

City of Vernon
Official Community Plan and Transportation Plan Update

What We Learned Report

Submitted to:

City of Vernon
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engage delaney

ENGAGEMENT, FACILITATION, COMMUNICATIONS & CHANGE

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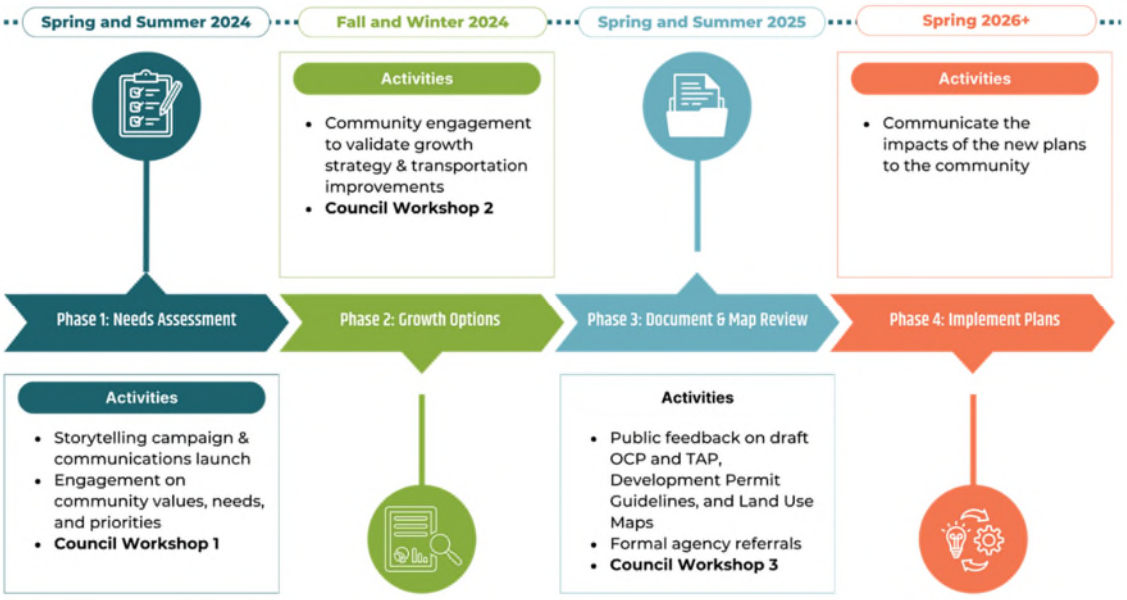
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Executive Summary

Background

The project has the following phases:

Phase 1: Needs Assessment | Spring and Summer 2024
Phase 2: Growth Options | Fall and Winter 2024
Phase 3: Document and Map Review | Spring and Summer 2025
Phase 4: Implement Plans | Spring 2025+



In Phase 1, the coordinated review of both the OCP and TP was supported by community and interested parties engagement, informed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) planning methodology and core values.

The communication and engagement process for this phase included 10 in-person workshops (eight Engage Delaney facilitated workshops and two led by City staff), nine community pop-ups and an online survey. In May and June 2024, interested and affected parties were invited to participate by:

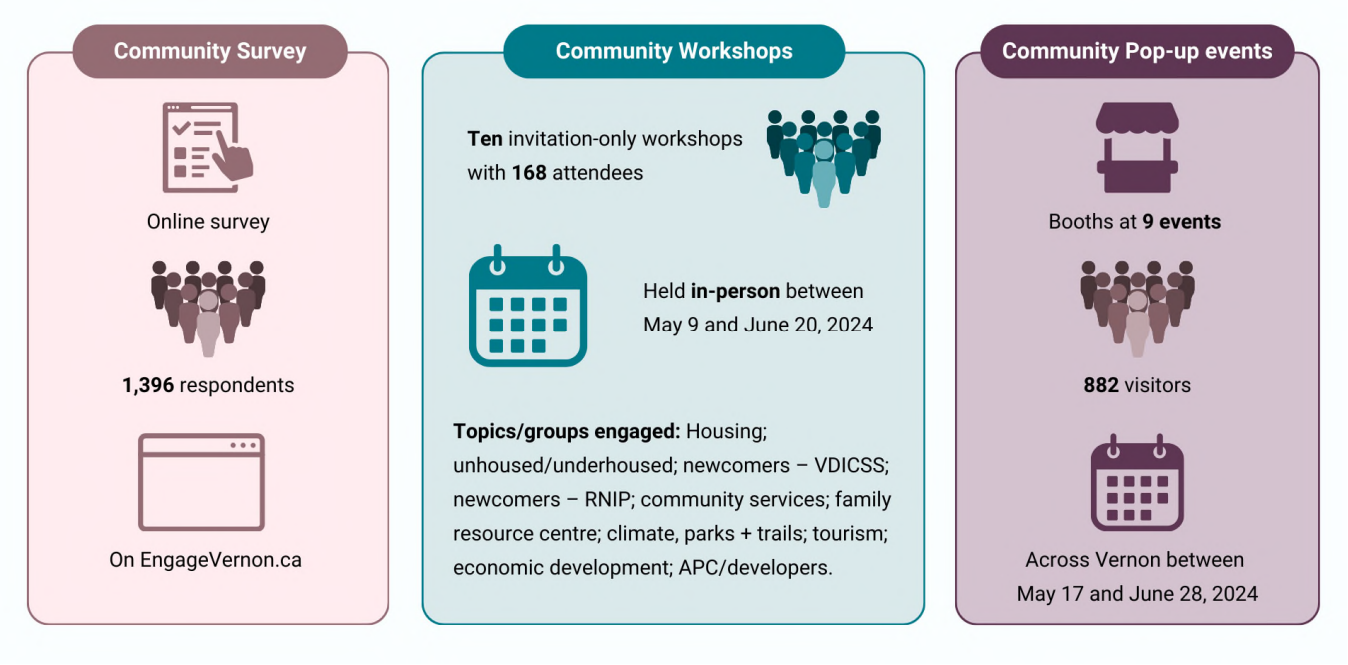
- Completing an open online survey
- Participating in one of eight community workshops
- Attending a community pop-up
- Contacting a City of Vernon liaison
- Providing a written submission

The engagement focused on eight objectives, emphasizing equity and inclusion. These objectives, distilled from community conversations about how they wanted to be engaged in the OCP and Transportation Plan process, are:

- Ensure all community members have the opportunity to participate
- Build community trust, understanding and participation over time
- Help community members understand the impact or result of their participation
- Provide community members with clear and accessible information
- Accommodate diverse engagement preferences
- Make participation fun
- Make participation safe for staff and community members
- Be transparent in how community feedback is being gathered and used

The City of Vernon shared detailed information about the project on the Engage Vernon website.

A total of 2,466 members of the public participated in the engagement process, including 1,396 survey respondents and 168 workshop participants. Following the engagement process for Phase 1, the feedback was analyzed for key themes and takeaways to complete a needs assessment for the Official Community Plan and Transportation Plan.



Key Findings

Through the community engagement process, much was learned about the community's needs, interests, values and priorities. Key findings are listed below from what was learned.

Community Workshops

Housing and Community Planning

- Workshop participants identified affordability and housing diversity as critical issues, with a focus on reducing stress, depression and anxiety around housing, providing hope and stability by ensuring the right housing options are available at the right time for all residents of Vernon.
    - They called for inclusive, affordable housing solutions for various demographics, including families, youth, and seniors.
    - Diverse housing options and permitting and regulatory changes, including addressing high land and development cost, were discussed to improve accessibility and affordability, alongside a strong call to significantly reduce and eventually eradicate homelessness, ensuring stability and appropriate housing solutions for all community members.
- There was also an emphasis on housing being conveniently located near parks, recreation, shopping, and transit, emphasizing a preference for increased density and building up rather than out, particularly in the downtown area.
    - The importance of transit-oriented development, mixed-use developments, urban tree canopy expansion, and mindful placement of tall buildings to preserve landscapes and views was also highlighted.
- Overall, the aim is to create a cohesive, sustainable, and inclusive urban environment with well-connected and safe neighbourhoods that really work for people.

Economic Development

- Generally, emphasis was placed on overcoming the small-town mentality and embracing growth.
- Discussions focused on enhancing employment and business support by increasing services, simplifying development processes, and attracting diverse industries.
    - Many participants linked local business support back to the need for accessible, affordable housing for staff.
    - Local economic growth was encouraged through investment in businesses, expanding amenities, and fostering vibrant neighborhoods with accessible shops and services, and promoting Indigenous-owned businesses and innovative financial systems for sustainable development.
- Participants also emphasized tourism as a key strategy to enhance Vernon's economy.
    - Participants suggested increasing the city's visibility through extensive promotion and community engagement, improving tourism infrastructure with more hotels and a convention center, and supporting arts, culture, and agri-tourism.

- The importance of visual branding and consistent, positive messaging was highlighted, along with integrating tourism strategies into broader community plans for sustainable growth.

Community, Social Services and Wellbeing

- Addressing the needs of vulnerable residents, participants advocated for increased youth programs, expanded childcare, specialized senior care, and comprehensive support for the unhoused were important themes.
  - To support and combat loneliness among vulnerable residents, participants suggested building active, inclusive communities with social spaces and fostering a sense of opportunity and support for all community members.
- Improving healthcare access and services was also emphasized, focusing on harm reduction initiatives, mental health facilities, and extended emergency response capacities.
  - Participants also recommended regulatory changes to support social services and streamline processes between cities and healthcare systems, aiming to create a healthy, inclusive, and supportive community.
- Enhancing community engagement and education was highlighted, with calls for better outreach, collaboration among organizations, and expanded educational opportunities.

Climate and Environment

- Workshop participants emphasized the importance of natural resource management, focusing on preserving natural spaces, protecting biodiversity, and managing water resources.
  - There was an emphasis on avoiding urban sprawl, protecting natural corridors, water conservation, promoting native plant use, and implementing comprehensive environmental plans.
- Participants also stressed the need for climate resilience in city planning, advocating for zero-carbon new builds, green infrastructure, and fossil fuel independence.
- Enhancing urban green spaces and agricultural investment were highlighted as key areas, with suggestions to increase green spaces, promote organic farming, and support agricultural tourism.
- Emergency preparedness, particularly for wildfire risks, was also a major focus, with calls for better evacuation procedures, fire-smart community strategies, and updated landscaping bylaws to mitigate fire hazards.

Parks, Recreation and Trails

- The need for diverse recreational activities and enhanced community spaces in Vernon was a key topic of discussion.
  - Improving the cleanliness, safety, and accessibility of parks, creating more indoor event spaces, and fostering community engagement and connection through festivals and cultural activities were key themes.

    - Participants also highlighted the importance of vibrant nightlife, inclusive events, and year-round activities, particularly for young adults and teens.
- There was also a strong focus on enhancing accessibility and inclusivity in recreational facilities to cater to all ages and abilities, ensuring that community spaces are vibrant, welcoming, and well-maintained.

Transportation

On this topic, five main theme areas emerged in the workshops:

- **Public transit and personal vehicle alternatives**: Participants called for improved public transit with more routes, frequency, and extended hours, enhanced alternative transportation options, and increased accessibility and affordability of public transit.
- **Roads**: The emphasis was on enhancing road infrastructure for safety and reduced congestion, improving signage for better wayfinding, and better accommodations for non-car traffic.
- **Walking and bike trails**: Increased walkability and bike-ability with better connectivity, year-round maintenance, and integrated paths and trails were the main points made on this theme.
- **Scooters and mobility devices**: Participants would like to see better scooter program affordability, dedicated lanes, enhanced safety and end-of-trip facilities for those using scooters and mobility devices in Vernon.
- **Parking:** The emphasis was on increased downtown parking, addressing parking complaints, and balancing parking needs with sustainability efforts.

