Shelbourne Valley Action Plan Update

PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

November 2024 – January 2025

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INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The process to update the Shelbourne Valley Action Plan began in September of 2024, after Council approval of the Terms of Reference. The purpose of the project is to evaluate changes since the Plan was adopted in 2017 and update land use and other policies to better align with the provisions in the Official Community Plan and address current planning priorities. The Shelbourne Valley Action Plan identified a comprehensive vision and implementation strategy to guide land use and transportation decisions in the Shelbourne Valley area over a 30-year period.

Figure 1 shows the project phases. The focus of this report is on Phase 2 engagement, which allowed the public and other interested parties to share their ideas for the update of plan. The feedback received will be considered in preparing the Draft Update Plan which will later be presented to the public for review in phase 4.

Figure 1: Phases and Timeline of the Shelbourne Valley Action Plan Update

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
Project Initiation and Preliminary Assessment	Plan Evaluation	Plan Update	Draft Plan Review and Refinement	Plan Adoption
Sept-Oct 2024	Nov-Jan 2025	Feb-Apr 2025	May-Jun 2025	Jul 2025

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of engagement activities and feedback received during Phase 2 (Plan Evaluation) of the Shelbourne Valley Action Plan Update.

ROLE OF ENGAGEMENT – PHASE 2: PLAN EVALUATION

The objectives of the engagement activities in this phase are to:
• Provide updates on the progress of the plan and related initiatives to the public
• Gather feedback from the public and stakeholders on the assessment of the plan
• Identify and address key issues to achieve plan goals
• Review and gather ideas for future land use designations

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PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Community engagement opportunities presented to the public and stakeholders included webinars, open house events and online feedback. An online survey was also provided to allow the public to communicate their views and preferences regarding potential changes to the Plan. A summary of engagement activities is provided below:

NOTIFICATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

13,093 postcards were mailed to residents and businesses in and around the study area. The postcards outlined the purpose of the Plan, the phases and upcoming engagement opportunities.

Social media posts on Facebook and X (Twitter) were used to promote the Plan Update timeline, webinars, online survey and in-person open house events.

Members of the public were encouraged to follow the project page on HelloSaanich to receive email notifications on the Project. The project email svp@saanich.ca was also open for receiving questions, comments and suggestions on the Plan.

WEBINARS

Webinars were hosted on November 15th, 2024, at 12:00pm and November 19th, 2024, at 7:00pm, summarizing the existing Plan and the work to be completed in the various phases of the update. 59 people attended the first webinar and 50 people attended the second webinar. Recordings of these webinars were also posted on the project website for the public and other interested parties to view at will.
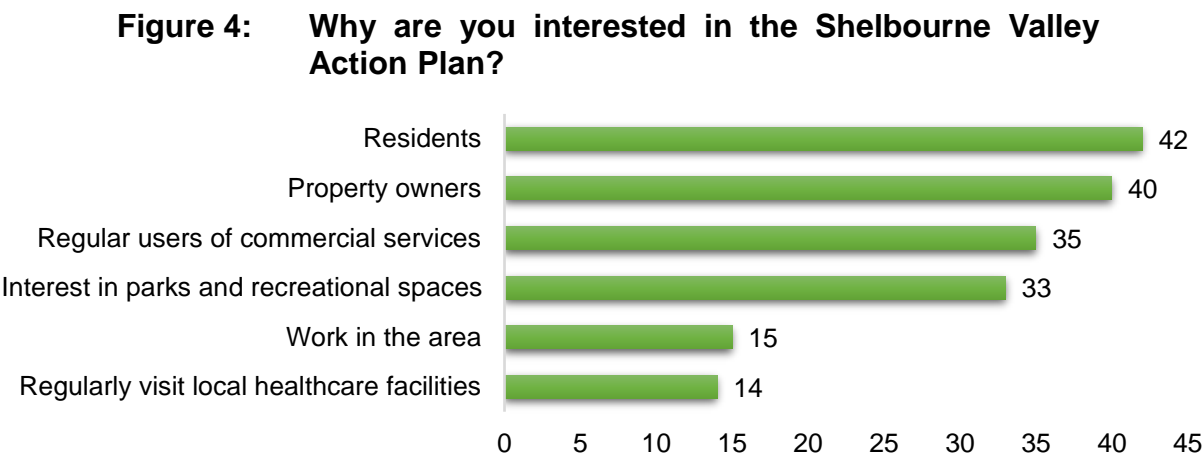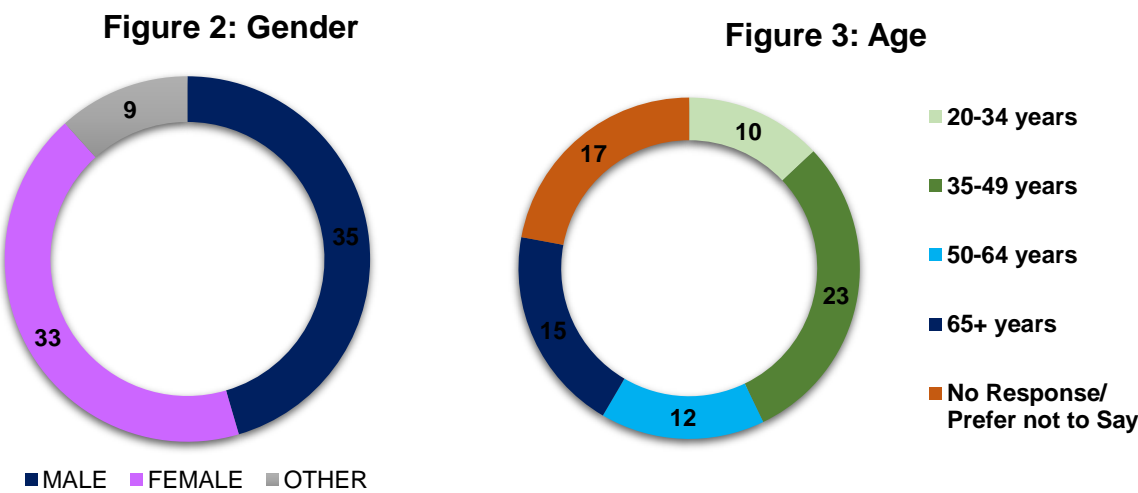
OPEN HOUSE EVENTS

The District of Saanich held open houses with 99 people in attendance on November 21st, 2024, and 143 people on November 26th, 2024, between 4:00pm and 8:00pm. These sessions served as an informative platform where attendees engaged directly with staff to gain insights into the progress of the plan and its associated initiatives. The events facilitated exchange of ideas and collection of feedback from both the public and stakeholders on key planning issues as well as necessary changes to achieve the goals of the Plan. 340 Post-its containing various comments were collected from open house boards. These notes are summarized in the "What We Heard" section of this report

ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was launched from November 18th to December 16th, 2024, to receive feedback from the public on potential ideas for future land use changes and important infrastructure improvements in various areas within the Plan. 77 people completed the online survey. A detailed summary of the feedback received is presented in the "What We Heard" section of this report.

