

What We Heard Report

# Lantz Secondary Planning Strategy

May-July 2024 Stakeholder Engagement Results  
Project Phase 2, Part 1



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## What is a 'What We Heard Report'?

A What We Heard Report is a summary of feedback provided by a variety of stakeholders. The project team prepares the report and shares it back to stakeholders to confirm their understanding of the information provided. Once finalized, the What We Heard Report serves as a record of stakeholder engagement and is used to inform future work.

## Who is the project team?

The project team consists of private consultants FBM and Englobe who provide community planning, engagement and engineering services. The project team works closely with staff from the Municipality of East Hants who are guiding this work.

# 1. Why a Secondary Planning Strategy?

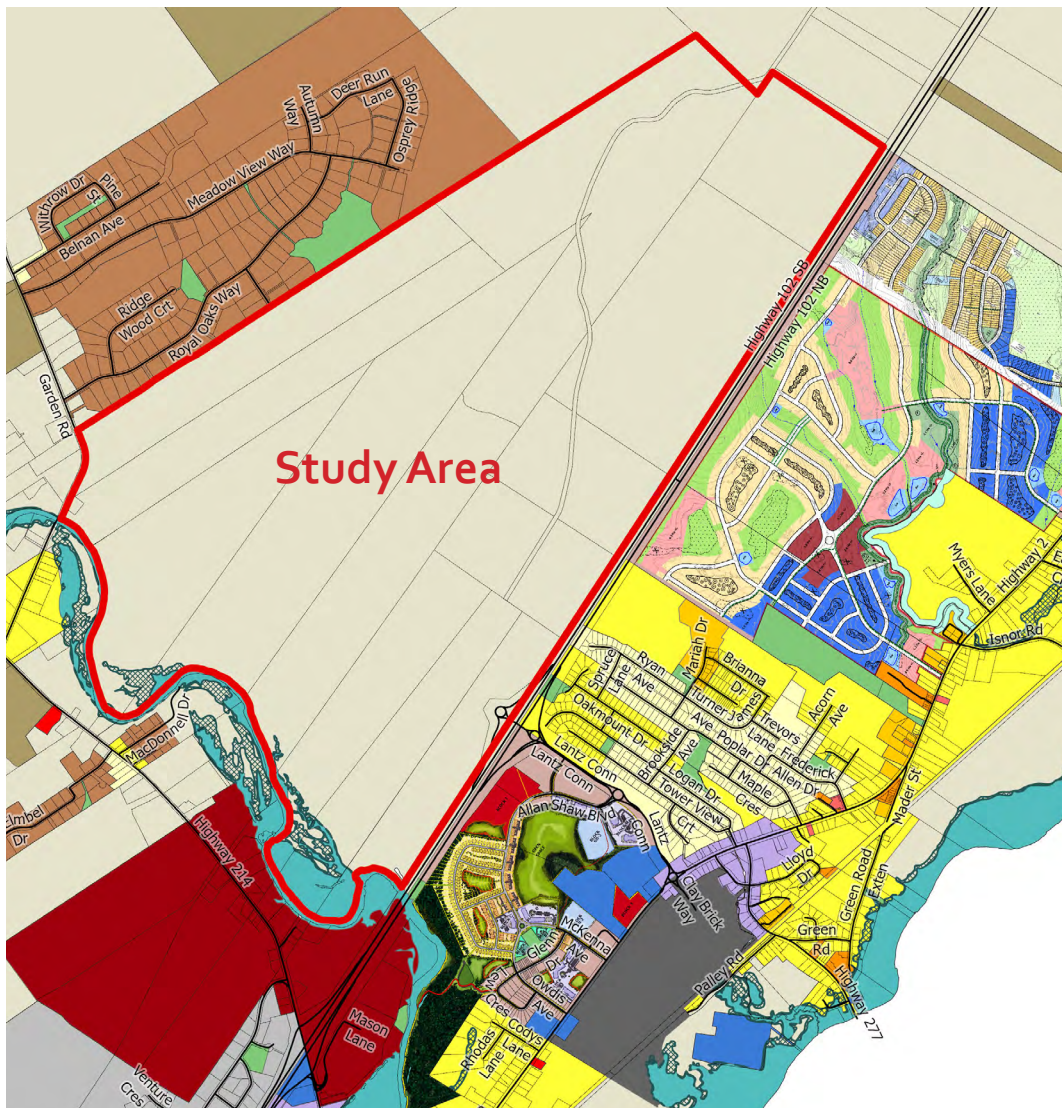
The Municipality of East Hants is experiencing high levels of growth and in recent years several large parcels of land in South Corridor (Enfield, Elmsdale and Lantz) have been approved for development. We are now facing a limited supply of land with municipal water and wastewater services available.

Council has identified land to the north west of the Highway 102 (the Study Area) as one location where future development growth may occur. Much of this land has been identified for future development growth for several years.

Now that the Lantz Interchange (Hwy 102 exit 8A) is complete, Council has determined that this is a good time to investigate how the study area land could be developed.

