

Community Engagement Report: Phase 1

Planning Advisory Committee

December 14, 2021

Planning and Development Department



EAST HANTS

Introduction

- A Plan Update Community Survey was undertaken from July to Sept.
- Plan Update Open Houses were held in October.
- Results of both engagement formats have been summarized in staff's report.
- Results will be used to help guide the development of land use planning policies and regulations in the future planned area and to assist in reviewing existing policies and regulations.
- Further community engagement will take place once the first draft of the East Hants Official Community Plan is ready for review.

Question 3

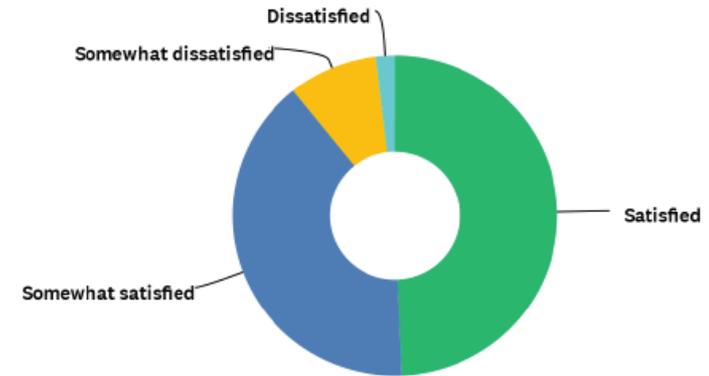
Overall, how satisfied are you with East Hants as a place to live?

- No matter where respondents lived they felt similar about living in East Hants.
- It is interesting because the South Corridor & Commercial GMA has undergone, and is still undergoing, change.

Answered: 428

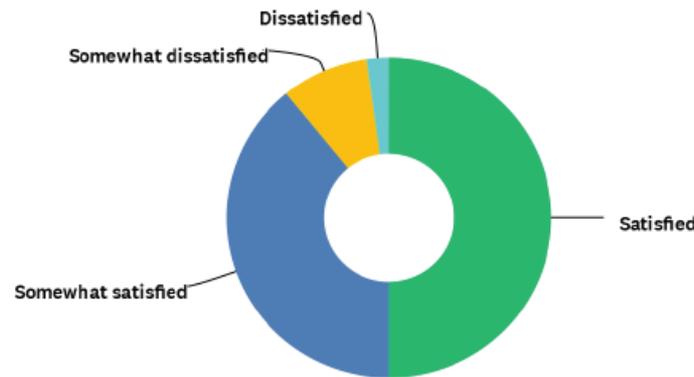
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All East Hants



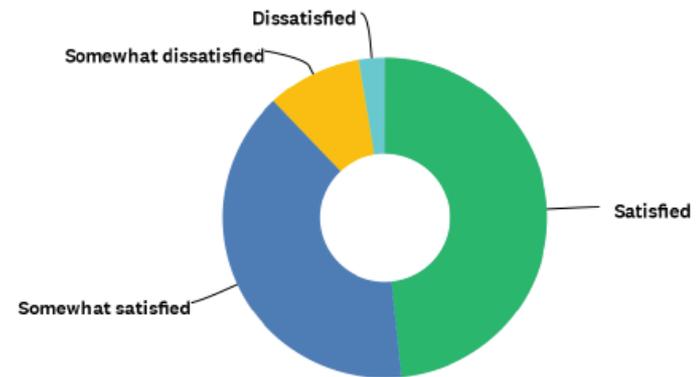
Satisfied/Somewhat Satisfied: 89%
Dissatisfied/Somewhat Dissatisfied: 11%