WHO WE HEARD FROM – SURVEY

77 individuals comprising 35 males, 33 females, and a smaller representation from nonbinary/gender-diverse individuals participated in the online survey (Figure 1). Most participants have resided in the area for an extended period, with 16 individuals having lived there for over 20 years. Figure 3 shows the age distribution of the survey respondents, while Figure 4 shows why they decided to be involved in the process.

Figure 2: Gender

- MALE ■ FEMALE ■ OTHER

Figure 3: Age

- 20-34 years
- 35-49 years
- 50-64 years
- 65+ years
- No Response/ Prefer not to Say

Figure 4:   Why are you interested in the Shelbourne Valley Action Plan?

WHAT WE HEARD

This section summarizes feedback collected from both an online survey and open house events. The survey assessed community perceptions regarding the goals of the 2017 Plan, recent developments, and potential land use changes. It highlighted concerns about housing affordability, transportation, and environmental impacts. Feedback from the open house included further discussions and examination of the survey questions, as well as other matters of concern within the planning area.

SUMMARY OF ONLINE SURVEY FEEDBACK

The survey aimed to evaluate the success of the 2017 Plan by assessing the eight established goals. The performance of recent developments in the area since the Plan was adopted and perception on various ideas for potential land use changes, including the understanding of housing preferences and important improvements in the area were also reviewed.

Evaluation of 2017 Shelbourne Valley Action Plan Goals

Figure 5: **To what extent do you agree that the Plan has been successful towards achieving its Goals?**
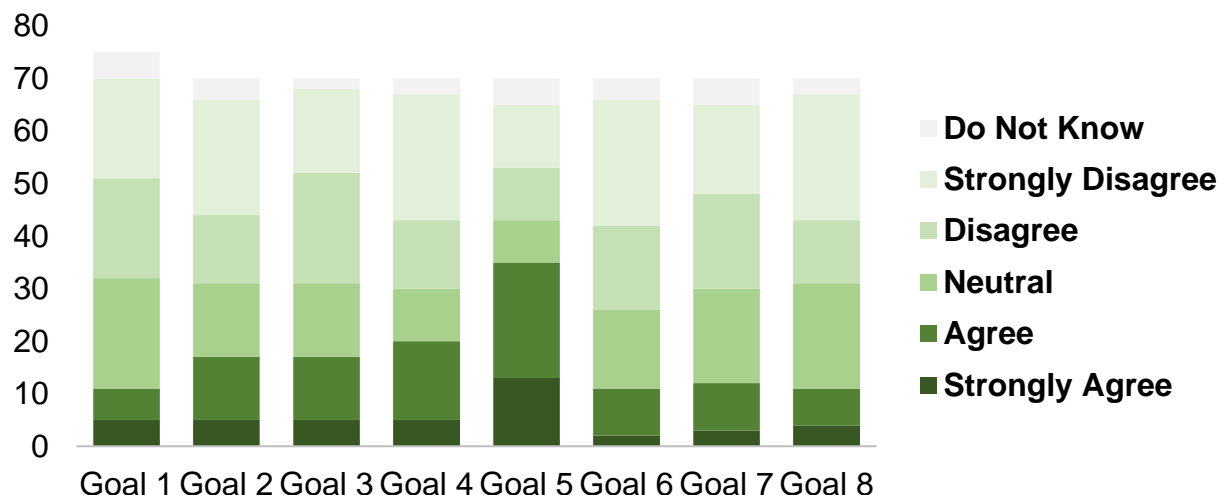
The Plan goals are:
- **Goal 1:** Protect and Restore the Natural Environment
- **Goal 2:** Address climate change mitigation and adaptation
- **Goal 3:** Develop economically vibrant and attractive centres and villages
- **Goal 4:** Respond to the needs of all ages and abilities
- **Goal 5:** Enhance opportunities for cycling, walking and transit
- **Goal 6:** Improve housing choice and affordability
- **Goal 7:** Strengthen the network of community spaces and facilities
- **Goal 8:** Enhance sense of place and identity

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The respondents recognize the Plan's efforts in promoting cycling, walking, and transit (Goal 5) and developing attractive centers (Goal 3), though opinions on their success vary. Goals responding to needs of all ages and abilities (Goal 4) are similarly seen as praiseworthy. Improvement in housing choice and affordability (Goal 6) is identified as a major challenge, with a lack of perceived progress. Neutrality and low awareness of these goals exist, suggesting a need for better communication. Recent actions in the Urban Forest and Biodiversity Conservation Strategies are expected to improve outcomes for Goals 1, 2, and 3.

Additionally, respondents expressed concerns about the impact of increased construction in the area. Concerns include tree removal, green space loss, and conflicting goals of environmental restoration versus population growth. Many doubt that the existing infrastructure can handle increased density, fearing strains on healthcare, education, emergency services, and community spaces. Traffic and safety issues were also noted, with bike lanes seen as problematic for drivers, especially seniors and those with disabilities. Despite this, some aspects such as new bike lanes were applauded. There is a call to re-evaluate the plan to better balance development and community needs.