A Secondary Planning Strategy (SPS) contains policies and zoning regulations in an area of the Municipality where major changes are expected and desired. Having a plan in place for the Lantz Study Area prior to individual development applications will lead to a better design for the community and help the municipality consider what infrastructure is needed for the land to be developed in the future.

This project will take place through 2024 and into early 2025. Once complete, Municipal staff will use the recommendations and findings prepared by the project team to draft the Lantz Secondary Planning Strategy.



## 2. Open House Feedback

On June 10th from 6-8pm, the project team hosted a community open house about the Lantz SPS project at the East Hants Sportsplex. The open house was advertised by the Municipality on their website and social media. Approximately 18 community members attended the session.

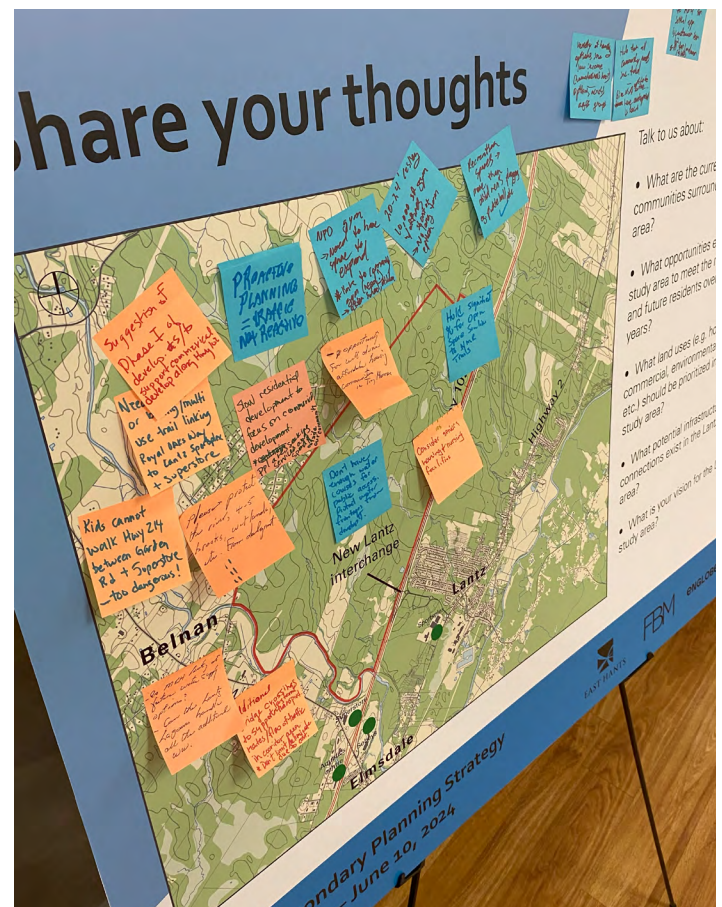
The purpose of the open house was to introduce the project to the public, share the phase 1 Land Survey Analysis findings, and begin to explore a vision for the study area. The open house began with a 10 minute project presentation and was followed by one on one discussions with the project team at the three panel boards. Community members were invited to review the information, speak with the team, and add sticky notes to the boards with their thoughts.

*For copies of the presentation, visit [easthants.ca/community-planning](http://easthants.ca/community-planning)*

Through these community conversations, the following ideas began to emerge:

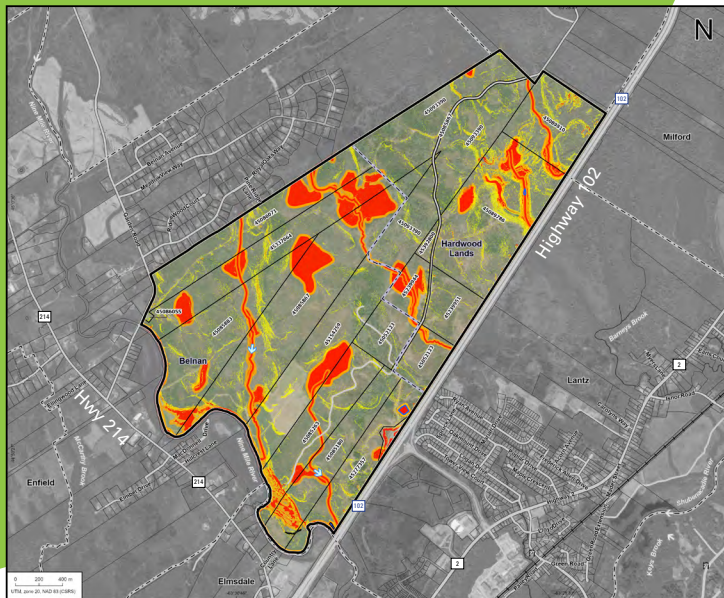
- Prioritize environmental protection, especially around waterways;
- Utilize Hwy 102 visibility for commercial and residential use in the study area;
- Enable commercial and industrial employment opportunities at various scales throughout the study area;
- Have a variety of housing options including affordable and barrier free options;
- Plan for additional recreation amenities and schools; and
- Design for complete communities with safe and accessible connections to communities and assets outside the study area.