Survey and pop-up events

Living in Vernon, Now and in the Future

- Vernon is highly appreciated for its access to nature and the outdoors, favourable climate, and for having a small-town feel with good access to amenities.
- The most important community improvements participants would like to see in Vernon in the next 20 years are:
    - More trees, parks, green spaces and environmentally protected areas
    - More lakeside places to shop, eat, and enjoy
    - Paths connecting parks and beaches to shopping and dining areas
    - Improved safety and security in parks and public spaces
- When it comes to other public investments in the next 20 years, the top five are:
    - More housing options for everyone
    - Connected transportation network for all modes
    - More small-scale neighbourhood shops and cafes
    - Renewing and improving existing infrastructure
    - More indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities
- Overall, to make Vernon an even better place to live, work and play over the next 20 years, the top five topics are focused on improving:
    - Housing and affordability

- Infrastructure and maintenance
- Transportation
- Community safety and environment
- Economic development and employment

Housing

- Participants say that meeting housing needs for everyone is best done by ensuing there are more units for purchase at attainable prices. More rental-only units are seen as a secondary strategy.
- Townhouses or rowhouses and apartments of up to six stories are the most desirable forms of housing, followed by duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes and secondary suites/dwellings.

Transportation

- For Vernon to meet its goal to build a safe and accessible transportation network that offers many ways to move around, participants want the focus to mostly be on:
  - New paths and trails for walking and biking
  - More transit routes and connections
  - Support for more regional transit options
- Participants by and large feel safe moving around their neighbourhood using any transportation mode; safety downtown is somewhat lower, most notably when walking, scooting, biking, wheeling or using a mobility device.

Project Context Statement

The City of Vernon is a growing climate-resilient community with support and systems in place that enable residents to thrive, businesses to prosper, and encourages community participation. The province of British Columbia projects that the City of Vernon will welcome 20,000 new residents by 2045, bringing the total population to 65,000 residents.

The City has started reviewing both their Official Community Plan (OCP) and Transportation Plan (TP) in 2024, which will be concurrently updated in 2025. An OCP is a comprehensive framework that includes the highest level, overarching policies for the City, designates land use and guides the long-term development of a community. The Vernon OCP plans to do so by addressing key areas such as Housing and Neighborhood Development, Transportation and Infrastructure, Climate and Environmental Stewardship, Economic Development, and Recreation, Parks, and Trails.

A Transportation Plan guides the development and growth of a community's transportation system in alignment with the OCP. The City of Vernon's TP aims to enable safer and easier

transportation choices for everyone, covering areas such as public transit, roads, scooters and mobility devices, walking and biking trails, and parking.

These new plans will be created to reflect both the current and future needs of the community. By moving the plans forward together, the documents will be more complementary (i.e. eliminate conflicting or redundant text), more streamlined (i.e. options analysis considers land use and transportation changes together, reducing iterations), less costly, and more efficient (i.e. steps like population projections, public engagement, and documentation design are completed at the same time).

Communication and Engagement Synopsis

Communications Goals and Objectives

Engage Delaney, a neutral third-party hired to support the engagement process, applies the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) planning protocol and spectrum (see Appendix A) to all its communication plans. The following was the overarching communications goal for the project.

> *By late 2024, build shared understanding about the project, the opportunities for community engagement and a sense of collective opportunity and responsibility to help shape the future of Vernon.*

Below are all the projects' communications objectives and those noted in bold were for Phase 1. All communications objectives are at the INFORM level of the IAP2 spectrum.

1. **By Summer 2024, share information about the engagement process so that all parties understand how to participate, where they can go to learn more about the project and process, and how their feedback will be used in developing options for the OCP and Transportation Plan.**

2. **By Summer 2024, clearly communicate the definitions of an Official Community Plan and of a Transportation Plan, and how revising them concurrently will support and build on a vibrant and growing community.**

3. **By Summer 2024, share information about the timelines for implementation of the OCP and Transportation Plan, including short-medium and long-term horizons, as well as Vernon's population projections for 2045.**

4. **By Summer 2024, clearly communicate recent changes in legislation from the province so that participants in the process understand the scope of engagement within the influence of the City.**

5. By spring 2025, clearly communicate the decision before Council and the anticipated timelines for the adoption of the Official Community Plan and the Transportation Plan.

6. Following each phase of engagement, report back on what was learned through the engagement and recognize the contributions of those who participated in the process.

Engagement Goals and Objectives

The engagement goal is the overarching purpose for the engagement and identifies the intention of the City in its engagement efforts with the community and interested parties.

For this project, the engagement goal is:

> *We will encourage the full and meaningful participation of the community in the process of reviewing our Official Community Plan and Transportation Plan to the extent possible within the provincially regulated timeline. We will ensure that the contributions of all community members that participate within the project timeline are heard and valued. We commit to ensure that these plans are informed and enriched by the results of the community engagement process.*

Engage Delaney applies the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) planning protocol and spectrum to its engagement plans (see Appendix A for the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement). The overarching engagement objective for this phase of the project is:

> *To involve key community partners in invitational events (i.e. workshops) to build relationships and facilitate collaboration and a deeper understanding of key priorities and initiatives held by these organizations.*

Phase 1 Communications Approaches

To effectively engage the community and ensure broad participation in the Phase 1 engagement process, the City of Vernon implemented a comprehensive communications plan, which utilized various channels and methods.



Project Webpage - A dedicated project webpage (engagevernon.ca/ocp-tp) was launched on the Engage Vernon site. This webpage provided comprehensive details about the OCP and TP updates, including the project background, timeline and project team contacts. It also highlighted various opportunities for community participation, such as a link to the online survey and dates of the upcoming community events.

Media Releases and Print Ads - Media releases were created and disseminated to announce the launch of the project, providing key information to the public. Additionally, full-page ads were placed in the Vernon Morning Star newspaper, featuring detailed information about the updates and inviting the community to participate in the engagement process.
Social media - Social media played a significant role in the communication strategy. Posts on different channels and platforms included calls to action, encouraging residents to share their visions for the community and participate in the online survey.

Radio Advertisements - Radio interviews and ads were also part of the outreach efforts. In addition to an interview conducted on Beach Radio, multiple radio ads were aired on Beach Radio and Pure Country, reaching a broad audience and emphasizing the importance of community input.

Community Pop-Up Events - The City organized several community pop-up events at local markets and festivals, such as the Vernon Farmers Market and the Polson Night Market. These events provided residents with direct access to City Planning Team members, allowing for face-to-face communication and information sharing.

Direct Mail and Email Invitations - Postcards were mailed to all homes and businesses in Vernon, outlining how residents could share their input and get involved. Email invitations were also sent to specific community groups and stakeholders, encouraging diverse perspectives in the workshop sessions.

Phase 1 Engagement Approaches

The following engagement approaches were used:

Community Survey – An open, online survey was developed by the project team and hosted on the Engage Vernon project page. Survey links were shared with residents, businesses, community partners and interested and affected parties via an open link that was accessible to the public in paper and online form. These engagement surveys were open to all through self-selection.

Workshops– A series of in-person **workshops** were held with participants and organizations representing a diverse cross section of interested parties in Vernon. Five of the workshops were dedicated to engaging with under-represented groups who would otherwise be missed and the agencies who work with them. The other five workshops were dedicated to Council Committees and organizations with related interests. The workshops included facilitated discussions to bring together multiple perspectives for input. *Participants were required to register to attend these sessions using Event-Brite or through invitation by non-profit organizations in the city*.

Community Pop-Ups – These highly engaging community outreach pop-ups provided an opportunity for education, connection, calls to action to engage, and building relationships in the community. The pop-ups included colourful project information banners, interactive survey boards, a discussion board, and City branded takeaway items. They were held at community events, community centers, night markets, etc. The pop-ups promoted the story telling campaign and encouraged people to participate in the online survey.

Project Liaison – A designated City of Vernon staff member was available to provide information and answer questions from the community throughout the active engagement period and support engagement through the City's project page. This individual was able to interview and engage community members as requested and was available to support ad hoc requests for information.

Outside the scope of this report, but included within Phase 1 of the engagement, was a workshop with Council on July 30. The goal of this workshop was to share preliminary community feedback from the phase and seek Council's input on the content for consideration in the draft plans.

Engagement by the Numbers

Engagement Method	Number of Participants
Online engagement survey	1,396
Workshops	168
Community pop-ups	882
Project liaison contacts (Calls/letters/emails)	20
TOTAL	**2,466**

Engagement Numbers: **Workshops**		
Date	Attendance	Theme/Groups Invited
May 9, 2024	19	Housing – Housing Action Advisory Committee
May 13, 2024	19	Unhoused/Underhoused
May 14, 2024	11	Newcomers – Vernon & District Immigrant & Community Services Society (VDICSS)
May 15, 2024	16	Newcomers – Rural Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP)
May 16, 2024	7	Priority Sector/Community Services
June 3, 2024	13	Family Resource Centre
June 11, 2024	29	Climate, Parks and Trails – Climate Action Advisory Committee
June 12, 2024	16	Tourism Commission
June 13, 2024	13	Economic Development Advisory Committee
June 20, 2024	25	Development - Advisory Planning Committee

Engagement Numbers: **Pop-ups**		
Date	# Engaged participants	Event
May 17, 2024	25	Belonging Art Show (VDICSS Event)
May 27, 2024	45	CARE Community Expo
June 6, 2024	62	Vernon Senior's Fair
June 7, 2024	108	Polson Night Market
June 9, 2024	47	Go by Bike Wrap Up Event
June 14, 2024	55	Polson Night Market
June 15, 2024	374	Sunshine Festival
June 21, 2024	63	Polson Night Market
June 28, 2024	103	Polson Night Market

Engagement Numbers: **Engagevernon.ca Page Highlights**	
Data until June 30, 2024	
Total Page Visits	4,830
Document Downloads	160
Total Survey Visits	2,244
Total Survey Respondents	1,396

What We Learned

The following section of the report summarizes what was learned in the community workshops. Each of the sections articulates a key theme and subthemes from the workshops. The overarching themes are divided between Official Community Plan themes and Transportation Plan themes.

Community Workshops

Official Community Plan

1. Housing and Neighbourhood Development

Affordability

The most pressing issue which was consistently identified in every workshop was the need for more inclusive and distributed **affordable housing** throughout the city targeting seniors, working-age, youth, newcomers and low-income individuals. Key suggested strategies included maintaining at least a 10% vacancy rate to allow for more ease in the market and as a positive indicator of housing availability, increasing housing supply, and offering more rental and ownership options. Policies such as incentives for long-term rentals, adjustments to subsidies, and the creation of a centralized housing hub were discussed.

The high cost of land, development, rentals, and home purchases is seen as compounding the problem, making it difficult for people to secure housing they can afford. Additionally, we heard that many people see younger generations leaving Vernon for advanced education and career opportunities. This is coupled with the challenge of limited affordable housing options, making it difficult for them to stay local or return home after completing their education. Many participants shared how young adults want to return to Vernon but feel they cannot because there are few affordable housing options and limited opportunities for careers that would pay for their housing needs.

Participants also highlighted the importance of reducing stigma around affordable housing, ensuring equitable access and fostering sustainable growth to attract young families and professionals. Overall, the focus was on creating diverse, inclusive, and environmentally friendly housing that meets the community's diverse housing needs.

> *Affordable housing, maybe more rental properties especially for newcomers. Rebates on rental properties or rental units that will encourage property owners to include more rental units and also keeping a cap on how high the rent could go so that the rental prices aren't as skyrocketed as they are today.*
>
> May 15 Workshop Participant

Housing Diversity

Another key theme is the demand for **diverse housing options** that cater to the needs of different demographics, from youth, to families, to seniors. Key points included the inclusion of RV parks, single-family homes, low-rise buildings, and apartment-style condos to ensure a broad range of choices. Emphasis was placed on flexible and accessible housing inventory that can accommodate different life stages and household sizes, including intergenerational living, pet-friendly options and family-friendly housing, which is often referred to as “the missing middle”.