Assessment of Recent Developments in the Shelbourne Valley

Figure 6:   How well you think recently constructed mixed-use and apartment buildings have contribute to the following items?
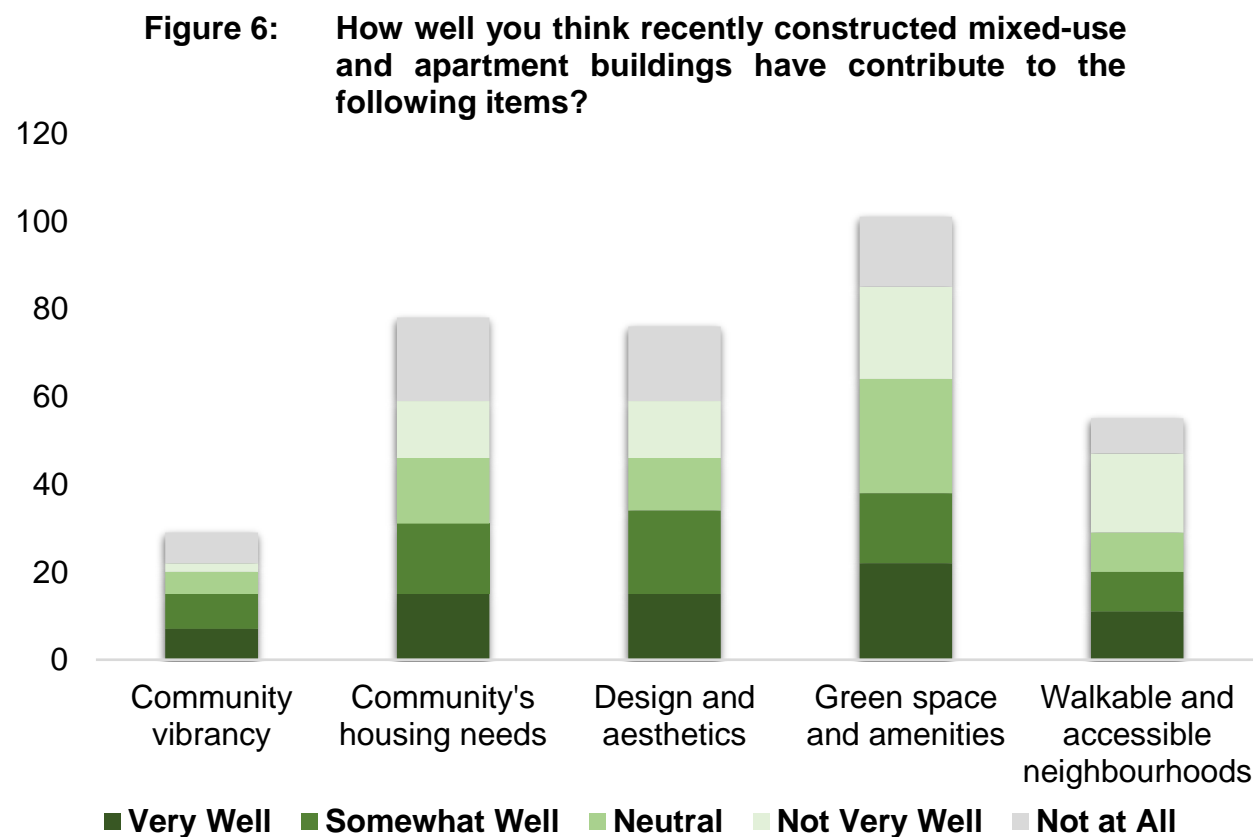
The respondents express mixed views on recent Shelbourne Valley developments. While positive feedback exists about increasing housing density to enhance affordability and support public transit, dissatisfaction regarding new developments meeting housing needs, boosting community vibrancy, and achieving desired design, aesthetics, and green space improvements prevail. Many respondents like the added amenities that the mixed-use developments have introduced in the neighbourhood and would like to see more of these developments along Shelbourne Street. Nevertheless, concerns about traffic congestion, environmental impacts, parking problems, affordability, subsidized housing scarcity, and inadequate infrastructure persist.

Plan Area

Figure 7: **Which sub area(s) in the Shelbourne Valley Action Plan are you interested in?**
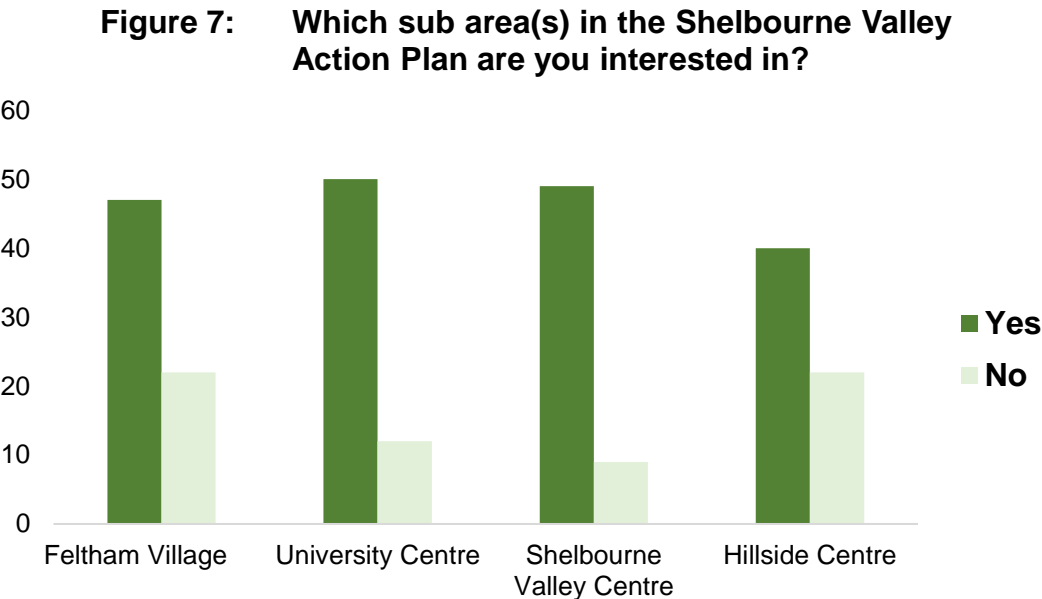
Interest in the four sub-areas in the plan is nearly equal (Figure 7). Respondents were referred to the draft Quadra McKenzie Plan for further details on planning in the Shelbourne-McKenzie Centre.

Potential Locations and Distribution of Commercial Developments

There is general support for more commercial activity, especially along Shelbourne Street and near key intersections like Cedar Hill Cross Road, Hillside Shopping Mall, and Pear Street. While enhancing commercial activity is supported, opinions differ on implementation and concerns exist about the vision's impact on various community segments. Skepticism arises about the 15-minute neighborhood's practicality in adverse weather, at night, and for individuals with disabilities. Doubts also persist about the viability of new retail spaces due to challenges faced by retail businesses in the area.
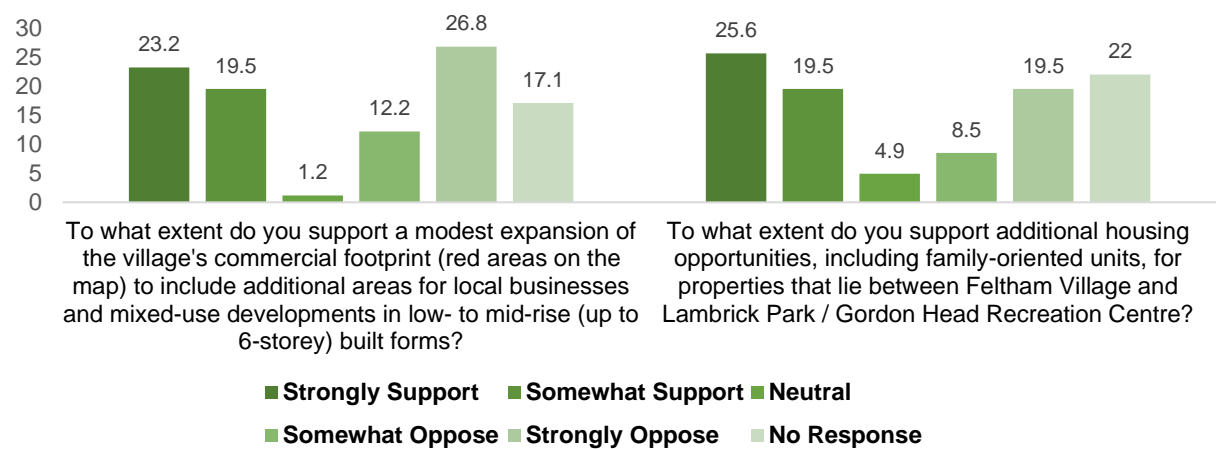
Opinion on Possible Land Use Change, Housing Options and Improvements