When asked about their vision for the study area, community members often spoke about the importance of transportation connectivity within the study area and to the surrounding community. Proactively planning for the study area and having a mix of land uses was a priority.



Above: Community Open House

# Phase 1 research



Preliminary site analysis map

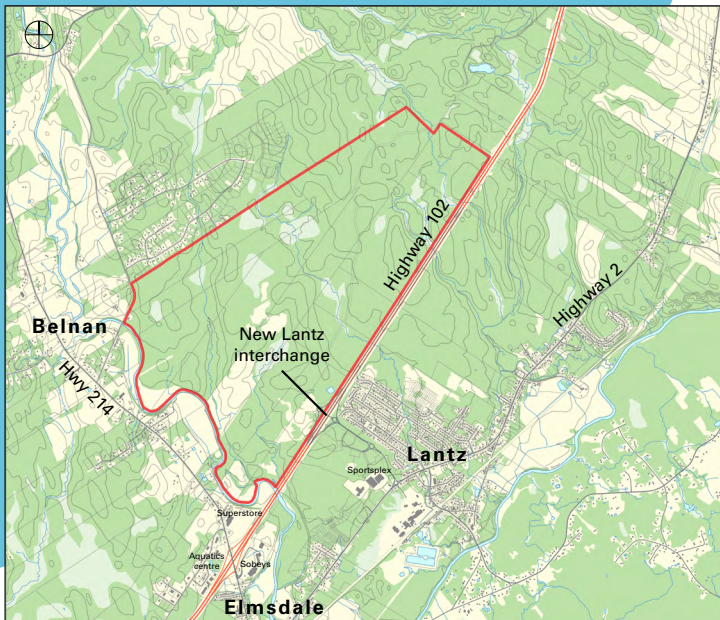
The project team is examining potential constraints and opportunities. Initial desktop research suggests the site contains watercourses and wetlands that limit development potential. The area may also be home to sensitive habitats or protected species of plant and animal life. High-level, preliminary findings are presented in this map.



Lantz Secondary Planning Strategy  
Open House – June 10, 2024



# Share your thoughts



Talk to us about:

- What are the current needs in the communities surrounding the study area?
- What opportunities exist for the Lantz study area to meet the needs of present and future residents over the next 20 years?
- What land uses (e.g. housing, commercial, environmental protection, etc.) should be prioritized in the Lantz study area?
- What potential infrastructure connections exist in the Lantz study area?
- What is your vision for the Lantz study area?

Lantz Secondary Planning Strategy  
Open House – June 10, 2024



Above: Boards 2 & 3 that were shared at the Open House (Board 1 was a welcome board with an introduction to the project)

### 3. Public Survey Results

To collect community feedback, the project team ran an online survey from June 10-June 30th. The survey was advertised at the community open house and on the Municipality’s website and social media. The survey received a total of 167 responses from across the Municipality of East Hants with a few responses from residents within the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Where lists are used in the results below, they are ordered from (approximately) most to least commonly reported by respondents.

#### Demographics

The majority of respondents (62%) identified as female. When asked their age, the majority of respondents were in the 35-44 years (35%) and 45-54 years (29%) age ranges.

#### Unique areas and assets

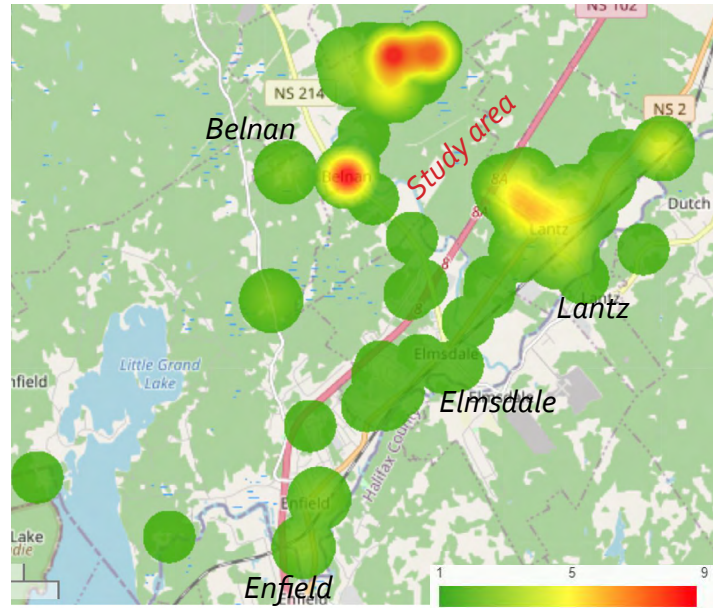
When asked “What makes the area near the Lantz study area, including, Lantz, Elmsdale and Belnan, unique? What features or assets should be celebrated?” respondents commonly wrote about:

- Natural environment: Nine Mile River, green spaces, woodlands, biodiversity, wildlife;
- Trails and recreation amenities;
- Small town feel: quiet, peaceful, privacy, open space, community;
- Proximity to Halifax, airport and nearby communities;
- Agriculture and local history;
- Small businesses.