The discussions also covered the need for co-ops, social housing, and non-market housing to support affordability and community living. Some also highlighted the need for workforce housing, youth housing, and ground-oriented tiny home communities for older adults to age in place. Some participants noted that in some instances there are community members who are “over housed” i.e.: too much housing for their needs, and others who are “under housed” i.e.: insufficient housing for their needs. This dialogue, in part, lead some to question the idea of aging in place within the original family home, vs aging within the community in more “right-sized” housing. Additionally, planning for more housing near the college is viewed as a key component to meeting the community's evolving needs. Lastly, there were discussions on the importance of engaging residents in building decisions and ensuring connected, inclusive housing that offers choice, control, and independence for everyone, regardless of age or ability.

> *Housing options for working age group older adults living at home or cared for at home - in laws - intergenerational pony doors - flexibility accommodating life cycle.*
>
> May 9 Workshop Participant

Housing Regulations and Policy

Several initiatives were suggested regarding **regulatory and policy changes** to improve affordability, inclusivity and accessibility of different housing options. Participants for example recommended reducing strata rules to create more flexible living environments. Strengthening landlord-tenant relationships through education and adopting income-tested rental pricing structures were proposed to better manage tenant risk and implement rent caps on units rather than individuals.

The importance of maintaining strong relations and partnering with stratas to support retrofits and increase equity was highlighted. Finally, there was a strong call to reduce homelessness through aiming for a 75% reduction in homelessness and ensuring a higher vacancy rate to make housing more accessible, with the ultimate goal of eradicating homelessness altogether.

The focus is on reducing stress and fear around housing, providing hope and stability by ensuring that the right housing options are available at the right time.

Fewer strata rules – cars, pets, kids, visitors, etc.

May 9 Workshop Participant

Partner with stratas to assist in changing retrofit (pay back loan) increasing more equity.

June 11 Workshop Participant

2. Urban Planning and Infrastructure

Community Planning

On the theme of urban planning and infrastructure policies, key points include exploring the opportunities for collaboration between all areas of Vernon, as well as for collaboration with the surrounding communities to enhance cohesive planning and regional coordination, updating design guidelines, and ensuring housing is conveniently located near parks, recreation, shopping, and transit. Participants also emphasized the preference for increased density and building up rather than out, particularly in the downtown area.

The importance of transit-oriented development, urban tree canopy expansion, and mindful placement of tall buildings to preserve landscapes and views was highlighted. Infrastructure improvements to support population growth, waterfront development, and amenities in residential areas were also discussed. Some participants underscored the need for forward-thinking strategies that acknowledge community growth, promote active living, reduce urban sprawl, and integrate electricity underground when doing redevelopment. It was highlighted that creating a city designed around people, enhancing urban cohesion, and maintaining a fluid, regularly reviewed urban planning approach should be a priority.

Having pockets of high-density areas placed around town. This will space our living areas while integrating the community without congesting traffic. Maybe less 55+ places and more entry level family options.

May 15 Workshop Participant

Partnerships

Participants highlighted the need for public-private partnerships**.** They suggest the city partner with non-profits and private developers to ensure a mix of affordable units and streamline the development process. There is an emphasis on increasing density of housing and strategic purchasing of properties to aid in social housing and development, as well as designing mixed-use developments to integrate residential, commercial and recreational spaces.

Explore partnership with private developers - % of affordable units protected pricing.

May 9 Workshop Participant

Create a partnership with OKIB for planning.

June 13 Workshop Participant

Partner with developers on housing solutions.

June 20 Workshop Participant

Policies

Another key theme discussed amongst participants was improving zoning, permits, and regulations, focusing on modernizing and streamlining processes to facilitate development and promote flexibility. Key suggestions include adopting forward-thinking permit and zoning practices, streamlining permitting and embracing flexible zoning regulations. From a financial perspective, emphasis is placed on waiving development costs, lowering fees, and simplifying approval processes to make property purchase and building easier. The importance of mixed-use and inclusionary zoning is also highlighted, along with the need for better integration between municipalities to reduce bureaucracy and support developers.

Additional suggested initiatives included adopting best practices in policies, offering density bonuses for green buildings, and making zoning changes along lakefronts to improve accessibility and amenities. The overall goal this discussion highlighted was the need to create a more efficient, supportive, and adaptive regulatory environment to encourage sustainable and inclusive development.

Reduce bureaucracy - better integration between municipalities - streamline processes - governments working together - permit approval streamlined - developers supported - more effort to attract developers.

June 13 Workshop Participant

Community Engagement

Another major theme is fostering connected and informed communities. Key points include implementing strategies to reduce NIMBYism, actively listening to residents and involving those most impacted in decision-making processes, especially regarding affordability and senior housing. Emphasizing the importance of social connections, participants advocated for housing that facilitates neighbourly interactions through common areas and community hubs. Some participants noted that there can be “small town” mentalities that can stifle progressive growth.

One of the strategies participants identified to enhance community engagement was to enhance neighbourhood connectivity through active resident involvement. Efforts to keep communities informed about development projects were seen as crucial for creating buy-in and maintaining a small-town atmosphere within denser urban developments. Moreover, it was mentioned that a heightened sense of community security could be achieved through improved lighting in certain areas or neighbourhoods. Overall, the feedback proposes building organized, cohesive communities responsive to change, with well-connected spaces that encourage interaction and a sense of safety and togetherness.

> *Residential communities are connected = communities are things with cultivated place to interact / gather*
>
> June 11 Workshop Participant

3. Economic Development

Tourism

A key theme arising from discussions on strategies to enhance economic development in Vernon was tourism. Key suggestions included increasing the city's visibility and attractiveness to tourists by promoting Vernon extensively and engaging in community conversations about raising its profile. It was also noted that some event organizers are not coming to Vernon in late summer for fear of cancellations or impacts due to wildfire and/or wildfire smoke as there are very limited indoor locations that events could use if the need arose.

The need for more hotels and improved tourism infrastructure, such a convention center, shopping centers, and enhanced recreational facilities, was emphasized. Supporting tourism through arts and culture, seasonal dispersion of tourists, and waterfront accommodations was also highlighted, along with promoting hidden local gems and agri-tourism.

There was an emphasis on the importance of visual branding, resident participation as ambassadors, and consistent, positive messaging. Policies to integrate tourism strategies into broader community plans and ensure long-term, well-managed tourism growth were also discussed, with the aim of creating a thriving, culturally diverse, and economically robust Vernon.

> *Community hub with tourism attraction; consistent, positive messaging.*
>
> June 12 Workshop participant

Employment and Supports for Businesses

Additionally, many participants advocated for enhancing employment and business support through various strategies. Key initiatives brought up included increasing employment services, promoting diversity in industry, and creating more job opportunities in retail, childcare, and indoor

activities. The focus was on supporting local businesses with trade centers, exhibitions, grants, and promotions, as well as simplifying business development processes and improving the City's reputation as a business-friendly location. It should also be noted that many participants linked local business support back to the need for accessible, affordable housing for staff.

Strategies to attract a working-age demographic, larger employers, and young professionals were also discussed, alongside the promotion of local tours to support local businesses and diversify industry job opportunities. Participants shared a variety of ideas, many of which are outside of jurisdiction of the City of Vernon. These included using the college campus as an anchor for social spaces and businesses, alongside guaranteed minimum income and basic employment standards, were highlighted as vital to fostering a robust economic environment.

> *More support for small businesses - grants - security for businesses.*
>
> June 13 Workshop Participant

Focus on Local Economic Growth

Fostering community and economic growth through a variety of strategies such as attracting investment for businesses, expanding commercial waterfront amenities, and encouraging the establishment of big brands and local enterprises such as bakeries, restaurants, and shops. Participants emphasized the need for more hotels, diverse businesses, and entrepreneurial spaces, along with expanding patio spaces and improving shopping centers to enhance the local economy. There was a call to overcome the small-town mentality, embrace growth, and create vibrant neighbourhoods with accessible shops and services.

Additionally, enhancing connectivity and promoting local businesses, especially those which are Indigenous owned, were highlighted as vital for attracting talent and assets necessary for sustainable development. Lastly, some participants also suggested enhancing financial systems and incentives to drive growth. Key points included creating a robust financial support system to attract more investors and encouraging investments through innovative approaches like donut economics to balance basic needs and environmental considerations.

> *Don't be afraid to grow: stop the small-town mentality, you can be warm yet accommodating.*
>
> June 12 Workshop Participant

4. Community, Social Services and Wellbeing

Community Health

There was a strong emphasis on health care access and services, focusing on a comprehensive approach to addressing health and social challenges. Key suggested strategies included harm reduction initiatives, such as street clinics, safe consumption sites, and more detox and treatment beds, and transitional housing. The importance of creating sober safe homes, mental health facilities, and a community crisis center was highlighted, providing essential services like showers and support operated by the city. Participants shared that there are no available resources to support the unhoused community after 4 p.m. in Vernon, and this reality lacks dignity for those living on the streets, parks and bus shelters.

Incentives for health care professionals to work in Vernon, alongside promoting mental health programs and reducing cancer rates, were also discussed. The feedback also stressed the need for extended hours for emergency response centers, improved access to (primary care) health care and physical activity for all demographics, and a collaborative community effort to address health and climate issues. Supporting seniors with age and dementia strategies, reducing drug addiction, and enhancing mental health support for the unhoused were key priorities. Overall, the focus of the conversation was on fostering a healthy, educated, and active community with robust social services and health care access.

> *Have a community crisis center where people can get what they need + operated by the city, which includes showers.*
>
> May 13 Workshop Participant

> *Community action to address health and climate.*
>
> June 11 Workshop Participant

Vulnerable Residents

Initiatives and strategies to support vulnerable groups and provide comprehensive support across various demographics were also highlighted as crucial. Key suggestions included increased investment in youth programs, expanded childcare support, and specialized care for seniors, including more facilities and services to foster social connections. Addressing loneliness and social isolation were also identified as important areas of focus. Emphasis was placed on integrating health services with housing and ensuring stability for youth through job opportunities and supportive programs. Additional priorities included creating safe spaces for women, fostering community involvement through volunteer programs, and developing social safety nets for those in recovery. The goal is to combat loneliness by building active, inclusive communities with social spaces and fostering a sense of opportunity and support for all community members.

More facilities for seniors to connect through programming. Incentive programs for people to be foster parents and/or support NGOs who support youth.

May 16 Workshop Participants

Create social safety nets for people in recovery or trying to make a better life.

June 20 Workshop Participant

Community Engagement and Education

Workshop participants suggested community social services and wellbeing could be enhanced with increased community engagement and education. They advocated for fostering input from the next generation and improving outreach.

There was a strong emphasis on expanding educational opportunities, including evening classes. This could include creating opportunities for the community to enhance knowledge about available services, such as treatment programs and drug prevention strategies, as well as more formal education programs, for example to integrate more environmental education into the public-school curriculum.

Participants identified the need for better communication and collaboration among community organizations, schools, and local authorities to facilitate these enhancements. Strategies proposed involved forming community committees and partnering with academic institutions and public schools. Additionally, there was a call for more public engagement, diverse decision-making, and initiatives to educate employers and newcomers about local norms and support programs.

Next generation of volunteers - incentivize - educate + encourage.

June 11 Workshop Participant

Safety, Wellbeing and Food Security

Public safety and community wellbeing was another major theme and participants highlighted the need for creating a safe and inclusive environment for all residents. It was identified in a number of workshops that a heightened sense of community security could be achieved through improved lighting in certain areas or neighbourhoods. Additional key suggested strategies to improving safety and wellbeing in the community included: establishing social services as a secondary option in every zone, ensuring nighttime safety (including improving lighting), and providing safe spaces with basic amenities like water, washrooms, and heat. The need for mobile operation sites was also highlighted. Feedback received also discussed the importance of integrated service hubs, safety in neighbourhoods through co-op models, and fostering intergenerational connections. Promoting cultural and ethnic diversity, creating community hubs, and enhancing downtown safety were prioritized to foster a sense of community, belonging, and purpose.