The survey assessed public support for potential land use changes and key infrastructure improvements in three sub-areas of the Plan. Respondents suggested additional housing options like cooperative and social housing, and single-family homes, alongside the six provided options. They also proposed classifying 3–4-bedroom units as family-friendly, rather than 2-3 bedrooms.

Feltham Village

Figure 8: **Support for Potential Land Changes in Feltham Sub-Area**

To what extent do you support a modest expansion of the village's commercial footprint (red areas on the map) to include additional areas for local businesses and mixed-use developments in low- to mid-rise (up to 6-storey) built forms?

To what extent do you support additional housing opportunities, including family-oriented units, for properties that lie between Feltham Village and Lambrick Park / Gordon Head Recreation Centre?

■ Strongly Support ■ Somewhat Support ■ Neutral
■ Somewhat Oppose ■ Strongly Oppose ■ No Response

There is support for expanding the village footprint and increasing housing density, contingent on infrastructure upgrades and avoidance of high-rise developments. Also, doubts about the potential of enhancing walkability in village through these new developments exist. Key village improvements desired are detailed in Figure 9.

Figure 9: **Specify the two most important improvements you would like to see in Feltham Village?**
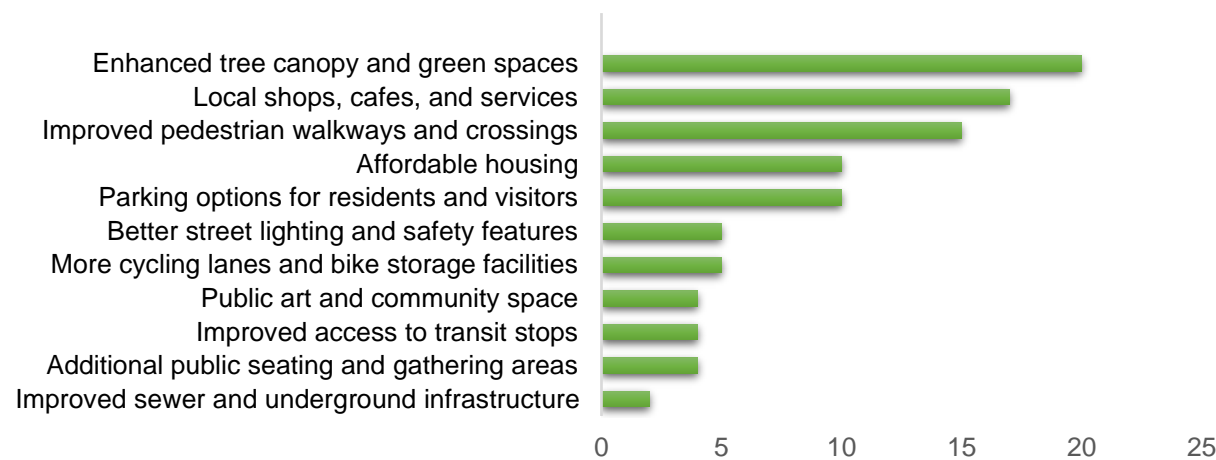
Summary of feedback on future housing options in selected suitable locations include:

- The area between Feltham Village and Lambrick Park / Gordon Head Recreation Centre due to its proximity to amenities and transit / active transportation routes
- Along Feltham Road, a key transit and potential secondary corridor
- The area between Shelbourne Street and Blair Park

Figure 10:   What future housing options would you support on properties in the area between Feltham Village and Lambrick Park / Gordon Head Recreation Centre?
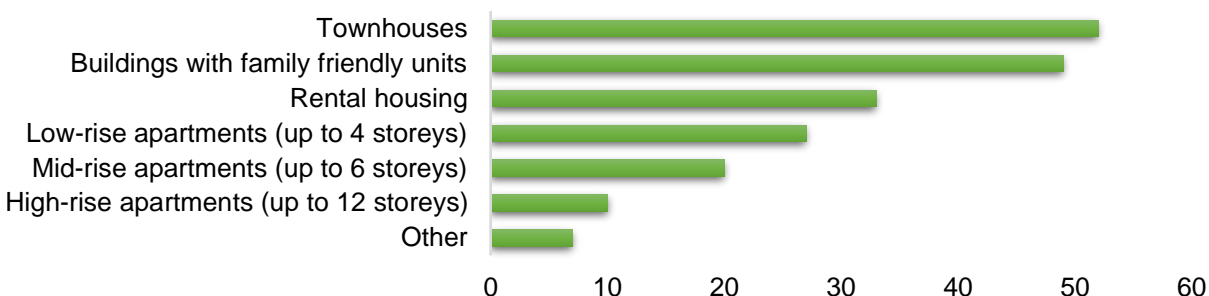