Future Planned Area



Satisfied/Somewhat Satisfied: 88%
Dissatisfied/Somewhat Dissatisfied: 12%

South Corridor & Commercial GMA



Satisfied/Somewhat Satisfied: 89%
Dissatisfied/Somewhat Dissatisfied: 11%

Question 4

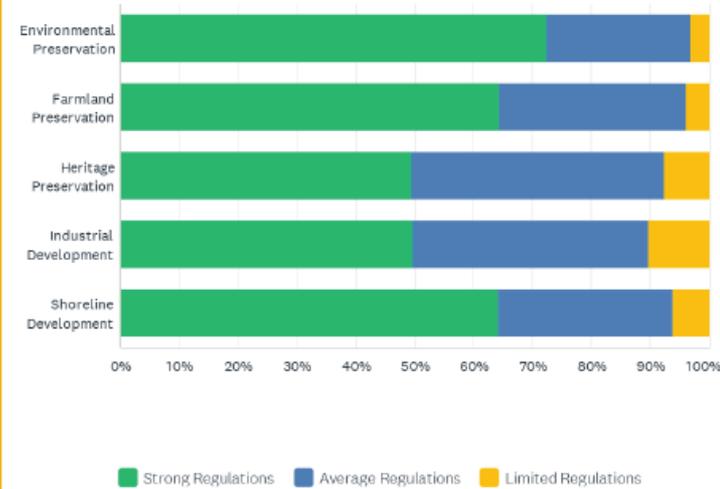
In planning for the future of your community, how strongly should East Hants regulate land use in the following areas?

Answered: 429

Skipped: 2

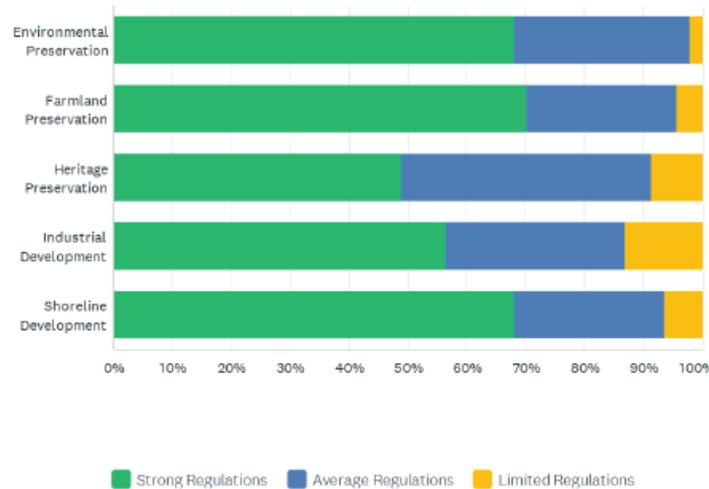
- Overall residents felt that Environmental Preservation should have the strongest regulations closely followed by Farmland Protection and Shoreline Preservation.
- Methods to achieve these goals could include setbacks from watercourses, agricultural zoning, protection of good quality soils, and preventing the removal of vegetation next to the shoreline.

All East Hants



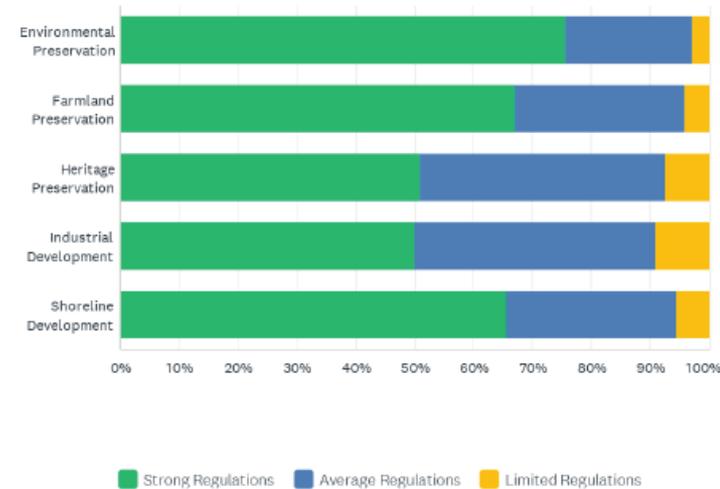
Residents felt that Environmental Preservation should have the strongest regulations.

Future Planned Area



Residents felt that Farmland Preservation should have the strongest regulations.