In order to enhance community well-being, some participants advocated for improving food security and environmental health. Some suggested initiatives include ensuring access to healthy, locally sourced food, especially during emergencies like highway closures, and improving cold storage facilities for locally produced food. Some suggested using reclaimed water for food crops and fire suppression, establishing food carts and blessing boxes, and supporting community gardens. Additionally, some participants advocated for policies promoting local food systems, the formation of a food policy council, and the adoption of a food charter. Efforts to improve food system efficiency, soil resilience, and regional food sustainability were also highlighted to create a resilient, efficient, and sustainable food system.

> *Safe place and water, heat. We aren't scared [in the future state]. We have a warming center for everyone. (even if they have a bad experience in the shelter)*
>
> May 13 Workshop Participant

> *Cultural centers / community center - immigrants to come together + share culture (exchange students)*
>
> June 12 Workshop Participant

> *More community gardens for food security and mental health.*
>
> June 20 Workshop Participant

Regulations

Some participants also advocated for regulation and policy changes to support social services such as increased workplace regulation on drug and medication use, implementing homelessness prevention programs, and establishing common rent banks. The need for local government to lobby for more funding for mental health and addiction services was highlighted, along with simplifying processes between cities and less complicated processes between cities and health care systems. Improving infrastructure and accessibility to support the community's diverse needs was also mentioned. Key recommendations included ensuring good street and wheelchair access to all spaces, providing 24/7 bathrooms and creating drop-in centers with showers for those in need.

Less complicated process between cities and health care systems.

June 11 Workshop Participant

5. Climate and Environment

Natural Resources

The conversations on climate and environment centered on natural resource management, highlighting the importance of preserving and enhancing natural spaces to maintain biodiversity

and ecological health in Vernon. Key suggested strategies included avoiding urban sprawl, protecting natural corridors, and encouraging native plant use while actively managing invasive species. Participants emphasized the need for comprehensive environmental plans that incorporate wildlife corridors, wetland protection, and the inclusion of Indigenous principles. Measures such as compost and rainwater rebates, bans on wetland loss, and promoting biodiversity-friendly development practices were discussed. Overall, the focus was on achieving a balance between urban development and nature conservation to ensure resilience and livability. Participants' contributions suggest they highly value Vernon's natural resources and want to see proactive management of them from both a climate standpoint and recreation and ecology.

Participants also discussed the importance of water conservation and management, highlighting the need for community collaboration and equitable access to water resources. Key initiatives included increasing the use of reclaimed and grey water, installing more drinking fountains to reduce plastic use, and implementing policies for rainwater collection and water source protection. Some participants advocated for higher water costs to promote conservation, banning fracking and motorized watercraft to protect waterways, and preserving biodiversity by preventing logging in watersheds. The importance of water conservation practices in development, such as using grey water in housing, was also emphasized.

Lastly, the feedback emphasized the importance of municipal offset policies, solar incentives, and maintaining a balance between environmental and economic priorities.

> *We need to create strategies that make us accommodate wildlife and nature such as including them in our plan. If nature stays healthy, we do too.*
>
> June 20 Workshop Participant

> *Comprehensive Environment Plan - protection of natural areas - wildlife corridors - salmon preservation - inclusion of First Nations principals in partnership.*
>
> June 20 Workshop Participant

> *Access to grey water or recycled water to use for plants - do more good to increase access.*
>
> *No fracking or water pollution in our community.*
>
> June 11 Workshop Participants

Climate Resilience

Climate action was highlighted as another crucial topic, as participants discussed the importance of integrating climate resilience into all city planning with a focus on reducing carbon emissions and enhancing green infrastructure. Participants suggested promoting zero-carbon new builds with EV plugs and heat pumps, encouraging the use of passive solar energy, fast-tracking permits

for green initiatives, creating shading for parking spaces with solar panels and incorporating drought-tolerant perennials in public gardens to support pollinators.

Additional strategies included fostering community-wide fossil fuel independence through loan paybacks for heat pumps, implementing landscaping policies for lawn alternatives, and establishing cooling stations.

> *Resilient to climate change - integration of all the plans into climate mitigation and adaptation.*
>
> *Encourage smaller passive solar, buildings, houses for energy efficiency.*
>
> June 11Workshop Participants

Urban Green Spaces

On the theme of environmental sustainability, participants emphasized the need for increased and interconnected green spaces within urban cores, integrating natural areas into city planning. Strategies suggested to achieve this include enhancing streetscapes to be clean and accessible, promoting densification while maintaining green spaces, and incorporating biophilic designs with more trees and green roofs. Participants also highlighted the importance of preserving and enhancing the urban tree canopy, banning artificial landscaping, and encouraging biodiversity.

> *Encouraging interconnectivity of green space = wildlife friendly, people friendly.*
>
> June 11 Workshop Participant

Agriculture

Enhancing agricultural investment and protection within the city was another topic raised. Emphasis was placed on increasing investment in farming and agriculture, such as establishing a flour mill and attracting more investors through government subsidies. Key initiatives discussed include protecting agricultural spaces, promoting organic farming, and preserving hobby farms within city limits. The City should aim to leverage its agricultural setting by becoming a hub for growing, processing, and distributing food, supported by strategies like winter farmers markets and food security plans. Additionally, there was a focus on reducing the use of toxic herbicides and pesticides and encouraging agricultural tourism.

> *Invest as a hub of agricultural region in growing, processing and distributing food - winter farmers market - agriculture and food security strategy.*
>
> June 20 Workshop Participant

Emergency Preparedness and Safety

Emergency preparedness and safety was identified as another crucial topic, particularly focusing on wildfire risks. The topic of wildfire intersected a number of related topics from public health, mental health, economic prosperity, indoor, free accessible event spaces, local economic impacts on event cancellations and public safety. Key points included enhancing community education on safe evacuation procedures, considering lakes for evacuation routes, and ensuring multiple access roads in developments to prevent bottlenecks during emergencies. There were calls to update landscaping bylaws to ban fire-hazardous plants like pyramid cedar and promote water conservation. The community needs to be fire-smart, with strategies to mitigate risks, protect daily life from smoke and fires, and have plans for businesses during wildfire season. Addressing the need for adequate accommodation during evacuations was also highlighted, ensuring the community remains resilient and well-prepared for wildfires.

> *We grow with wildfire in mind - no one-way roads in developments*.
>
> May 16 Workshop Participant

6. Parks, Recreation and Trails

Recreation and Events

Workshop participants emphasized a need for a shift from traditional systems to holistic and varying recreational activities, emphasizing an active nightlife, diverse and spread-out activities, and increased options for young adults. There is a call for enhanced sports programs in schools, more drop-in activities for youth, and inclusive events year-round. Key suggestions include revitalizing festivals, supporting cultural activities, and organizing block parties to foster community engagement. Participants consistently noted that there are very few evening options for socializing.

Affordable, year-round farmers markets, increased teen events, and vibrant neighbourhood cores with extended hours are also highlighted. The community wants more opportunities for creators and artists, better promotion of current events, and strategies to preserve and enhance outdoor activities. Additionally, more indoor event space is required, particularly as wildfire smoke disrupts outdoor summer events.

> *Vibrant neighborhood cores - later than 8 o'clock - night life / day life - not just a bar - outdoor patios - create a scene - densify to create them.*
>
> *Create opportunity for creators / artist to put on events / art collectives to help them grow + thrive - Riot on the roof.*
>
> June 13 Workshop Participants

Parks, Facilities and Recreational Infrastructure

On the theme of recreational facilities and parks, conversations focused on enhancing the cleanliness, safety, and accessibility of community spaces. Key suggestions included increasing garbage facilities and maintenance, creating more indoor sports complexes and play areas for winter, and providing safe, free places for youth. Emphasis was placed on improving existing parks like Justice Park and Polson Park, including fixing the waterfall, replacing hazardous playground equipment and fixing/improving lighting. The need for shaded playgrounds, community gardens, and better dog-friendly areas was highlighted. Additionally, participants called for more public art, outdoor adventure facilities, and spaces for cultural and community events, along with initiatives to make parks functional, attractive, and inclusive for all ages.

The need for more community amenities and public spaces was identified and participants highlighted the importance of creating vibrant, accessible, and well-maintained areas for all residents. Suggestions include developing complexes with gardens, outdoor meeting spaces, and scooter charging stations, as well as maintaining beautiful playgrounds and indoor spaces for children, especially during winter and smoky seasons. Enhancements to public facilities like 24/7 open spaces and more bathrooms at trails were emphasized, along with the need for community gardens, shared workspaces, and libraries as well as the development of additional amenities such as conference centers, patios, and accessible pathways along beach areas.

> *There aren't enough parks, especially ones that are good for kids in Middleton Mountain. Also, there's a part of the hiking trail in Middleton Mountain Park that doesn't have any railings which makes it dangerous in the winter when it snows.*
>
> *Winter is long and cold. If there are more indoor sports complexes, that would be great for the kids and family to spend some quality and fun time during the cold wintertime.*
>
> May 15 Workshop Participants

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Discussions also focused on enhancing accessibility and inclusivity across various aspects of community life, emphasizing the need for multi-generational, income-diverse, age-inclusive, and ability-friendly designs. Participants highlighted the importance of smaller, accessible parks with outdoor fitness elements and better accessibility for paddlers on Okanagan Lake.

Challenges such as the cost of events and space rentals were noted, with calls for lower user fees and streamlined processes for event bookings and program implementation. Emphasis was placed on creating inclusive spaces that attract young people, offering more indoor activities, and enhancing accessibility to sports facilities and beaches for all abilities. The need for a recreation plan that aligns with population needs and includes accessible trails and amenities in subdivision plans was stressed.

Don't need monstrous parks, we need accessible parks with an element of outdoor fitness, e.g., Ninja fitness.

June 11 Workshop Participant

Diversity + inclusion - create spaces to support - What will draw young people - find more activities not already here - indoor spaces.

June 13 Workshop Participant

Transportation Plan

The following themes and subthemes relate to what was learned about the transportation plan.

1. Public Transit and Personal Vehicle Alternatives

Participants called for significant improvements to the **public transit system**, including more bus routes, increased frequency, and extended hours to better serve work commute times and employment areas. There's a need for safer transportation options, especially after dark, and more bus schedules and stops.

Some busy intersections are not suitable for STOP signs anymore. Too few public transit options in Coldstream.

May 15 Workshop Participant

Flexible transport options (i.e. U-ride to move kids around) and investment in public transit - examine year-round transportation.

June 20 Workshop Participant

Enhancing transit connectivity was identified as necessary, emphasizing the expansion of public transit to various key areas. Specific suggestions include adding a transit service on Sundays between Vernon and Kelowna. Priorities included establishing transit routes to recreational destinations, resort areas, and key destinations such as the hospital and Silver Star. Expanding BC Transit services to Middleton Mountain and other outer Vernon areas was highlighted, along with prioritizing transit to lakes, tourist destinations, and downtown. They also highlight the need for better connections, improved intersections, and a fully integrated transit and active transportation plan. Introducing hydrogen rail to connect communities was also suggested.

Prioritize transit to outer Vernon + bay and to draw people to lakes / tourist destinations / downtown.

June 13 Workshop Participant

Participants suggested **promoting and enhancing alternative transportation options**, increasing public awareness, and reducing reliance on cars. Key suggestions include enhancing

driving services, improving taxi services, and expanding car-sharing programs. There's a demand for better U-ride availability, and robust transportation options in the winter.

Participants also shared that they want more ways to get around **without using cars**, such as hoverboards and other active transportation methods. They emphasize the need for more transit, biking, and walking alternatives, particularly for youth and seniors. Suggestions also include ride-sharing programs, car co-ops like Car2Go, and creating more space for people rather than cars to support alternative transportation methods.