Figure 11:   What future housing forms would you support on / in close proximity of Feltham Road (east of Shelbourne Street)?
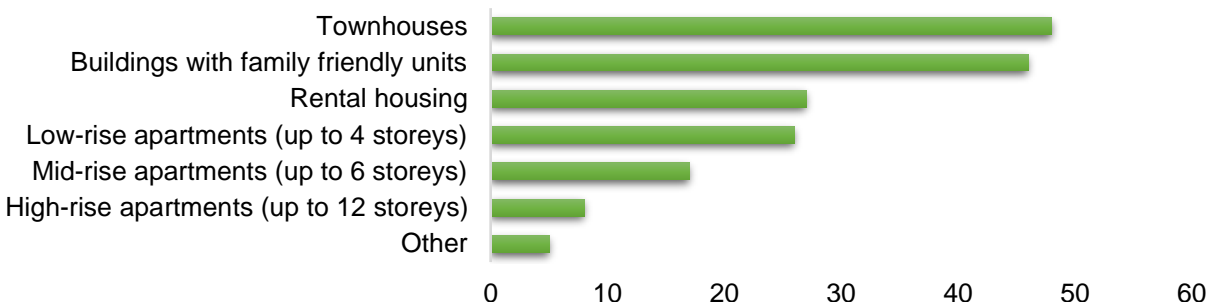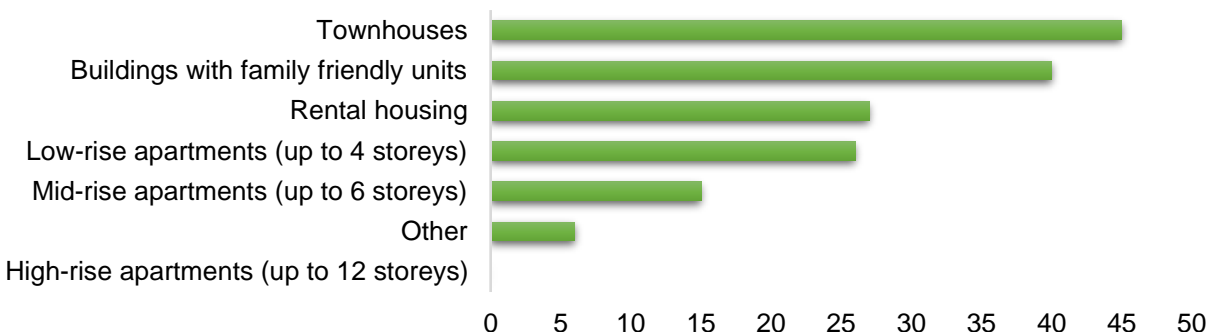

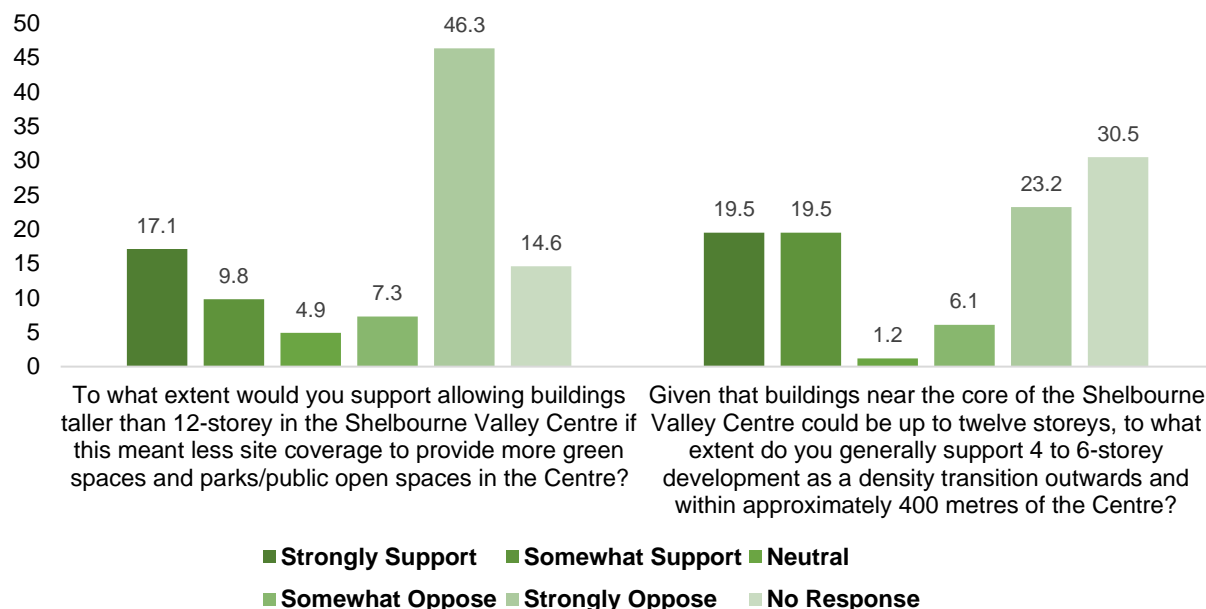**Figure 12:   What future housing forms would you support in areas between Shelbourne Street and Blair Park?**

Figure 13:   Support for Potential Land Changes in Shelbourne Valley Center

To what extent would you support allowing buildings taller than 12-storey in the Shelbourne Valley Centre if this meant less site coverage to provide more green spaces and parks/public open spaces in the Centre?

Given that buildings near the core of the Shelbourne Valley Centre could be up to twelve storeys, to what extent do you generally support 4 to 6-storey development as a density transition outwards and within approximately 400 metres of the Centre?

■ Strongly Support   ■ Somewhat Support   ■ Neutral
■ Somewhat Oppose   ■ Strongly Oppose   ■ No Response

There is considerable opposition to buildings over 12 stories in Shelbourne Valley Centre, despite potential benefits like more green spaces. The idea of a 4 to 6-storey transition outwards and within approximately 400 metres of the Centre also faced resistance; however, there remains a high-level of support for this idea. Some respondents argue that high-rise buildings are inappropriate for Saanich, expressing concerns about issues such as increased shade, reduced access to Vitamin D, and a rise in depression rates.