South Corridor & Commercial GMA



Residents felt that Environmental Preservation should have the strongest regulations.

Question 5

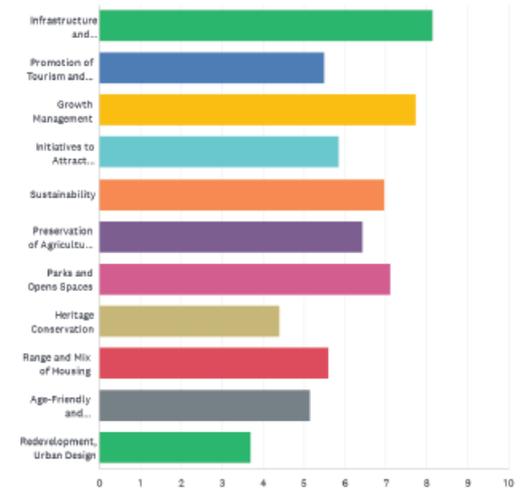
What are the most important factors for you to see reflected in the Official Community Plan? (Rank as 1 being the most important and 11 being the least important)

Answered: 430

Skipped: 1

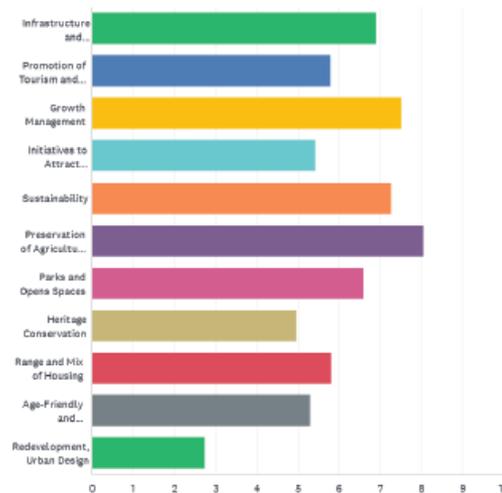
- Overall, the most important factor that East Hants residents wanted to see reflected in their Official Community Plan was policies and regulations regarding infrastructure and transportation.
- In the future planned area residents wanted to see policies and regulations regarding preservation of agricultural land.

All East Hants



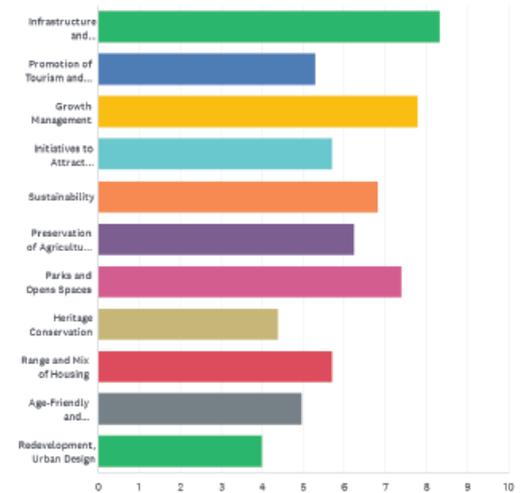
Infrastructure and Transportation was the most important factor to see reflected in the Plan.

Future Planned Area



Preservation of Agricultural Lands was the most important factor to see reflected in the Plan.

South Corridor & Commercial GMA



Infrastructure and Transportation was the most important factor to see reflected in the Plan.

Question 6

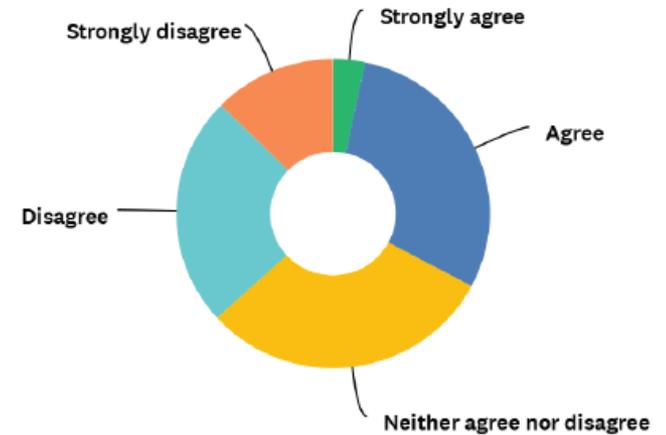
Do you think that growth in East Hants is happening in the appropriate areas?