> *Alternatives to driving (transit and accessibility for youth and seniors) Car share, cycling and walking opportunities - Transit opportunities in the Foothills*.
>
> June 20 Workshop Participant

Another theme was the need for **enhancing accessibility and affordability** of transportation options. Key proposals included offering taxi vouchers and bus tickets, providing cheaper, subsidized, or free transit passes, and implementing free bus services one day a week, especially for youth. The emphasis was on creating inclusive transportation options that offer freedom of movement for all, including children, and ensuring every neighbourhood and community has reliable access to various transportation modes.

> *Every neighbourhood + community has access to all kinds of transportation.*
>
> June 20 Workshop Participant

2. Roads

Participant feedback is calling for **significant improvements to road infrastructure to enhance safety**, reduce congestion, and better accommodate various modes of transportation. Key concerns include the lack of signage to accommodate smooth traffic flow in some areas, insufficient left-hand turns (particularly downtown) and the absence of multi-use paths, such as on 30th street downtown, leading to near misses between scooters and pedestrians. The community seeks more dedicated spaces for non-car traffic, improved shoulders on Bellavista, and better traffic and speed enforcement. There is also a demand for auditing streets to ensure adequate safety measures, including four-way stops and lights, and promoting awareness of road rules for all users. Suggestions include implementing bypasses and creating superblocks with reduced car traffic. There is also a desire for improved street lighting, especially at night and in winter, and better wayfinding to make navigation easier.

> *D.T. 30th has no multi-use paths = scooters mixed with walkers. There have been near misses. Too much speed on scooters and bikes on sidewalk.*
>
> May 16 Workshop Participant

Additionally, there's a call for **beautification and better signage** on highways to improve traffic flow and Vernon's image, as well as the need for better access to Kelowna airport. Some participants suggest that more be done by way of signage to acknowledge the traditional language of the Syilx people. The community suggests enhancing visual appeal with greenery and art, addressing highway traffic issues, and improving overall road aesthetics.

> *Highway beautification / entrance clean up - changing Vernon's image.*
>
> June 12 Workshop Participant

3. Walking and Bike Trails

A key theme discussed on this topic was the need to **enhance walkability** in Vernon, emphasizing the need for year-round, all-season accessibility, including improved snow clearing in winter.

Key suggestions included addressing the lack of sidewalks, ensuring better connectivity of pathways, and reducing the emphasis on parking in favour of car co-ops and shared mobility options. The vision many participants articulated includes creating walkable city centers, complete neighbourhoods, and pedestrian-friendly routes to key parks and attractions, such as Swan Lake. Proposals also highlighted the importance of encouraging walking and biking for children, enhancing pedestrian crossings, and developing trails that connect establishments away from busy roads. The overarching goal for many is to transform Vernon into a "10-minute town" with thriving, walkable neighbourhoods that prioritize pedestrian access and safety.

> *Walkability of city center to key parks (Swan Lake Nature) and beaches.*
>
> June 11 Workshop Participant

Participants also noted the need for **enhanced connectivity and safety for trails and paths** as well as the need for better integration of multi-use paths (MUPs) and bike paths within the town. Key suggested improvements include increasing lighting on paths, creating trails that connect residential areas, and developing trails away from roadways. Additionally, winter trail maintenance to reduce ice and snow, and creating flat, wide trails for safe walking and biking should be prioritized.

> *Sidewalks are icy in the winter - How do we keep moving all year?*
>
> May 13 Workshop Participant

There is a call for creating a cultural trail, developing an interactive trail map, and establishing inter-city paths. Enhancing the safety of bike paths and routes, increasing inter-city bike and walking paths, and ensuring trail connections like the Grey Canal are linked are also priorities.

Regarding **bike lanes**, participants highlighted the importance of better design and dedicated bike paths to create a more bikeable community. Suggestions included developing multi-use parks and bike lanes away from main roads, and ensuring safe, enjoyable, and cohesive routes for kids. The lack of end-of-trip facilities for cyclists was also mentioned as a barrier to increasing cycling trips for commuting and “running errands”. Participants shared their hesitation of leaving bikes, particularly costly e-Bikes, in unsecure locations. Participants also supported creating more bike lanes, including on 30th and 29th Streets, and developing the 25th Avenue corridor. The idea of a special "bike day" and expanding the Vernon bike park were also proposed to encourage biking. The emphasis is on creating separated bike paths lined with trees, establishing a bike share program, and fostering a community where biking is a safe and integral mode of transportation.

> *A great idea, we should have a special "bike day" every week or month during the summer to encourage everyone to ride bikes. We could also expand the Vernon bike park at the same time.*
>
> May 15 Workshop Participant

4. Scooters and Mobility Devices

The discussion on scooters and mobility devices highlighted several key points for improving their use and integration into urban mobility. There was an emphasis on increasing affordability for the scooter program. Additionally, e-scooters turning too quickly and traveling at high speeds on sidewalks, particularly downtown, pose safety concerns. Suggestions included dedicated lanes for e-scooters and enhanced end-of-trip facilities such as charging stations and parking to prevent them from blocking sidewalks. The use of apps for finding scooters was noted, although requiring phones and data may be a barrier. With a high proportion of kids being driven to school, there should be a push to encourage more biking, walking, and scooting, while addressing safety, weather, and security concerns. A few participants noted conflicts on sidewalks between scooters, pedestrians and cyclists and the need for education on how to safely use scooters.

> *E-scooters need their own lane - different pace - downtown on sidewalk go very fast.*
>
> May 13 Workshop Participant

5. Parking

The conversation on parking solutions emphasized the need for increased and accessible parking downtown, including ample parking for multi-unit buildings and hospitals. Participants suggested that strategies should be aimed to balance the demand for parking with sustainability by avoiding excessive gravel parking and implementing a no-parking policy on both sides of certain streets. Participants want the city to address parking complaints, enhance accessibility, and ensure sufficient parking availability for various needs and destinations.

More parking downtown - try not to take away parking.

June 13 Workshop Participant

Indigenous Reconciliation

Participants across multiple workshops also advocated for a comprehensive plan to enhance First Nations' inclusion and representation in the official community plan and transportation plan development, focusing on increased representation in decision-making, collaboration with local Indigenous communities, and embedding Indigenous goals and knowledge into city strategies. Some participants emphasized the need for stronger partnerships with the Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB), increased Indigenous procurement, and comprehensive environmental planning that includes First Nations principles. Key recommendations include creating cultural centers and healing lodges, incorporating Indigenous plants and fire mitigation practices, enhancing public spaces with Indigenous art, and promoting meaningful and genuine engagement with Indigenous communities. Some participants emphasized the need for cultural diversity in Vernon through creation of Indigenous cultural centers, storytelling along trails, and signage in the Syilx language.

First Nation more well known - Indigenous ambassador - story telling - indigenous business along trails - QR codes on trail posts for storytelling.

June 12 Workshop Participant

Community Survey and Pop-ups

This online survey focused on residents' experiences living, spending leisure time, moving within and shopping in Vernon, and what they would like to see the City focus on in the next 20 years as pertains to housing, transportation and economic development.

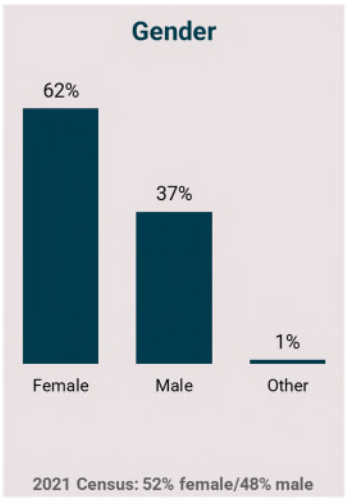
At the community event pop-ups, a small selection of the survey questions were also posed to visitors.

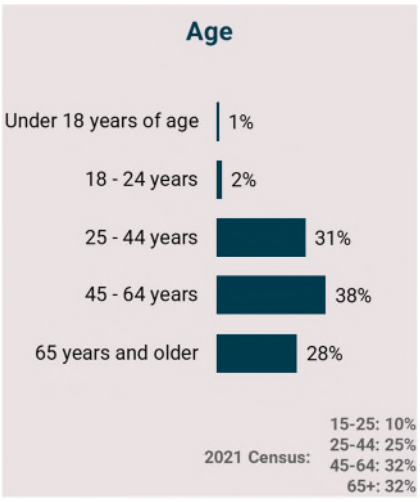


Who Responded

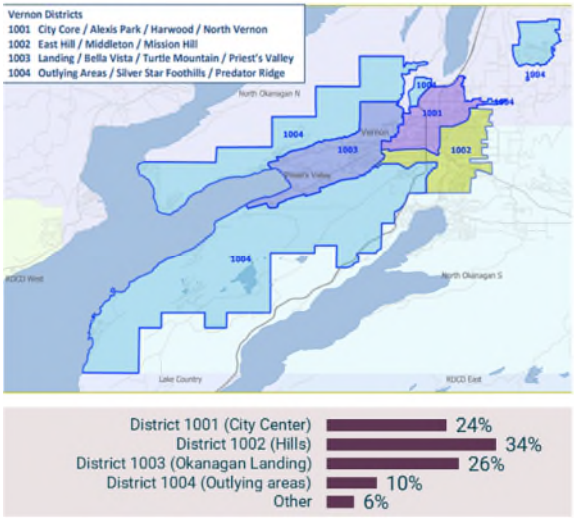
Survey respondents represented a mix of demographics:

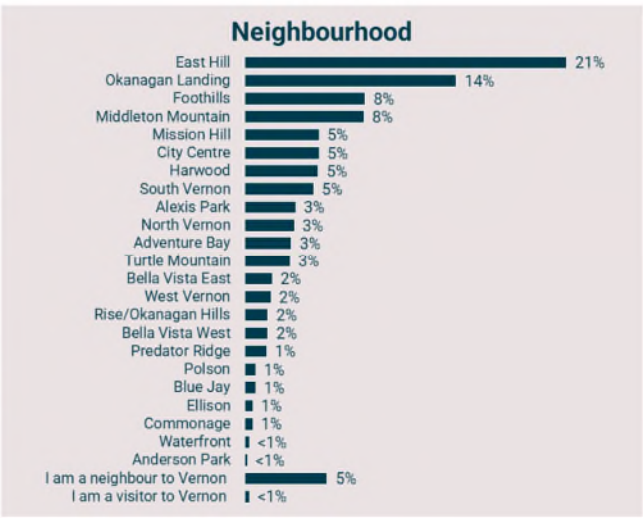
- More likely to be female (62%) than male (37%).
- Split between 44 years of age and younger (34%), 45 – 64-years-old (38%) and 65 years and older (28%).
- All household incomes were represented, skewing towards higher-income earners (64% earning $80K+/year).
- Most were homeowners (84%), with 12% renters and the remainder in other housing situations.
- Respondents were from across Vernon, with many neighbourhoods represented. A quarter lived in the City Center district (24%); a third in the Hills area (34%), a quarter in the Okanagan Landing area (26%), one in ten in outlying areas (10%) and 6% were from outside Vernon.
- The majority (88%) live within a 10-minute walk to a public park, trail or green space.