Figure 14:   What future housing forms would you support in areas between Shelbourne Street and Horner Park?
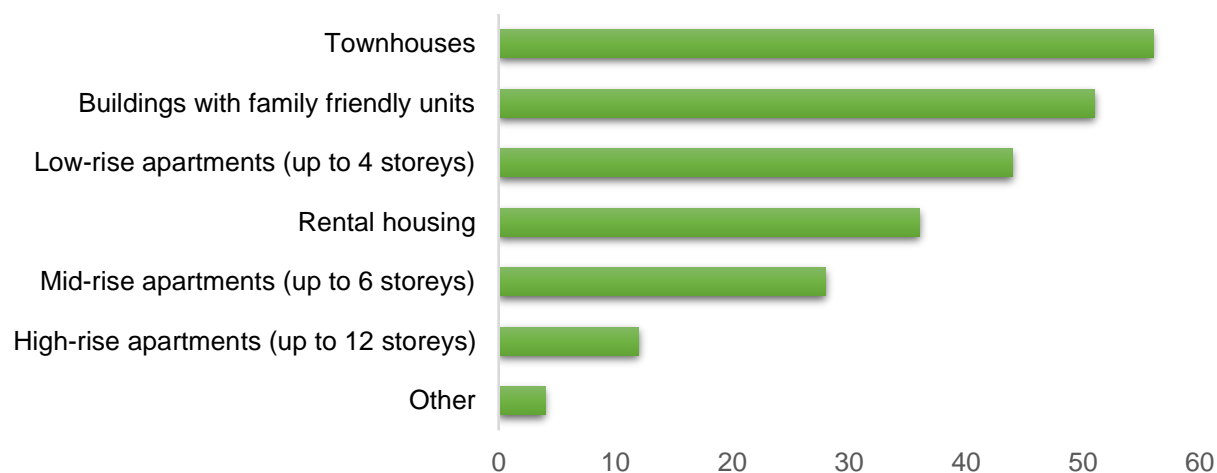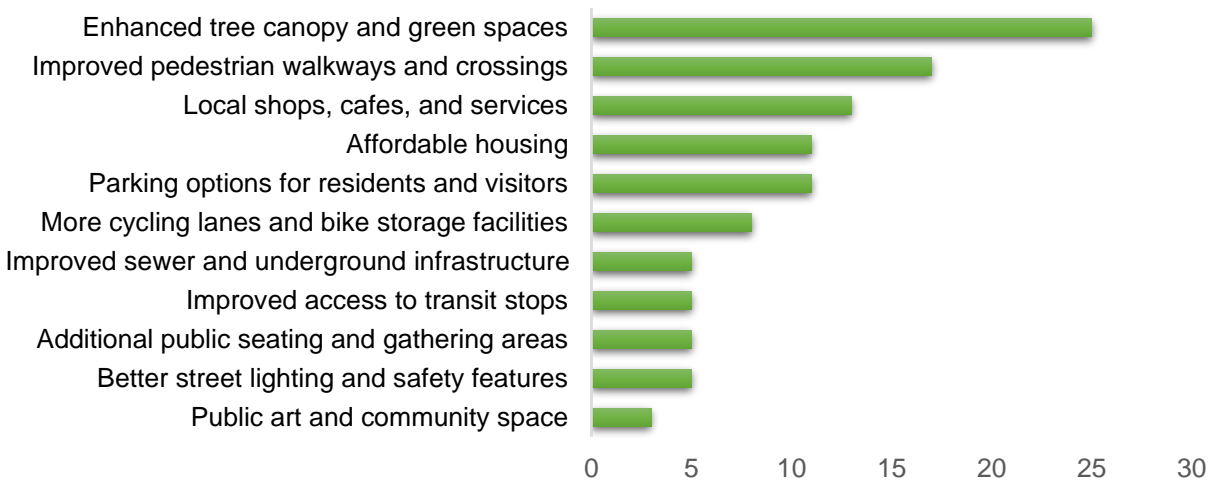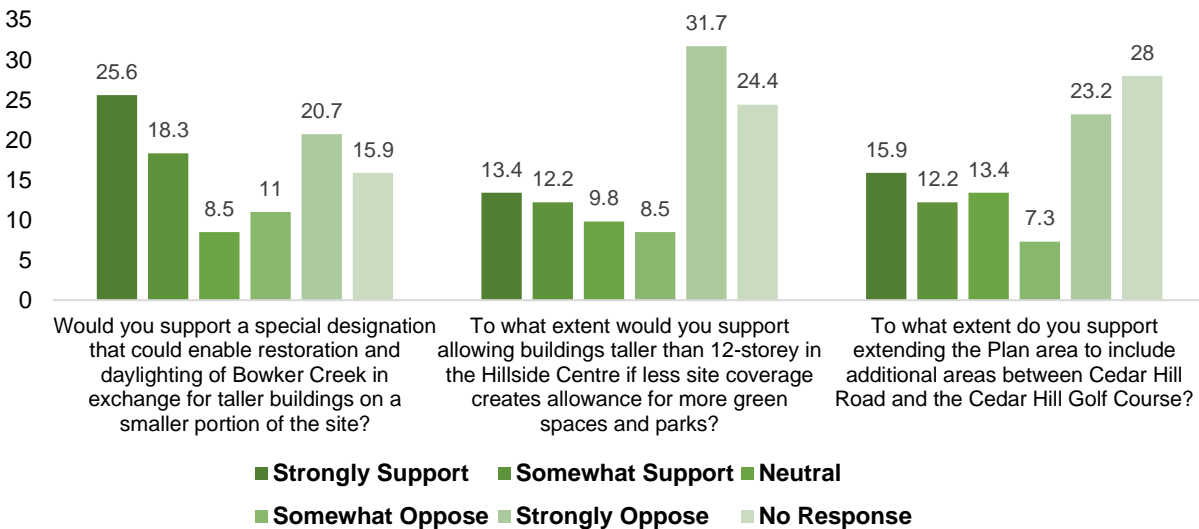
Figure 15: Specify two most important improvements you would like to see in in the Shelbourne Centre?

Improvement	Value
Enhanced tree canopy and green spaces	25
Improved pedestrian walkways and crossings	17
Local shops, cafes, and services	13
Affordable housing	11
Parking options for residents and visitors	11
More cycling lanes and bike storage facilities	8
Improved sewer and underground infrastructure	5
Improved access to transit stops	5
Additional public seating and gathering areas	5
Better street lighting and safety features	5
Public art and community space	3

The improvements prioritized in the Shelbourne Valley Center are the same as in Feltham Village.

Hillside Center

**Figure 16: Support for Potential Land Changes in the Feltham Sub-area**

Legend: Strongly Support, Somewhat Support, Neutral, Somewhat Oppose, Strongly Oppose, No Response

Would you support a special designation that could enable restoration and daylighting of Bowker Creek in exchange for taller buildings on a smaller portion of the site? — 25.6, 18.3, 8.5, 11, 20.7, 15.9

To what extent would you support allowing buildings taller than 12-storey in the Hillside Centre if less site coverage creates allowance for more green spaces and parks? — 13.4, 12.2, 9.8, 8.5, 31.7, 24.4

To what extent do you support extending the Plan area to include additional areas between Cedar Hill Road and the Cedar Hill Golf Course? — 15.9, 12.2, 13.4, 7.3, 23.2, 28

The idea for a special designation around Bowker Creek to enable more density and daylighting was widely accepted. There is also substantial support for extending the Plan area's boundaries and increasing density in Hillside Center, especially away from busy

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roads, and including areas between Cedar Hill Golf Course and Cedar Hill Road. The suggestion to preserve single-family neighborhoods, like on Earlston Avenue, was noted.