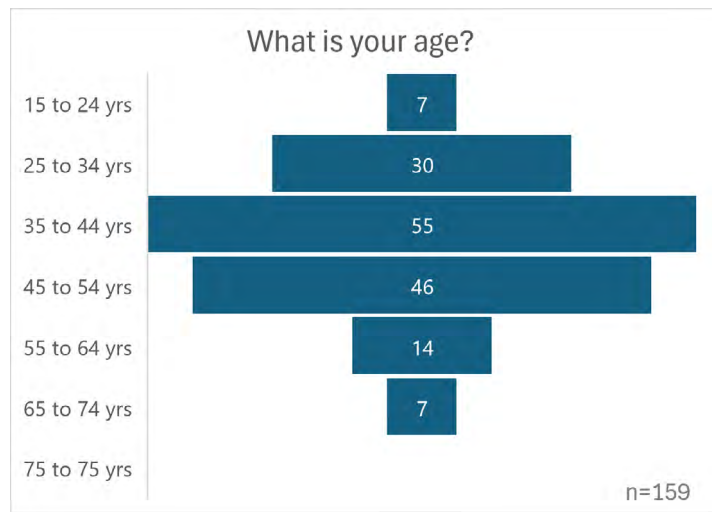
#### Community needs

Respondents were also asked about what community needs they see in the general area currently and over the next 20 years. Respondents reported the following needs:

- Upgrade existing water and waste water infrastructure and increase capacity;
- More housing options for a range of people;
- Public transport and shuttles, especially within the community and to the airport (connecting to Halifax Transit);



Location of the majority of survey respondents based on 6-digit postal codes



Respondent age range

- Safe routes to school and connectivity between new and existing communities and local assets;
- Accessible walking and biking trails, especially near Nine Mile River;
- More access to natural green spaces and parks;
- Healthcare services and daycares;
- Entertainment (e.g. movie theater, bowling);
- Clothing, footwear and grocery options.

## Land use priorities now and in 20 years

When asked to rank the importance of different land uses, respondents reported similar levels of importance between current priorities for the general area and future priorities for the Lantz study area over the next 20 years. Top priorities included:

- Schools;
- Recreation;
- Environmental Protection;
- Agriculture.

Industry and tourism were consistently ranked as either very or somewhat unimportant.

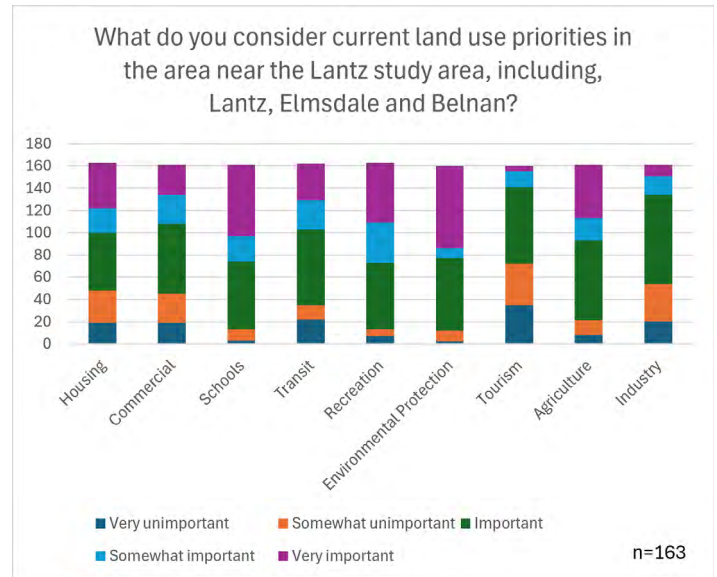
## Meeting community needs

Respondents had many ideas when it came to how the Lantz study area can meet community needs by providing:

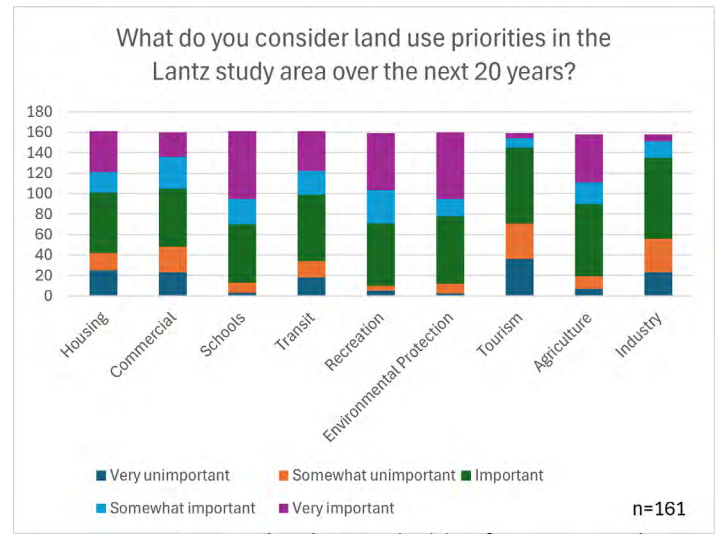
- Greenspace and recreation opportunities
  - » Parks, trails and trees are a priority;
  - » Have undeveloped areas for wildlife;
  - » Space for recreation amenities.
- Housing
  - » Have rural options with single units on large lots;
  - » Have variety and affordability: mixed use, small units, senior living, one level living;
  - » Consider a long term care facility.
- Schools, specifically a high school
- Transportation connections
  - » Connections between communities;
  - » Support transit use with transit hub.
- Economic Development
  - » Walkable downtown core;
  - » Local independent shops;
  - » Medical office space;
  - » Daycare spaces.