- All of East Hants was near evenly split.
- More residents from the future planned area were indifferent.
- More residents in the GMA either agreed or were neutral compared to the number who disagreed.

Answered: 427

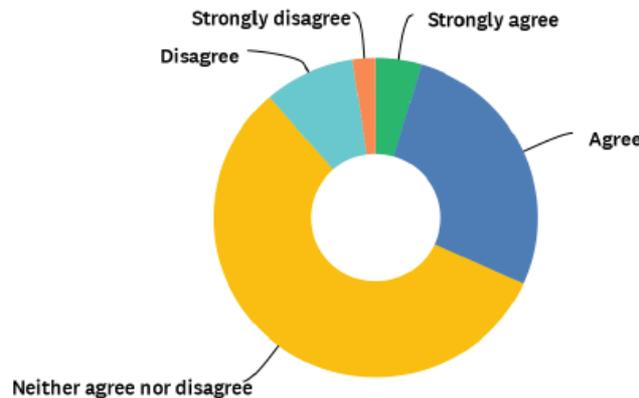
Skipped: 4

All East Hants



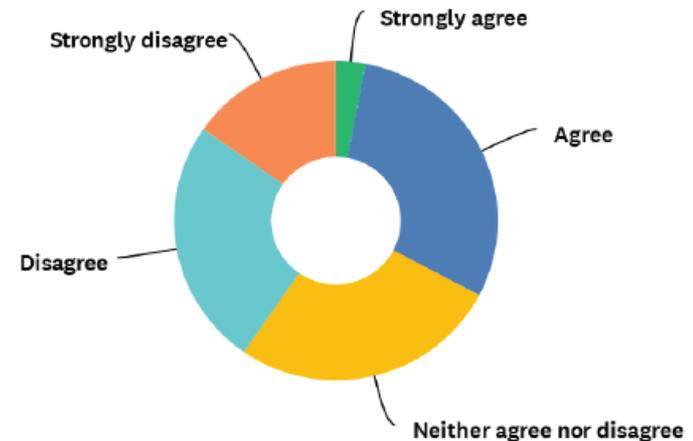
Neither agree nor disagree: 30%
Strongly Agree/Agree: 33%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 37%

Future Planned Area



Neither agree nor disagree: 57%
Strongly Agree/Agree: 32%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 11%

South Corridor & Commercial GMA



Neither agree nor disagree: 27%
Strongly Agree/Agree: 33%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 40%

Is the development of parks and open spaces important to you? If yes, please describe the types of parks you would like to see developed. (428 Responses)

- Respondents to the survey overwhelmingly indicated that the development of parks and open spaces was important to them.
- Family oriented parks that encompass a wide variety of uses was the most common response; parks which have walking trails, picnic areas, water access, and parks that are accessible to all ages and that are pet friendly and allow for biking.
- Two other park types that were mentioned often were off-leash dog parks and more playgrounds for kids. Many respondents indicated that these parks should be located within their neighbourhoods for easy access.