Figure 17: What future housing forms would you support in areas between Lansdowne Road and Mcrae Avenue (East of Shelbourne Street)?
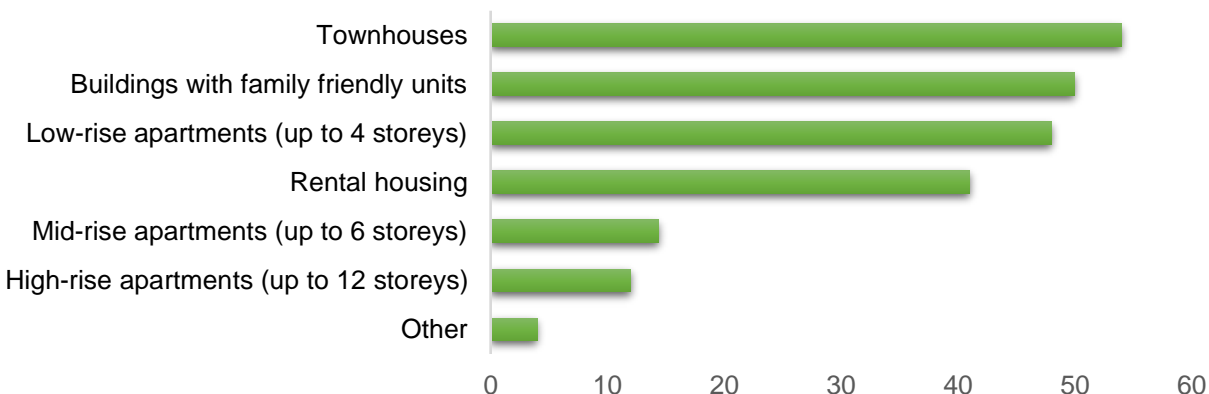
Housing preferences in the sub-area align with other Plan areas, showing some support for mid- and high-rises. Feedback was sought for the area between Lansdowne Road and McRae Avenue due to transit, employment, amenities, and educational facilities.

Figure 18: Specify two most important improvements you would like to see in Hillside Center?
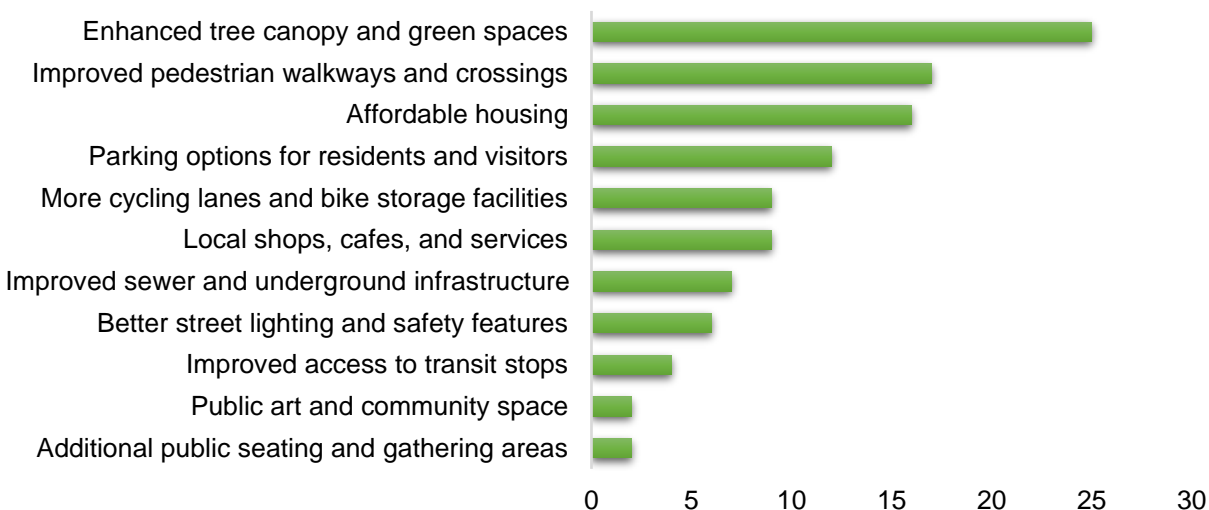
There is more demand for affordable housing in Hillside Center, with suggestions to build high-rises over existing plazas, rather than in residential neighborhoods. Other specific demands include improved transit, traffic light coordination and road planning along North Dairy Road.
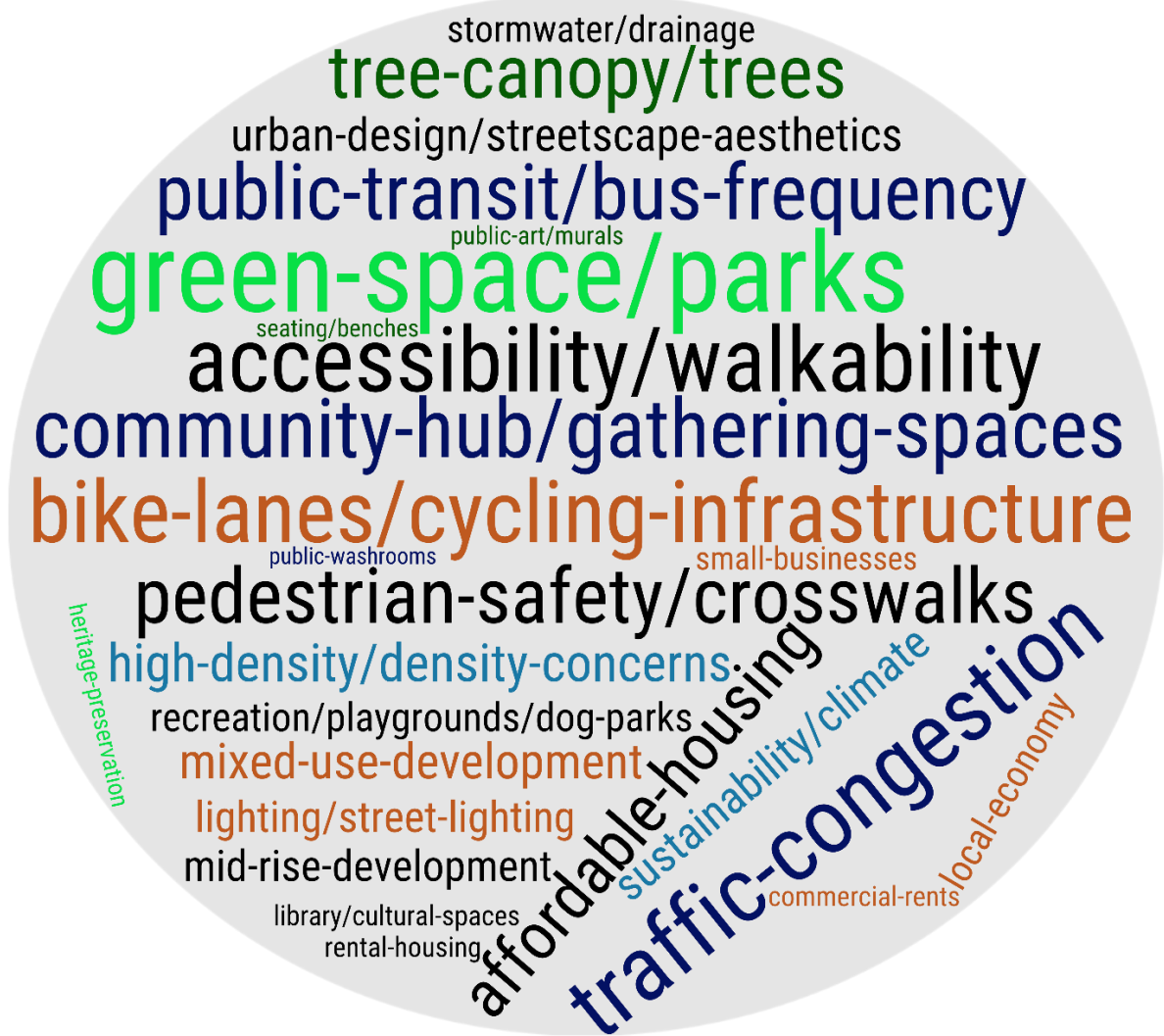
Shelbourne-McKenzie Centre (University Centre)