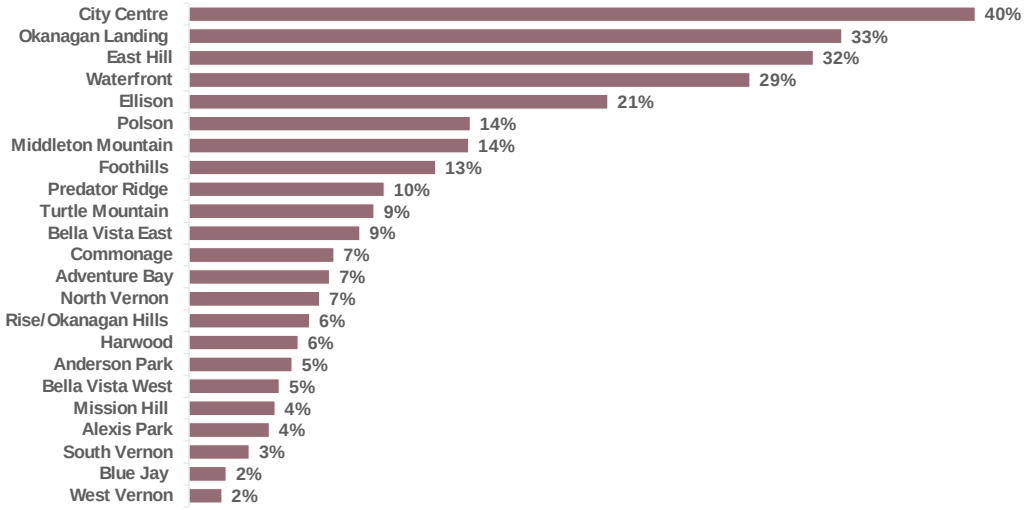


Living in Vernon

Vernon is highly appreciated for its access to nature and the outdoors, favourable climate, and for having a small-town feel with good amenities. Leisure time is mostly spent in the City Centre, Okanagan Landing, East Hill and the Waterfront. While each neighborhood has its unique appeal, common themes include a desire for safe, well-maintained outdoor spaces, access to nature, and vibrant community life centered around local amenities.

Preferred Neighbourhoods for Leisure Time

What are the **three neighbourhoods** you most prefer to spend your leisure time in?



Top features of neighbourhoods where survey respondents enjoy spending leisure time are:

- **Nature and outdoor activities:** Respondents highly value neighbourhoods that offer well-maintained walking, hiking, and biking trails, as these provide opportunities for both recreational activities and quiet relaxation. Proximity to lakeshores and beaches is particularly prized, offering residents access to swimming, boating, and other water-based activities that enhance their outdoor experiences. Areas like Adventure Bay, Ellison, Okanagan Landing and Predator Ridge are popular for their natural beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities.
- **Proximity to amenities:** Proximity to amenities such as grocery stores, shops, and restaurants is highly valued. The City Centre and Anderson Park are frequently mentioned for their convenient access to shopping and dining options.
- **Serenity and quietness:** Many neighbourhoods are appreciated for their quiet and serene environments. Adventure Bay and Ellison are highlighted for their peaceful settings away from city noise.
- **Views and scenic beauty:** Scenic views are a significant draw for neighbourhoods like Adventure Bay, Turtle Mountain, and Bella Vista East, where residents can enjoy beautiful vistas of the lake and surrounding landscapes.
- **Safety:** Safety is a key factor, with neighbourhoods like East Hill and Middleton Mountain being noted for their safe environments. They value areas where they feel secure and where crime rates are low.
- **Accessibility, walkability and bikeability:** Respondents prefer neighborhoods where it's easy to walk or cycle, complemented by good public transit options and proximity to workplaces and schools. especially in areas like the City Centre and East Hill. Accessibility and convenience, particularly in terms of transportation and ease of getting around, are appreciated. They like neighbourhoods where they can easily access public transit and

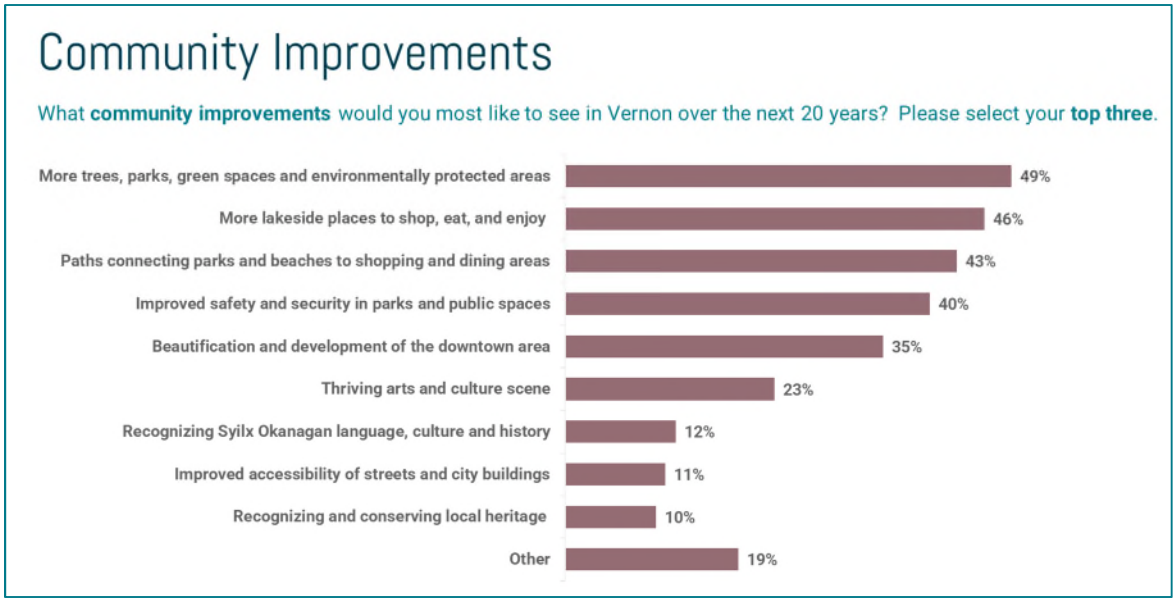
major roads, making commuting and daily errands more manageable. This includes access to parks, shops, and other amenities, with an emphasis on engagement in local businesses and community projects to foster a connected and supportive neighbourhood.

- **Community and social connections:** Respondents value neighbourhoods where they have strong social connections and a sense of community. Areas like East Hill and South Vernon are noted for their community feel and friendly neighbours.
- **Family-friendly amenities:** Family-friendly amenities, such as parks, playgrounds, and sports facilities, are important. Areas like Polson Park and Marshall Fields are popular for their family-oriented facilities.

Community Improvements

Respondents were asked to select up to three community improvements they would most like to see in Vernon over the next 20 years. These selections revealed the following hierarchy of importance among survey respondents:

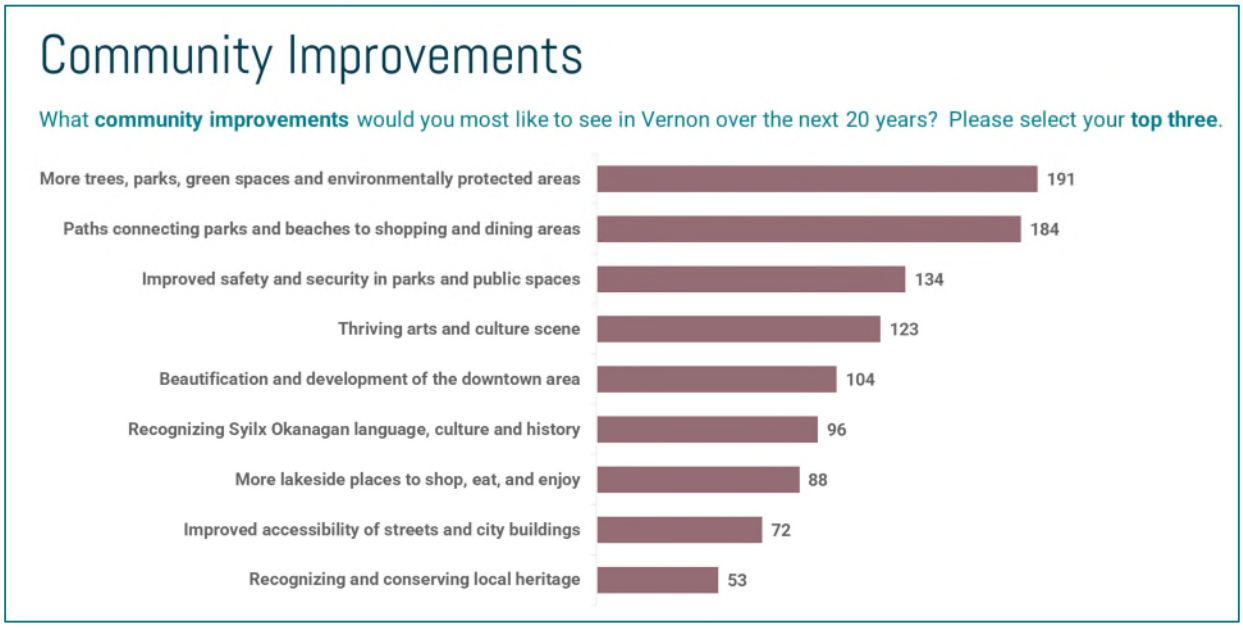
- More trees, parks, green spaces and environmentally protected areas (selected in the top three by 49% of respondents)
- More lakeside places to shop, eat, and enjoy (46%)
- Paths connecting parks and beaches to shopping and dining areas (43%)
- Improved safety and security in parks and public spaces (40%)
- Beautification and development of the downtown area (35%)
- Thriving arts and culture scene (23%)
- Recognizing Syilx Okanagan language, culture and history (12%)
- Improved accessibility of streets and city buildings (11%)
- Recognizing and conserving local heritage (10%)



One in five survey respondents (19%) added another area for community improvement to their top three. These can be summarized into the following themes:

- **Affordable housing:** Emphasis on apartments, condos, modular housing, tiny house communities, and avoiding basement suites. Suggestions to increase housing density and ease the development of affordable lots.
- **Improved roadways:** Enhancements in road quality, connectivity, and traffic flow, including advanced left turn lights and bypasses to reduce congestion.
- **Bike and pedestrian infrastructure:** Better bike lanes, pedestrian-friendly routes, interconnected trails, and safe pathways connecting neighbourhoods, parks, and commercial areas.
- **Reducing homelessness** through support and bylaws, addressing social decay, and improving community cleanliness.
- **Community Amenities and Services:** Enhancements in cultural centers, senior recreation, family activities, and more entertainment options like restaurants, bars, and breweries.
- **Downtown development:** Making downtown more walkable, increasing parking availability, creating pedestrian-friendly zones, and better use of downtown spaces.