Notably, there were mixed opinions on the role of big box stores in the community with some respondents in favor of having more of them to meet local needs, and others opposed.

Other ideas expressed by respondents included having integrated community energy zone, and exploring a new NSCC campus, hospital, fire station and/or museum for Indigenous teachings.



Current land use priorities for general area



Future land use priorities for Lantz study area

“ Allow residents to keep money in East Hants rather than having to travel to the city or Truro for all of our daily needs and provide adequate medical options without having to travel so far ”

“ It's getting wildly unaffordable for the average person to afford a house in our community. ”

## Future infrastructure connections

When asked about how the Lantz study area could support future infrastructure connections, respondents focused on utilizing existing assets and also building on what makes the area unique, namely the natural environment and proximity to Hwy 102 as a major corridor.

Ideas included:

- Utilize new Lantz interchange (8A);
- Connect to existing trails and create new ones, especially along Nine Mile River as active transportation routes;
- Invest in sewer and water infrastructure;
- Enable transit between HRM and Truro;
- Support connections with existing Lantz and Elmsdale subdivisions;
- Build walking and cycling connections to schools;
- Have active transportation connections to Superstore and nearby commercial;
- Establish wildlife corridors;
- Plan for ATV use;
- Plan for commuter rail.

## Vision for the Lantz study area

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked what their 20 year vision for the study area is.

They envisioned the area as:

- Prioritizing the wellbeing of residents;
- Being community oriented and socially connected;
- Protecting the natural environment;
- Prioritizing parks, trails and recreation amenities;
- Having affordable housing;
- Carefully considering building and community design (e.g. aesthetics and character);
- Having unique draws into the community like a Downtown core;
- Supporting the health care and education needs of community;
- Balancing commercial and residential areas.

Notably, a small portion of respondents (7%) reported being against development of the Lantz study area lands. Their concerns were often tied to infrastructure capacity and also wanting to keep undeveloped areas a part of the community.

“ In a rural municipality access to trails, nature and parks is for everyone not just the rich! ”

“ It would be amazing if we could keep the core values that makes east Hants the community it is, which isn't about giant corporations but about local supporting local. ”

“ Please don't prioritize fast over development ahead of a well thought out plan of what this area can support (population wise) and how this community will look on the map. Be different! Be diverse in the development! ”

“ I am concerned about the amount of development proposed in the area. We don't have the infrastructure (water, roads, schools, health care, etc.) to support it ”



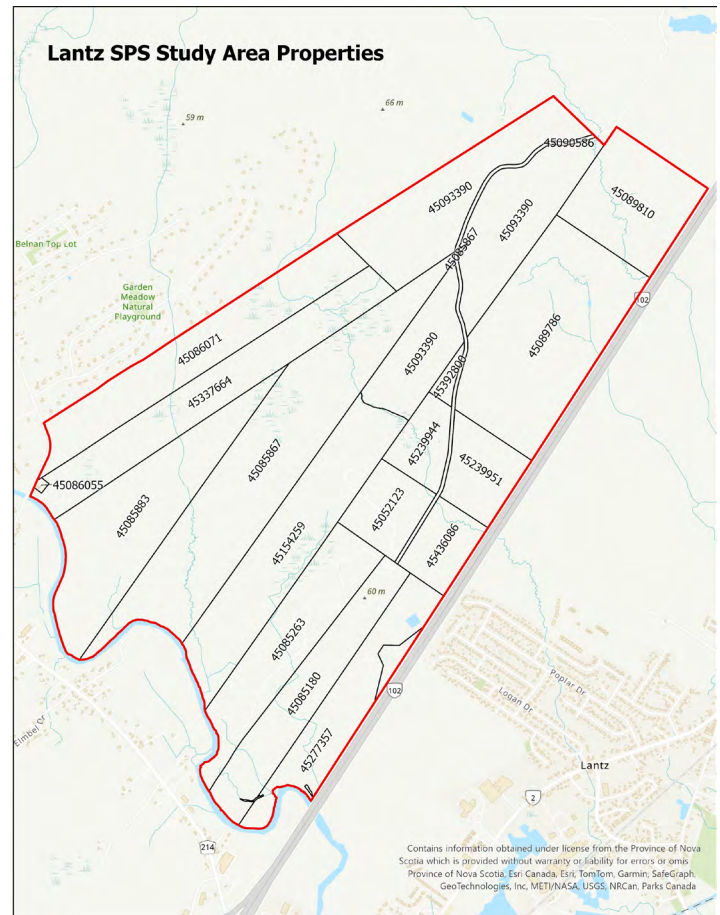
## 4. Landowner Engagement

As part of the Phase 2, Part 1 project engagement, the project team invited land owners within the study area to attend in person individual meetings. Invitations were mailed to the 12 landowners representing 19 parcels 2.5 weeks prior to the proposed meeting date. Four landowners representing 56.4% of the study area requested meetings. FBM staff held these meetings in person at the Municipality of East Hants offices on June 27th. The option to meet virtually was also proposed, though no landowners chose this option.