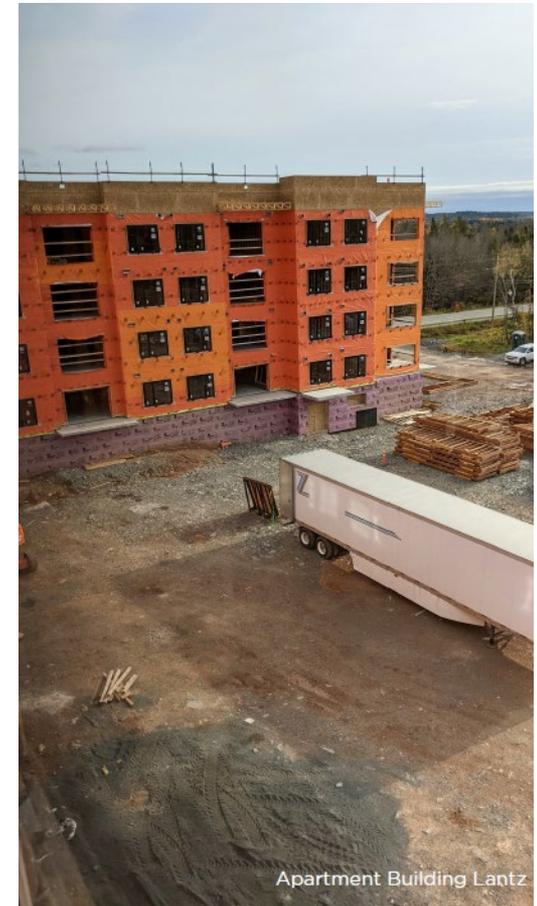
Is there anything special about your community that we should know about as we prepare this plan? (326 Responses)

- East Hants residents identified many different aspects of their communities that they felt staff and Council should be aware of.
- Two of the most mentioned items was East Hants waterways and our rural community/small town feel.
- Comments regarding rural community/small town feel was often followed by a statement indicating that too many people were moving to East Hants from the city and they were worried that the “small town feel” was going to disappear; or that the Corridor was turning into Sackville.
- Other special aspects that were often mentioned was our beautiful farmlands, close knit community, and our heritage.
- There were over 35 respondents who felt that there was nothing special about the community that they would like to have staff and Council know about.



Has there been any recent development in your community that you are concerned about? (375 Responses)

- Where residents live in East Hants, really seemed to influence how they responded to Question 9.
- Issues with the number and height of apartment buildings; new housing, and increased density were concerns mentioned frequently.
- This makes sense, considering that over half of the respondents to the survey were from the South Corridor and Commercial Growth Management Area (GMA); which has seen the most development and changes to the community.
- There was also a fair number of respondents, outside of the GMA, who felt that there was a lack of development in their community (Milford, Shubenacadie, and Mount Uniacke).
- Affordable housing was also identified as an issue; with many respondents indicating that new housing was unaffordable.
- A large portion of residents also had concerns with how new development impacted traffic and road infrastructure; as an example, traffic congestion and required road improvements.



What is your long-term vision for the Municipality of East Hants? (354 Responses)

- Respondent's long-term vision for East Hants was diverse. Many different themes were identified in the comments from residents. Some of the more repeated themes included the following:
 - the need for a public transit system that connects into Halifax's system;
 - the need for more affordable housing;
 - more community events;
 - more parks and open spaces;
 - growth in the number of businesses and in the number of amenities provided by the Municipality;
 - to have a mix of housing with commercial development included with that mix;
 - to protect the environment, rivers, and farmland;
 - to have family focused living;
 - to keep the small-town feel;
 - to have more doctors and a full medical clinic;
 - better designed buildings and more pleasant infrastructure;
 - keep development in Enfield, Elmsdale and Lantz and keep agricultural land for food production; and
 - to spread the growth out.
- Based on review of the comments, staff cannot underline one common theme that would unite all of the visions. No one vision would satisfy the majority of respondents.

Community Open Houses

- Five open houses were held.
- As part of the open houses, attendees were asked to provide their comments on what they heard or concerns they had. All comments have been included with the report.
- In general, many of the residents who attended the open houses don't want land use regulations. They don't want to be told what they can do with their land. However, there was a general consensus to a number of items that could be regulated.
- Shoreline erosion and flooding were identified as concerns, and residents agreed that there should be setbacks from the shoreline.
- The development of campgrounds and RV lots was also noted as a concern by a number of residents at the open houses.
- Residents had a mixed response to agriculture and the limited amount of Class 2 Soils. Many agreed that the soils should be protected for future generations and not used for cottage development or other similar developments, while those in the farming community did not want any regulations on their lands.
- In general, residents in the future planned area, who attended the open houses, only want limited land use regulations and they don't want the regulations to impact what they can do on their land but they see the value of land use regulations potentially benefiting the greater community.
- They wanted to limit land uses that would create a nuisance to them.
- There most likely will be no consensus on the implementation of new land use policies and regulations from residents, and instead the approach should be to create land use regulations that benefit the greater good.