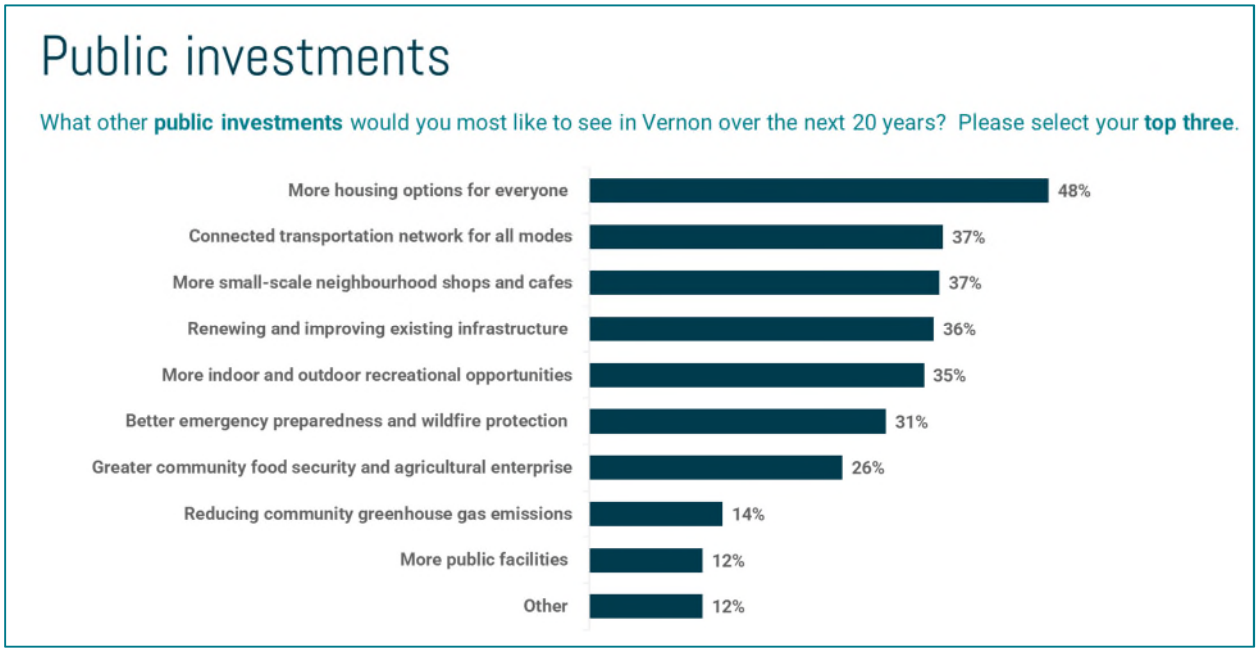
At the pop-up events, *more trees, parks, green spaces and environmentally protected areas* was also identified as the most important improvement. However, there was less emphasis among these participants for *more lakeside places to shop, eat, and enjoy.*



Public Investment

Similarly, respondents were asked to select their top three other public investments they would most like to see in Vernon in the next 20 years. In order of importance, the results from the survey are:

- More housing options for everyone (48%)
- Connected transportation network for all modes (37%)
- More small-scale neighbourhood shops and cafes (37%)
- Renewing and improving existing infrastructure (36%)
- More indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities (35%)
- Better emergency preparedness and wildfire protection (31%)
- Greater community food security and agricultural enterprise (26%)
- Reducing community greenhouse gas emissions (14%)
- More public facilities (12%)

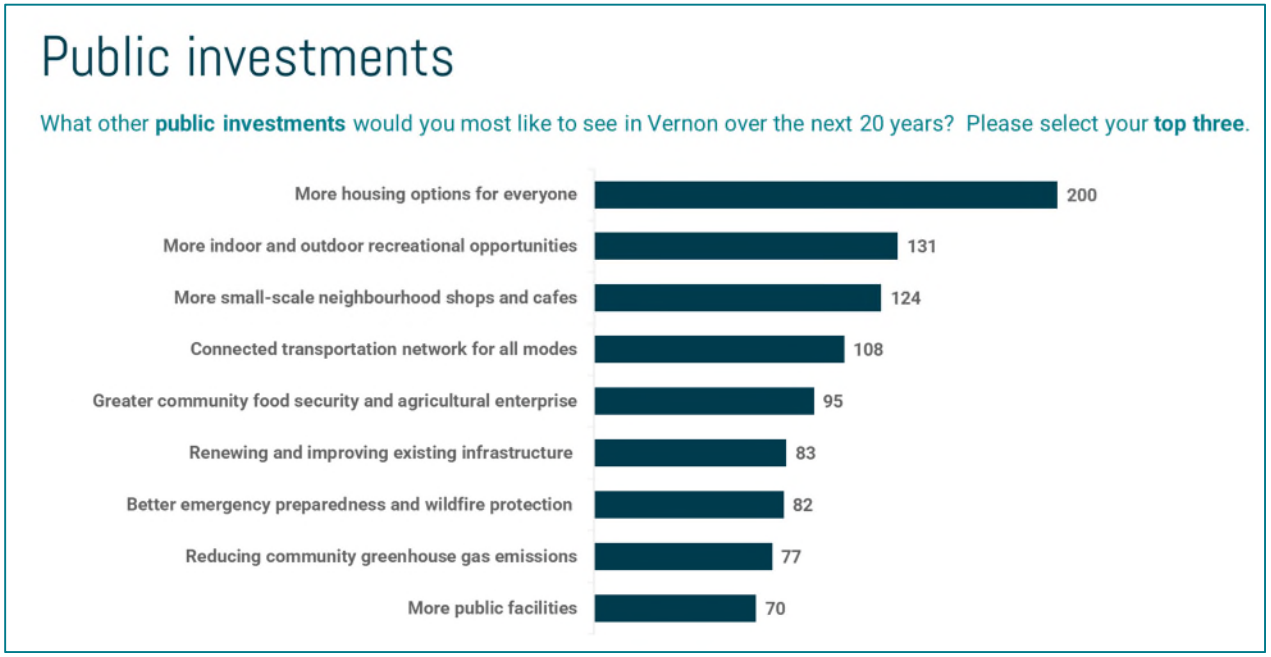


One in 10 respondents (12%) added another area for public investment to their top three. These can be summarized into the following themes:

- **Downtown safety and cleanliness:** greater safety in the downtown core, increased police and by-law presence, and cleaning up the streets to reduce homelessness and drug use.
- **Highway bypass**: building a highway bypass to reduce downtown traffic congestion.
- **Business and industry attraction:** creating space to attract high-tech industry to Vernon, fostering employment opportunities.

- **Green spaces and agricultural preservation**: preserving agricultural lands, creating more natural spaces with greenery and trees, and planting more trees.
- **Mental health and medical facilities:** investment in mental health facilities and overall health care services.
- **Cultural centers and gathering spaces:** developing cultural centers and community spaces, especially downtown or at Kin Beach, with amenities like brew pubs and food trucks. This includes more event and wedding spaces to support local tourism and businesses.
- **Enhanced public transit:** expanding transit routes and service schedules, including express bus services to Kelowna and night buses on weekends.
- **Better governance:** improving governance for the region, possibly through amalgamation with outlying areas, and focusing on reducing red tape and improving municipal efficiency.

Those engaged at pop-up events also identified *more housing options for everyone* as the most important are for public investment:

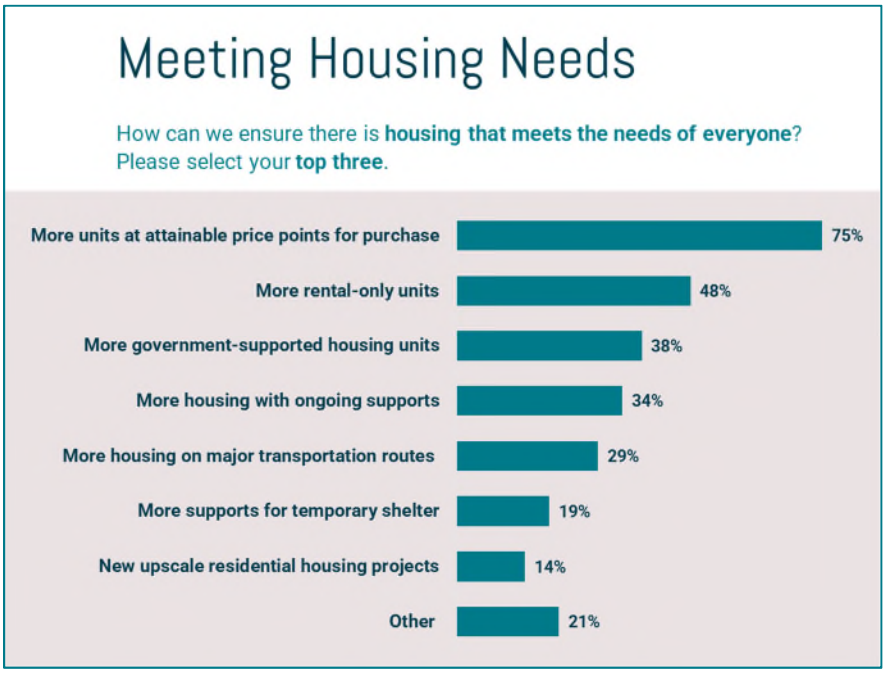


Housing

First, respondents were asked to reflect on how Vernon can ensure there is housing that meets the needs of everyone. They were asked to select their top three suggestions; results show the following selections:

- More units at attainable price points for purchase (75%)
- More rental-only units (48%)

- More government-supported housing units (38%)
- More housing with ongoing supports (34%)
- More housing on major transportation routes (29%)
- More supports for temporary shelter (19%)
- New upscale residential housing projects (14%)



One in five respondents (21%) offered another preference in their top three. These can be summarized into the following themes:

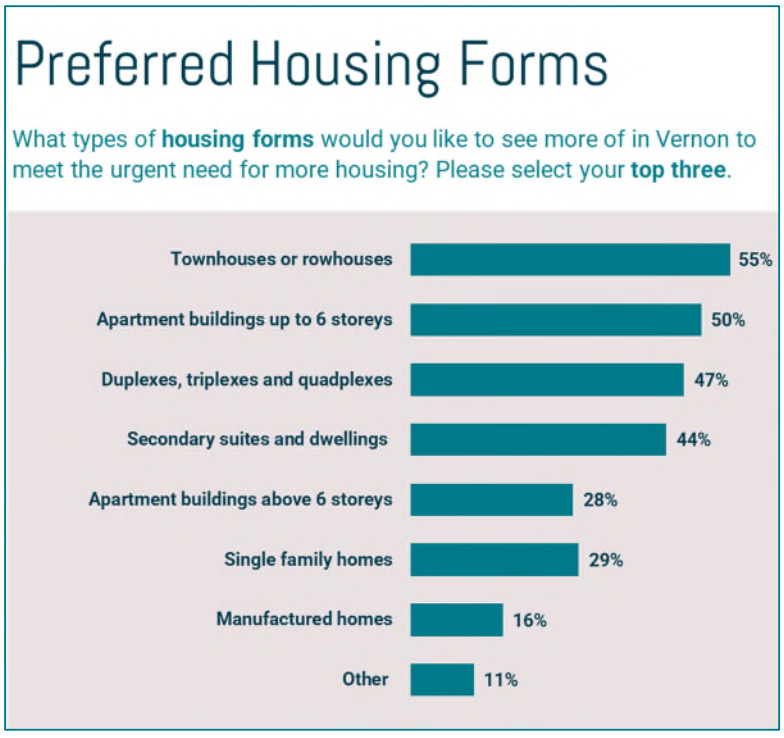
- **Densification and mixed-use development:** encourage higher-density housing in the downtown core and surrounding neighbourhoods, including multi-family units, high-rises, condos, townhomes, and mixed-use zoning. This also involves the development of lofts and studio apartments.
- **Simplifying and streamlining development processes:** revamp city bylaws and zoning to expedite the approval process for new housing projects, making it easier to build additional suites, carriage homes, tiny homes, and multi-family projects. This includes reducing red tape and development costs.
- **Affordable and diverse housing options:** promote the construction of affordable housing options, including rentals, tiny homes, and co-op housing. Focus on creating housing for young people, seniors, and low-income families, and ensure rental units allow pets.
- **Encouraging secondary suites and carriage houses:** allow more flexibility for homeowners to add secondary suites, carriage houses, and tiny homes on their

properties. This includes making it easier to obtain permits and reducing zoning restrictions.

- **Limiting upscale developments:** limit the development of upscale residential areas and focus on building more affordable housing near amenities, such as shopping and restaurants. This also involves halting urban sprawl and preserving agricultural land.

The second area explored on the theme of housing was that of housing forms. Respondents were asked to identify their top three types of housing forms they'd like to see more of in Vernon to meet the urgent need for more housing. Results show the following preferences:

- Townhouses or rowhouses (55%)
- Apartment buildings up to 6 stories (50%)
- Duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes (47%)
- Secondary suites and dwellings (44%)
- Single family homes (29%)
- Apartment buildings above 6 stories (28%)
- Manufactured homes (16%)



One in 10 respondents (11%) added another housing form to their top three or added specific comments or ideas. These can be summarized into the following themes:

- **Tiny homes:** support for tiny home communities, tiny homes on private properties, and approval for tiny house construction.

