



Subject: *2026-27 Plan Review Community Engagement Report*
To: CAO for Planning Advisory Committee, February 17, 2026
Date Prepared: February 11, 2026
Related Motions: PAC25(05), C25(20), and C25(21)
Prepared by: Debbie Uloth, Community Planner II
Approved by: John Woodford, Director of Planning and Development

Summary

Staff are seeking authorization to initiate the community consultation process for the 2026-2027 Plan Review. Community engagement will include: community meetings, surveys, and newsletters.

Financial Impact Statement

\$17,000 has been proposed in the 2026/27 Budget to cover additional staff overtime, mailings, supplies, advertising & hall rentals related to year 1 of the plan review. There are also three consultant studies proposed as part of the plan review with a budget of \$490,000. In addition, a new planner position has been proposed to assist with the volume of work associated with the plan review and beyond.

Recommendation

That staff be authorized to begin the community engagement as outlined in this report.

Recommended Motion

Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that Council:

- *authorize staff to begin the community engagement as outlined in the staff report “2026-27 Plan Community Engagement Report” dated February 11, 2026.*

Background

The goal of the community engagement process is to ensure that all East Hants residents can contribute their knowledge, their aspirations and their perspective to the Official Community Plan Review. In addition to stakeholder input, community input will be sought throughout the Plan Review.

Community Engagement Outline

Each stage of the Plan Review process will include a community engagement component. The first table below outlines the engagement milestones and events by phase. The second table outlines the type of engagement and at which phase each type of community consultation takes place.

Table 1

ENGAGEMENT MILESTONES & EVENTS BY PHASE



| PROJECT STAGE | Determine the process | Visioning | Objectives & Planning Principles | Review Policy | Draft Planning Documents | Statutory Approvals Process |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ENGAGEMENT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal kick-off meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community meetings Focus Groups Consultation Report PAC/Council Approval | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principles / objectives meeting What we heard report What we heard public meetings PAC/Council Approval | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directors and CAO update Community open houses PAC/Council Approval | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy work-shops Directors and CAO update Community open houses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directors and CAO update PAC and Council Meetings Public Hearing |
| MEETINGS | | | | | | |

LEGEND:

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Public | Stake Holders | Planning Advisory Committee |
| Advisory Committees (Heritage, Agriculture, etc.) | Council | Staff |

Table 2

| Process | Engagement Type | Date |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Visioning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Hants Plan Review Survey (draft questions, Appendix A) East Hants Visual Preference Survey | Spring 2026 |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Visioning (Corridor, Mount Uniacke, Rawdon, Maitland) - Dates have been added to Council Chambers Online. • Municipal Visioning with Municipal Departments - Meetings have been arranged • Developer Stakeholder Meeting - Tentative date added to Council Chambers Online • East Hants Chamber of Commerce Meeting • Meetings with adjoining Municipalities • Meetings with internal departments • Meeting with Nova Scotia department of Public Works (NSPW) • Meeting with Agricultural Advisory Committee | |
| Objectives & Planning Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Check-In Meetings - What we heard and survey results (Corridor, Mount Uniacke, Rawdon, Maitland). Meetings to be tentatively scheduled for October 2026. | October 2026 |
| Draft Planning Document | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Information Meetings (Corridor, Mount Uniacke, Rawdon, Maitland). Presentation of draft planning policies and regulations. • Stakeholder Meetings | April 2027 |
| Statutory Approval Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Open House & Public Hearing - Lloyd E. Matheson Centre | October 2027 |

Visioning Process

Community visioning enables the members of a community to envision the overall future of their community. It allows residents to have a voice in what their community looks like and what their goals and objectives are for their community.

After the visioning process is complete, the community engagement feedback will be reviewed, and a vision statement will be created. Planning staff will take the community's vision and use it as guiding principles in creating land use planning policies and regulations that will guide growth into the future.

Details of the community visioning meeting will be presented in a future report titled "What we heard".

Councillor Participation

As with regular public information meetings, Councillors are welcome to attend any of the community meetings but attendance is not required. The community visioning process will end with a report to Planning Advisory Committee detailing what staff heard and reviewing the survey results.

Mount Uniacke Visioning Meeting

In 2025, the Mount Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy was completed and adopted by Council. As part of the Uniacke SPS, a community survey and meetings were conducted. Therefore, instead of a visioning meeting in Mount Uniacke, the meeting will review the recommendations in the Uniacke SPS with residents and will consider broader land use issues that impact the entire Municipality and not just the Uniacke area.

Plan Review Surveys

Planning staff have completed a draft of both the written survey and visual preference survey for the consideration of PAC. The surveys will be available online but hard copies will also be available to residents who wish to receive one. Advertisements of the surveys will be placed on the Municipal website, social media, the Municipal Newsletter, and at the visioning meetings.

A visual preference survey is a tool used to gauge public opinion on community design by asking participants to rate images of streetscapes, architecture, landscaping, and land-use scenarios.

Results of the surveys will be shared as part of the report to PAC on “What we heard”.

Alternatives

Planning Advisory Committee/Council may direct staff to do one of the following:

- a. Change the number of meetings with the community.
- b. Add additional stakeholder groups to the consultation process.

Attachments

- Appendix A - Draft Survey Questions
- Appendix B - Draft Visual Preference Survey

Appendix A - Draft Survey Questions

1. Are you happy living in East Hants (Rank)
2. Do you plan to move from East Hants to another Municipality in the next 5 years (yes/no)
3. What do you enjoy most about living in East Hants? (Choose top three)
 - a. Proximity to Halifax
 - b. Proximity to the airport
 - c. Affordability
 - d. Access to parks and recreation
 - e. The community
 - f. Access to schools
 - g. Close to work
 - h. Other
4. Would you recommend living in East Hants to someone else?
5. Please identify your community and rate the overall design or layout of your community (homes, buildings, streets, parks, etc.) (Rank and fill in blank)
6. How do you feel about the overall vibrancy of your community, including shopping and service areas? What could be done to improve these areas.
7. Are you comfortable walking in East Hants? What improvements could be made to improve your walking experience?
8. How would you rank your neighbourhood as a place to live? (Rank)
9. Please rate the following characteristics as they relate to East Hants as a whole:
 - a. East Hants has well planned residential growth.
 - b. East Hants has well planned commercial growth.
 - c. East Hants has well designed neighbourhoods.
 - d. East Hants has public spaces where people want to spend time.
 - e. East Hants has a variety of housing options.
 - f. East Hants has availability of quality affordable housing.
10. When you think about your neighbourhood, what is the one thing you would do to make your community better?
11. Do you feel the protection of agricultural lands is important?
12. Do you feel low-density neighbourhoods should be protected from higher-density housing (e.g. townhouses and apartments)?

Appendix B - Draft Visual Preference Survey

1. CHMC has developed designs for stacked townhouse development across Canada. Which design do you feel best suites East Hants? (Up to three may be selected)
2. CHMC has developed designs for small apartment buildings (sixplex) across Canada. Which design do you feel best suites East Hants?
3. Rank each method of screening a development?
4. Rank each photo of a large parking lot.
5. Rank each photo of a street corridor.
6. Rank each photo of a four storey apartment building.
7. Rank each photo of a sidewalk.
8. Is this a place you would like to walk.
9. Which type of commercial development do you prefer?
10. Which method of traffic calming do you prefer?
11. Rank the types of Townhouses (cluster, row, stacked).