Key takeaways from these meetings included:

- Annual flooding along Nine Mile River and traffic along Garden Road are concerns
- Landowners expressed a desire for:
  - » Environmental preservation;
  - » Intentional and aesthetically pleasing community design;
  - » Mix of housing options ranging from dense to rural;
  - » New transportation connections;
  - » Safe routes to school and amenities;
  - » New schools, hospital and recreation opportunities (especially for youth);
  - » Improved access to existing land parcels (some of them are currently inaccessible).
- There has been long standing interest in developing near the new Lantz interchange (exit 8A)
- Landowners want more information on the market demand to support development. Some believed there is strong demand, while others believed there is none.

Overall these meetings provided valuable insight into current land uses in the study and the landowners desired future.



Lantz Study Area land parcels ID's supplied by the Municipality of East Hants

## 5. Future Schools Discussion

The project team met with the staff from the Nova Scotia Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) department, and Nova Scotia Public Works (NSPW) real estate team for school site selection on May 22.

This purpose of this initial meeting was to discuss potential future school needs for the Lantz SPS area and how those needs are determined. Key takeaways are noted below.

### School land use needs

- Typically schools need 10-15 acres, depending on busing, recreation needs, etc. Note that busing standards are available and can be shared. When in doubt, plan for more space, not less.
- Close proximity (1-2km) to green space and community assets like libraries and recreation is desirable.
- Low land costs are ideal as DPW prefers to purchase land early and hold title. They don't usually expropriate land for education.
- Info on site selection criteria is available and can be shared.

### Assessing need

- Likely looking at least 10 years out for school development in this area. Local developers have expressed interest in having schools within their developments. It will be up to DPW to determine the most appropriate lands for school development.
- For EECD to assess school needs, they need to have accurate data on current and planned development (e.g. number and type of units, residential density, estimated build out). EECD can integrate municipal data into their scenario forecasts to look at the impact on existing schools. EECD has existing capacity pressure maps they can share.

### Process for developing a business case for school development

1. EECD completes heat mapping to show current school capacity and existing needs
  2. Initial conversations with interested parties. Conversations continue throughout process.
  3. Regional Centre submits a business case on the need for a new facility to the province. These applications are looked at annually and weighted against the 5 year capital plan. There are lots of schools being built right now.
    - » School regions prepare business cases by themselves using a standardized process. Examples of these business cases are available. Need to speak with Chignecto Central RCE about preparing a case for Lantz study area.
- If the province decides to fund the project, the Minister of Public Works can direct staff to start looking at spaces. Site selection report goes to public for comment. After Minister accepts it, project goes to tender. Approximately 3-5 years from tender to build out.

### Next steps

- Meeting attendees asked to be kept in the loop as Lantz SPS project continues to evolve.
- Municipality to share with EECD development statistics (including projected build out) and answers to community planning questions
- Opportunity for Municipality to connect with Chignecto Central RCE contacts about business case.
- Opportunity to follow up with DPW on school site selection criteria and business case examples.
- Project team to consider findings throughout phase 2 of the project.

## 6. Council Visioning Workshop

On the evening of July 15th, the project team hosted a Council visioning workshop at the Municipality of East Hants offices. The workshop began with a short presentation on the project which detailed the project context, phase 1 (Land Survey Analysis) findings, and engagement findings to date including the open house, community survey and landowner meeting key take aways.

For the workshop portion of the event, Council members were divided into 3 self-selected groups to explore local land needs and opportunities, and to discuss a guiding vision for the Lantz study area. Throughout the discussion, Council members were asked to identify their priorities.

### Community needs

Local needs that were identified by Council included the following priorities:

- Affordable housing, housing for seniors, nursing homes, and subsidized housing;
- Sewer and water upgrades;
- Daycare and childcare services.

Other needs included:

- Education facilities (high school, elementary, trade schools);
- Recreation facilities (e.g. field sports, playgrounds, skate parks);
- Medical facilities and general practitioners;
- Fire department and life services;
- Commercial and retail options; and
- Stormwater management.

### Meeting community needs

When asked what opportunities they saw for meeting community needs in the Lantz study area over the next 20 years, Council members identified the following opportunities:

- A variety of housing for everyone (e.g. provincially subsidized housing, co-op housing);
- New police station;
- Transit connections to Elmdsale and HRM;
- Active transportation connections (e.g. river access, bridge to Lantz);

- Educational features (e.g. nature interpretation with wetlands, agriculture/dairy learning opportunities, partnerships with Indian Brook);
- Professional services (e.g. doctors, dentists, vets);
- Entertainment district (e.g. restaurants, bars, hotel, attraction venue);
- Local jobs and industry to keep people in community; and
- Fill commercial gaps (i.e. department store, personal fitness).

