Wolfville.*
- *Wolfville - trails for walking and biking along the dykes and further which connect to other communities, small independent businesses, a town core (rather than ribbon development); Chester - many recreational facilities e.g. boating, golfing, rinks etc., can walk most places, small independent businesses. Kentville: a town core, small independent businesses etc. I am sure there are other communities I like but that is all that comes to mind at the moment.*

Q19: WHAT FEATURES AND AMENITIES MAKE THESE NEIGHBOURHOODS ATTRACTIVE AND/OR PREFERABLE?

Many respondents mentioned aesthetic items such as well-groomed trees, parks, and public places. Other respondents mentioned having amenities within walking distance or a short drive. To have public spaces and small communities that have a rural town feel. The majority of the responses are derivative of a quintessential small town in Nova Scotia. A small core with amenities and sidewalks, parks, and trails connecting to centre.

Below are some of the responses to Question 19:

- *The ones that trim the trees cleanly along the road individually, rather than using the big mashing machines that leave everything jagged, leaving an eyesore for residents and tourists alike-it is not very welcoming for anyone.*
- *They have amenities close by, a small plaza with sobeys and a few fast food chains, a hockey rink, a sportsplex where kids from the highschool can attend after classes. It has active trails around the lake to provide an outlet for those who want to run,walk,hike or walk pets.*

- *It has ample parking and lots for the kids to do to stay out of trouble and develop themselves into healthy adults. Adults and retirees have lots of activities that can keep them active and participating in society beyond retirement years.*
- *Walkable, social, public space.*
- *Housing options, job opportunities, services.*
- *Small town feel, able to walk everywhere. Small businesses, coffee.*
- *Cafes, restaurants, drinking facilities, shops, gym, a destination for people to be entertained or visit nature via trails, public beach.*

Q20: WHAT DESIGN FEATURES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?

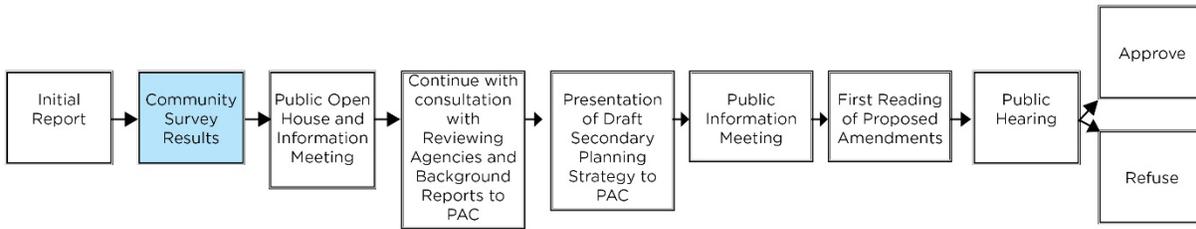
Sidewalks were once again mentioned at the top of the list. Respondents would like to see sidewalks added as the number one design feature. Recreation centres, fields, and play spaces were also mentioned numerous times. Streetlights and trees were also mentioned. Access to the lakes, where all residents can access the lakeshore - accessible lakeshores.

Below are some of the responses to Question 20:

- *A bigger outdoor space for community picnics, and informal play rather than for outdoor sports.*
- *Design features within our structures or plans to include, children, adults, retirees and families that can enjoy active lifestyles together and in their community. This would help ease the burden of many families having to drive kids 20+ minutes to facilities that offer what we have discussed.*
- *Signs and flower boxes. We have those now. Improved signage.*
- *Sidewalks and street lights.*
- *I don't have an opinion on this as I chose to live in a country setting that doesn't have sidewalks or streetlights because that's the way I like it. It's why I live on a lake - far removed from city like living.*
- *Sidewalks bike lanes on the main road along with slowing traffic through more populated areas.*
- *Landscaping, buildings that are well maintained and appropriate for the maritime history.*
- *I would like to see a town core where most amenities are located that most residents can travel to by walking and biking safely. Green spaces close to the core that would appeal to all from children to seniors (swings etc. for children, gardens, pathways, benches, etc.).*

Community Engagement

Now that the Uniacke Land Use Survey is complete, staff will make the results of the survey available to the public on our Municipal website. Staff also recommend that a community open house and public information meeting is held in Mount Uniacke to discuss the results of the survey, to discuss some of the recommendations coming forward from the background papers, and to seek input from the community. Additional community engagement will take place prior to the adoption of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy.



Alternatives

Direct staff not to proceed with an open house and public information meeting.

Attachments

Appendix A - Detailed Survey Results

Conclusion

Planning staff feel that the Uniacke Land Use Survey was successful in capturing how residents feel their community should grow and they have identified items to help in that growth. In general, Uniacke residents enjoy their community, love their access to nature and the existing parks and trails, and support their local businesses. They are not interested in having access to the community's natural assets diminished and would like the Municipality to take into consideration investing in new trails, recreational options, and beach parks. They would like to have land use regulations that respect that natural environment and encourage sustainable development.

Planning staff will use the results of the survey to support the development of the Uniacke Secondary Plan that Staff will present the results of the survey to the community during a future open house and public information meeting for the Secondary Plan.