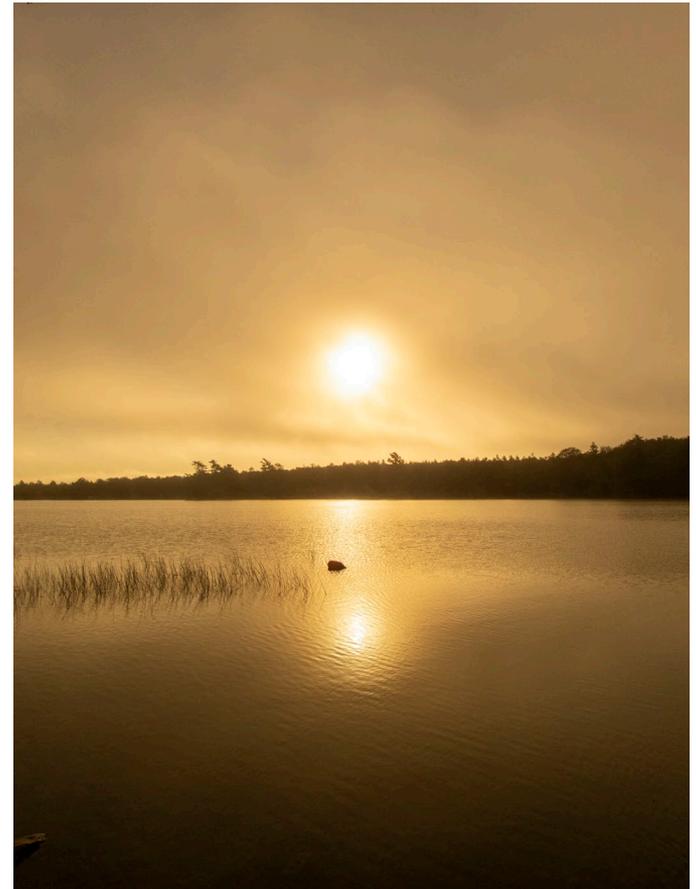
Conclusion

- Results of the Plan Update Community Survey and the Plan Update Open Houses shows that where a resident resides tends to impact how they feel about land use and development.
- Residents in rural East Hants want to be allowed to do a variety of land uses on their property and want their communities to stay rural in nature. Any land use restrictions they would like to see put in place would be for land uses that could be obnoxious (e.g. noise, emissions, smell, dust, etc.) to neighbouring residents and the larger community. Those who responded to the survey also want in general the protection of agricultural land and shoreline regulations.



Conclusion Continued

- Based on the comments from the Survey, residents in the Mount Uniacke, Lakelands, Milford, and Shubenacadie areas feel left out.
- Respondents want to see some of the growth and amenities that the South Corridor and Commercial Growth Management Area (GMA) has seen.
- They also love their communities for what they offer their residents.
- Agricultural land and farmland beauty in Milford and Shubenacadie and hiking trails and lakes in Mount Uniacke and Lakelands.



Conclusion Continued

- Respondents from the South Corridor and Commercial GMA have provided an overwhelming mix of responses to the survey, making it difficult to identify one main theme from the survey results; other than respondents consistently indicating that housing was unaffordable and that they didn't want their community to turn into Sackville.
- Growth and development were viewed through different parameters depending on the resident's personal experiences.
- The best way to sum-up the responses from residents of the South Corridor and Commercial GMA, is that the area is experiencing growing pains.
- It is an area that is undergoing growth and change, which is impacting the daily lives of many residents.
- Some residents are looking forward to this growth, and the amenities that accompany growth, while other residents feel that Enfield, Elmsdale, and Lantz have lost their rural and small-town feel.
- Comments from the survey results show that growth is challenging.