Council members also spoke about the need to prioritize protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

### Future infrastructure connections

When discussing potential future infrastructure connections, much of the conversation focused on the need to prioritize sewer, water and stormwater infrastructure. Active transportation connectivity and upgrades to Highway 2 were also discussed.

### Vision for the Lantz study area

Council's vision for the area centered around:

- A density transition (denser development closer to Hwy 102 and lower density development near Garden View);
- A variety of housing types and sizes that are affordable and attainable;
- Road and active transportation connectivity;
- Pedestrian oriented and environmentally sensitive design;
- Retail and commercial spaces of various sizes;
- Services complex with medical, RCMP, community space and library; and
- Education facilities.

Council spoke about the importance of thoughtful and intentional design, and keeping rural ties and feel while growing into an urban hub.

“We don't just want [the Lantz study area] to be a bedroom community of the urban area. We want it to be self-sustaining with a mix of residential, commercial and recreation”

## 7. Staff Workshop

On July 17, the project team hosted a workshop with 16 municipal staff at the East Hants municipal offices. The purpose of the workshop was to provide an introduction to the project, discuss departmental priorities that could apply to the Lantz study area, and explore interdepartmental visions for the study area.

The session started with the same project presentation given to Council. The workshop portion of the session was broken into two parts (A: departmental and B: interdepartmental).

### PART A: Departmental

During the Part A discussion, staff discussed their departmental priorities. All groups were asked “What policy priorities does your department have that should be reflected in comprehensive planning?”. Specific departments were also asked the following questions:

- Corporate & Finance
  - » What tools do we have to finance and support municipal infrastructure in the Lantz study area?
  - » What life safety infrastructure (police and fire department) will be needed over the next 20 years? How can the study area allow for, improve or aggravate the situation?
  - » What commercial development needs or opportunities do you see in this area over the next 20 years?

- Planning & Development
  - » What land use needs or opportunities do you see in this area now and over the next 20 years?
- Infrastructure & Operations
  - » What water and wastewater infrastructure limitations and opportunities exist in this area?
- Parks, Recreation & Culture
  - » What recreation needs do you see over the next 20 years? How can the Lantz study area address these?

Staff shared the following priorities, challenges and opportunities.

### Planning & Development

Departmental priorities

- Identifying where growth happens next. Is this the area?;
- Human scale development and healthy walkable complete communities;
- Mix of housing, affordable housing, social and below market housing;
- Mixed use development;
- Transit ; and
- Road connectivity (i.e. to Garden Road).

Study area challenges

- Water: wetlands, water courses, flooding, stormwater management;
- Servicing capacity;
- Working with multiple property owners.



Municipal staff reporting back on departmental priorities

### Study area opportunities

- Central community park;
- Environmental conservation;
- Recreation/ open space and trails along Nine Mile River;
- Institutional uses: healthcare, schools, police, fire;
- Green energy;
- Storm water best practices;
- Transportation connections; and
- Hwy 102 commercial opportunities for high visibility.

### Infrastructure & Operations

#### Departmental priorities

- Meeting environmental requirements;
- Maintaining local roads, garbage collection, and managing sewer and water services; and
- Active Transportation Infrastructure.

#### Study area challenges

- How to address stand-alone environmental issues;
- Pollution control with any new wastewater treatment facility here;
- Jurisdictional challenges, including needing to expand road specifications if the Municipality is responsible for a new collector road;
- Lack of land for sewer/water connections on the south side of Hwy 102; and
- Establishing new standards for sewer and water systems, and the unserved area of Belnan.

#### Study area opportunities

- Conducting a capacity study for the Lantz lagoon which could inform this work;
- Exploring a separate treatment system for the Lantz study area;
- Implementing grey water systems to reduce potable water demand;
- Improving stormwater management practices;
- Bringing public works crews in-house in new building.

### Parks, Recreation & Culture

#### Departmental priorities

- Non-motorized connectivity across community;
- Identifying and acquiring green space (e.g. passive green space, park infrastructure, likely sports fields assets);
- Recreation assets for all ages and abilities;
- Updates to Parks, Open Space and Active Transportation Master Plan (2017) to record new assets and set a course for the future.

#### Study area challenges

- Playground Development Strategy (2022) identified 600m catchment area for recreation assets based on single detached home density. This is a guideline, not a hard and fast rule. It's hard to plan for future assets scale without knowing future density of study area and demographics. Different users have different needs (e.g. seniors vrs youth).

#### Study area opportunities

- Could accommodate a ~20 acre regional park space servicing the broader community. Ideally this would be a multi-use facility as opposed to multiple stand alone assets. Could be located near new high school.
- Protection and conservation of wetlands by way of land acquisition and donations;
- Horticulture opportunity; and
- Updates to Master Plan will involve community engagement and needs assessment which could help inform the Lantz SPS work.