Despite being directed to the draft Quadra McKenzie Plan, comments were received on the Shelbourne-McKenzie Centre. This includes support for development and increased density, despite concerns about traffic, infrastructure, aesthetics and neighborhood character. Common demands include more public spaces and amenities, such as pedestrian islands and the return of stores like Save On Foods.

SUMMARY OF OPEN HOUSE FEEDBACK

Details from sticky notes on open house boards are summarized by prominent words and phrases, as depicted in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Key Themes and Voices from Open House Events

stormwater/drainage
tree-canopy/trees
urban-design/streetscape-aesthetics
public-transit/bus-frequency
public-art/murals
green-space/parks
seating/benches
accessibility/walkability
community-hub/gathering-spaces
bike-lanes/cycling-infrastructure
public-washrooms   small-businesses
pedestrian-safety/crosswalks
heritage-preservation
high-density/density-concerns
recreation/playgrounds/dog-parks
mixed-use-development   affordable-housing   sustainability/climate   traffic-congestion   local-economy
lighting/street-lighting
mid-rise-development
commercial-rents
library/cultural-spaces
rental-housing

What we heard at the open house events are summarized under the following themes aligned with the objectives set in the 2017 Shelbourne Valley Action Plan.

Environment and Climate Change

Most of the participants expressed strong support for preserving existing green spaces, enhancing tree canopy coverage, especially in Feltham, and improving stormwater management (with reference to the Bowker Creek) in the study area.

Few comments under this theme include:

* *"We need to protect existing trees along Shelbourne. Too many have been removed already -what's the plan to replace them?"*

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- *"The valley needs more green spaces, not just development. Look at how Feltham has changed -it's lost so much greenery."*
- *"Stormwater drainage is a disaster in some areas. Heavy rains turn sidewalks into small rivers."*
- *"How about integrating green roofs and more urban forests? Other cities are doing it."*

Transportation and Mobility

Traffic congestion and pedestrian safety emerged as major concerns, particularly along Shelbourne, McKenzie, and Hillside. Participants advocated for improved cycling infrastructure, better transit services, and safer pedestrian crossings.

Few comments under this theme include:
- *"Shelbourne needs dedicated bus lanes. Traffic is unbearable, and buses get stuck like everyone else."*
- *"Pedestrian safety at McKenzie is a joke. Crosswalks feel like death traps, especially for kids and seniors."*
- *"Bike lanes are great, but they need to be protected. Just painting a line on the road doesn't make cycling safe."*

Housing and Development

While there is support for increased housing options, concerns persist over high-density developments altering neighborhood character. Many participants preferred mid-rise and mixed-use developments.

Few comments under this theme include:
- *"Affordability is a huge issue. New developments seem focused on investors, not residents who actually live here."*
- *"We need more family-sized rental housing. Not just micro-apartments—where are families supposed to live?"*
- *"Density is fine, but where's the infrastructure to support it? More people means more pressure on schools, parks, and transit."*
- *"McKenzie corridor could be a great place for mid-rise housing, but high-rises would change the character too much."*

Business and Economic Development

Residents emphasized the need for affordable commercial spaces to support small businesses, along with a more diverse retail mix to enhance economic vitality.

Few comments under this theme include:
- *"Local businesses are being pushed out because of high commercial rents. This is killing the unique character of our neighborhoods."*

- *"Why do we keep getting more chain stores? Support for small businesses is lacking."*
- *"There should be incentives for businesses that create community spaces—cafés, bookstores, coworking hubs."*

Community Spaces and Social Inclusion

Many participants highlighted the need for more gathering spaces, improved accessibility, especially for seniors and people living with disabilities, and enhanced public amenities such as washrooms, seating, and street lighting.

Few comments under this theme include:
- *"Seniors and people with disabilities are struggling with sidewalk conditions. Ever tried pushing a wheelchair on Cedar Hill?"*
- *"We need more public washrooms, especially in high-traffic areas like Hillside."*
- *"It's impossible to navigate certain areas at night due to poor lighting. Some places feel unsafe."*
- *"We need a real **community hub**. Something like a public plaza with seating, a market, and event spaces."*
- *"Playgrounds are too far apart in some areas. More small parks within walking distance would be great."*

Urban Design and Sense of Place

There was strong support for public art, heritage preservation, and streetscape enhancements to reinforce a distinct and inviting neighborhood identity.

Few comments under this theme include:
- *"Public art makes a city feel alive. More murals, sculptures, and interactive spaces would bring the community together."*
- *"New developments should reflect local character. Everything is starting to look generic."*
- *"Hillside used to have a unique feel—now it's just parking lots and big box stores."*

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Figure 20: Cross Section of Participants at the Open House Events

CONCLUSION

There is general support for improvements and development in the Shelbourne Valley, though opinions differ on implementation. Concerns include increasing traffic, maintaining community character, ensuring affordability, and providing adequate infrastructure and green spaces. Some question the necessity of more housing, suggesting that taller buildings should not be the sole method for creating green space. The necessity of a sustainable plan that meets current and future needs was also emphasized.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will consider the feedback received in Phase 2 (Plan Evaluation), and directions from the on-going Quadra McKenzie Plan process to revise 2017 Shelbourne Valley Action Plan. This will involve updating land use and height designations, developing draft scenarios, and aligning policies with recent initiatives. In Phase 4, a draft updated Plan will be open for public review and feedback before being presented to the Council.