### Corporate & Finance

#### Departmental priorities

- Shift residential vrs non-residential tax assessment value to rely less on residential;
- Balance cost vrs revenue;
- Meet land requirements (e.g. infrastructure, commercial, NS Power, emergency services, education);
- Minimize land use conflicts; and
- Confirm new road jurisdiction

## Study area challenges

- Complex site with lots of factors, actors and priorities at play;
- Net economic value of land;
- Balance to assessment; and
- Provincial road access.

Study area opportunities: none explicitly identified.

## PART B: Interdepartmental

During the Part B workshop discussion, staff were rearranged into four interdepartmental groups to discuss the following questions:

- How do we achieve and balance departmental priorities in the Lantz study area?
- How can departmental priorities align and support one another?
- What is your overarching vision for the Lantz study area?

Staff provided the following insights.

### Lantz study area priorities

- Planned approach to development with phases for overall infrastructure and development - residential leads development;
- Servicing provides everything community needs;
- Complete and walkable communities;
- Connection to nearby communities, including Belnan;
- Recreation with active and passive open spaces;
- Commercial and mixed use development;
- Bring regulatory bodies into SPS discussions early;
- Ensure collaboration between Municipal departments;
- Manage expectations; and
- Provide public education and resources around new ideas (e.g. ball fields being used for stormwater management - how often they flood and for how long).

## Possible synergies

- Staff identifying and working together on similar priorities. Departmental master planning and the Strategic Plan can support this work;
- Explore benefits of underground power from Emergency Management, transportation and infrastructure perspectives;
- Bringing schools and recreation assets together presents a joint use opportunity;
- Active transportation connections to nearby commercial;
- Optimize flood zones with complementary uses like sports fields and parkland;
- Complete communities represent their own synergy; and
- Green infrastructure, environmental best practices and land use planning to make servicing easier [and more climate resilient].

## Lantz study area vision

Amongst the groups, similar themes emerged about what the study area should become:

- The Lantz study area represents an future evolution to a more complete, walkable and human scale urban community;
- This is a chance to comprehensively plan for a 'complete' corridor;
- Desire to have rural and urban living in harmony. Transformative opportunity for community;
- Focus on human scale design, sense of arrival and place making;
- Have a new downtown/ main street area to draw people in;
- Opportunity to design community to be climate resilient and self sustaining (e.g. grey water recycling); and
- Meet recreation needs of changing community.

Through this workshop, staff showed a keen interest in interdepartmental collaboration and proactively planning for the Lantz study area to meet multiple municipal and community needs.

## 8. Key Takeaways & Next Steps

This round of community and stakeholder engagement focused on understanding the study area context, defining community and municipal needs, and exploring a vision for the Lantz study area to inform the Lantz SPS project. Throughout these conversations, there were a number of reoccurring themes and ideas as shown below.

### Prominent community needs and study area opportunities

*In order of most to least frequently reported*

- Housing
  - » A variety of affordable housing options including but not limited to: large lots/ rural living options, smaller/denser units, barrier free, accessible, ground oriented, mixed use, senior living, subsidized housing, co-ops.
- Education
  - » High school & elementary school (to be confirmed with EECD);
  - » Trades school / college.
- Recreation
  - » Active transportation infrastructure and connections;
  - » Regional park space (multi-use facility).
- Environmental protection for sensitive wetlands and watercourses;
- Water and wastewater capacity upgrades;
- Healthcare and daycares (staffing and space);
- Commercial
  - » Utilize Hwy 102 for commercial visibility;
  - » Walkable 'downtown' core;
  - » A range of unit sizes;
  - » Entertainment options;
  - » Clothing, footwear and grocery options.
- Connectivity
  - » Transit throughout community and to HRM;
  - » Road connections between new and existing communities and local assets.
- Community services
  - » Life services (fire & police);
  - » Library;
  - » Community centre.

### Vision

The Lantz study area is envisioned as an intentionally planned and phased developed spanning the area between Highway 102 and Garden Meadows subdivision. Higher density commercial and residential uses are envisioned near the Highway for ease of access and visibility.

This area is intended to be a place where urban and rural living blend harmoniously together while celebrating the assets and history which make this area unique. Development should respect and integrate with the natural environment by protecting environmentally sensitive lands and providing recreation opportunities to connect with nature.

Development should be aesthetically compatible with the surrounding community and human scale with a range of residential and commercial unit sizes and types. The goal for this area is to design a complete community with unique local draws, services and employment opportunities that benefit the broader community.

Overall the Lantz study area is envisioned to be a point of connection between Elmsdale, Lantz and Belnan. It's location between all three communities presents a rare opportunity to establish a shared central downtown, while supporting active transportation, transit and vehicle connections throughout the community.

### Next steps

As the project team proceeds with the Phase 2 - Part 1 deliverables, we will be looking to confirm the identified needs through the market analysis (residential, commercial, light industrial) and servicing review. We will also work with the Municipality to determine if and when additional regulatory bodies such as Nova Scotia Power and other actors like NSCC should be brought into the project to discuss their land needs.

In Phase 2 - Part 2 we will be reconnecting with municipal staff, landowners and the public to discuss design directions and seek feedback. We anticipate this round of engagement will take place in October and November 2024.



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