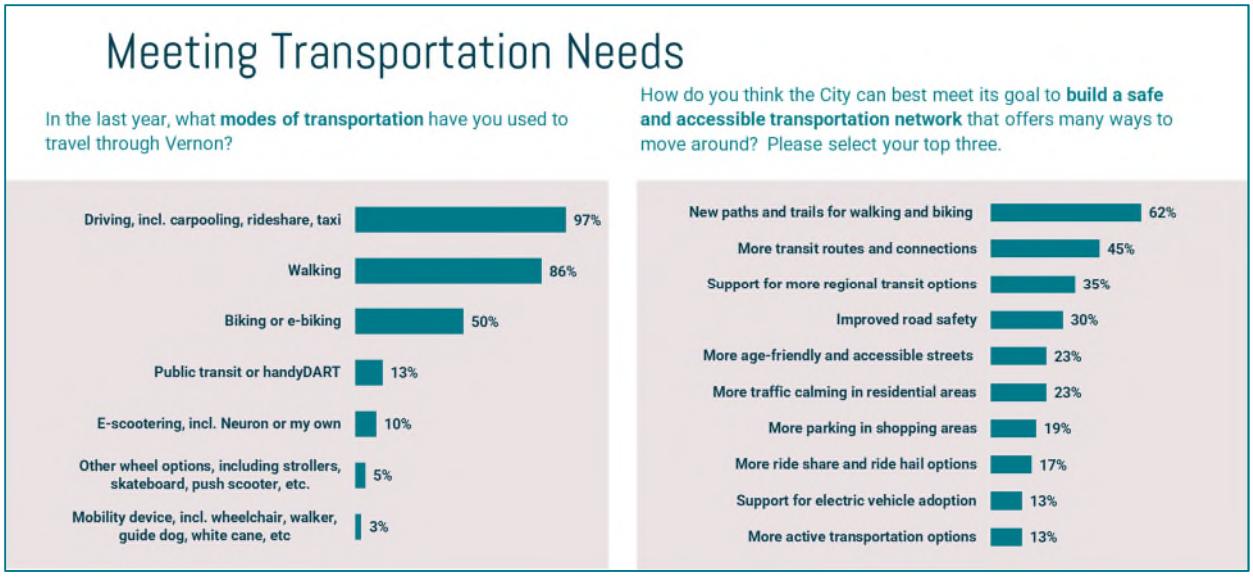
- **Co-op housing:** increase the number of co-op housing units to provide affordable housing options and foster a sense of community among residents.
- **High-density and multi-story buildings:** support for high-rise apartment buildings, especially in the city center, to maximize space and provide more housing units.
- **Affordable and supportive housing:** develop more subsidized, supportive, and transitional housing options to meet the needs of low-income individuals, seniors, and those requiring mental health or addiction support.
- **Mixed-use and infill development**: encourage the use of commercial space for residential purposes, develop multi-story buildings with businesses on lower floors and residences above, and focus on infill and revamping older neighborhoods to add more housing.

Transportation

When asked to identify their top three strategies to ensure the City can best meet its goal to build a safe and accessible transportation network that offers many ways to move around, respondents chose a variety of strategies:

- New paths and trails for walking and biking (62%)
- More transit routes and connections (45%)
- Support for more regional transit options (35%)
- Improved road safety (30%)
- More traffic calming in residential areas (23%)
- More age-friendly and accessible streets (23%)
- More parking in shopping areas (19%)
- More rideshare and ride hail options (17%)
- More active transportation options (13%)
- Support for electric vehicle adoption (13%)

Virtually all respondents (97%) had driven (using their own car, carpool, rideshare or taxi) to get around Vernon in the past year. Many walked (86%), while half (50%) biked or used an e-bike. Fewer used public transit or handyDART (13%), an e-scooter (10%), other wheeled transportation options (5%) or a mobility device (3%).

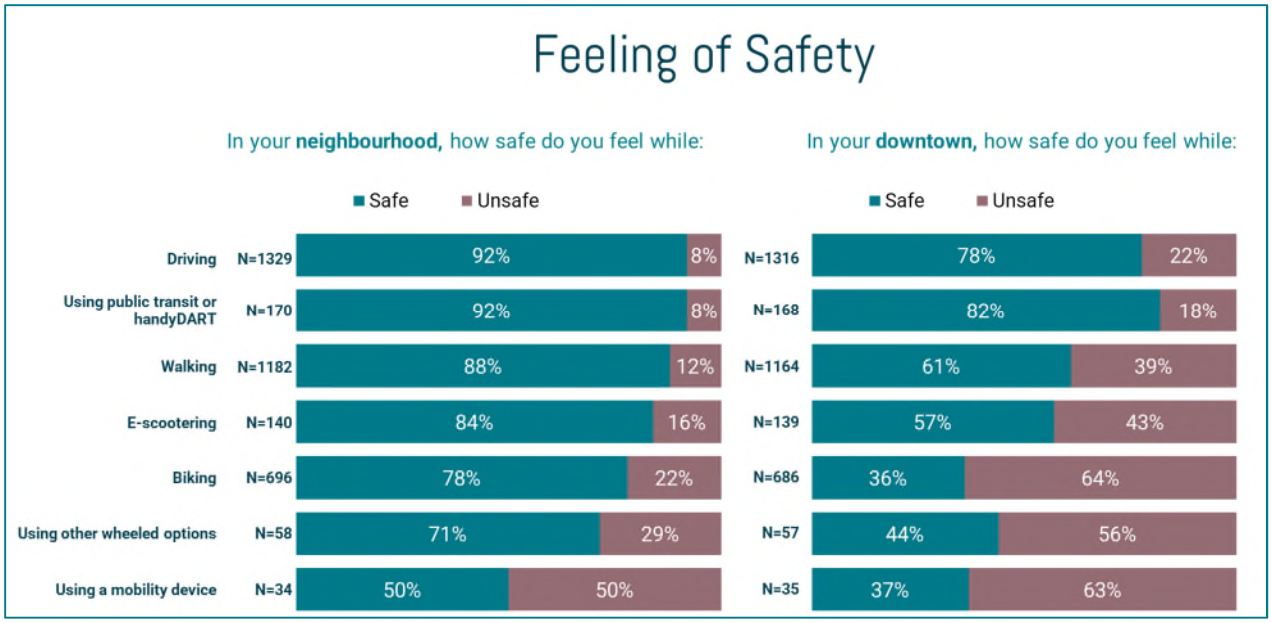


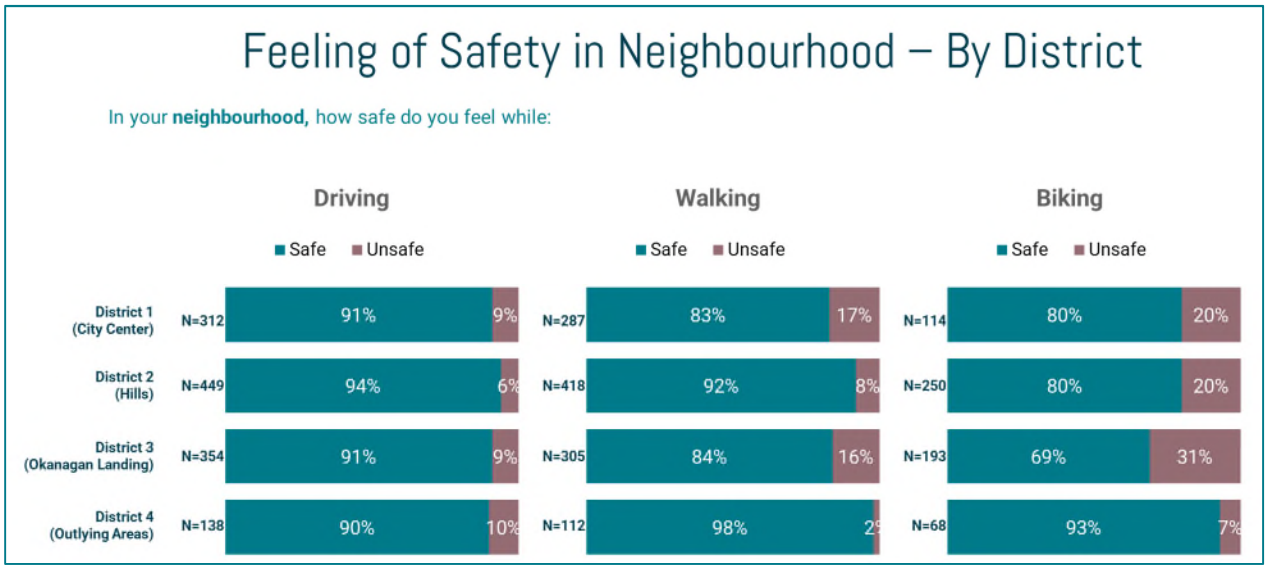
Respondents mostly felt safe while moving around their neighbourhoods:

- Driving (92% feeling safe in their neighbourhood moving around using this transportation mode)
- Using public transit or handyDART (92%)
- Walking (88%)
- E-scootering (84%)
- Biking (78%)
- Using other wheeled options (71%)
- Using a mobility device (50%)

The sense of downtown safety was lower for all transportation modes:

- Using public transit or handyDART (82% feeling safe moving around downtown using this transportation mode)
- Driving (78%)
- Walking (61%)
- E-scootering (57%)
- Using other wheeled options (44%)
- Using a mobility device (37%)
- Biking (36%)





Economic Development - Retail and Business

Most respondents either find almost all goods and services they need in Vernon (32%) or shop outside Vernon for a limited number of items (42%). One in five find about half their needs met in Vernon and the other half elsewhere (20%) while 6% mostly go outside Vernon to shop for what they need.



Respondents mostly shop outside Vernon or online for the following items:

- Clothing and Footwear
- Costco (Bulk, etc.)
- Art Supplies
- Specialty Items and Services
- Electronics and Technology
- Books
- Furniture and Household Goods
- Food and Grocery Items
- Outdoor and Sporting Goods
- Miscellaneous Specialty Items

When asked about favourite shopping spots, they say they value a mix of convenience, unique shopping experiences, and support for local businesses when choosing where to shop.

Downtown Vernon stands out for its local charm and diverse offerings, although challenges such as parking and safety perceptions remain. The North End, including Anderson Way and Village Green Mall areas, provide convenient access to major retailers and ample parking, appealing to those looking for practicality in their shopping trips.

Other themes include:

- **Preference for Specific Stores:** Some respondents shop based on specific stores rather than general areas, indicating loyalty to certain establishments across Vernon.
- **Online Shopping:** Several respondents mentioned shopping online due to the perceived limitations of local retail options.

- **Community and Local Support:** There's a strong sentiment towards supporting local businesses, which are seen as integral to the community's economy and character.
- **Parking Concerns:** Parking availability and ease of access are critical factors influencing shopping choices across Vernon.

When asked what types of businesses they would like to see more of in Vernon, the common answers were:

- Diverse Dining Options
- Retail and Shopping
- Entertainment and Recreation
- Waterfront Development
- Cultural and Community Spaces
- Specific Business Needs
- Nightlife and Social Spaces
- Supportive and Accessible Spaces

Making Vernon Even Better

Final comments reflect where respondents would like to see the City focus its efforts to make Vernon an even better place to live, work and play over the next 20 years.

The following is a summary of the main themes from these final comments from the survey (in order of number of mentions):

Theme	Concerns	Suggestions
Housing and Affordability	Respondents expressed significant concerns about the housing crisis, with many mentioning the lack of affordable housing options. There is frustration over restrictive rental conditions and the difficulty in finding suitable housing within budget constraints.	Calls for more subsidized housing programs, support for homeless shelters, and updates to bylaws to accommodate the current housing challenges. There is a desire for more options that allow families and individuals to own homes rather than rent.
Infrastructure and Maintenance	Many respondents emphasized the need to prioritize infrastructure maintenance over new projects that require ongoing upkeep. There were frequent complaints about the condition of streets, with a specific focus on fixing potholes and improving road safety.	Improve road maintenance schedules, allocate funds for street repairs, and rethink the allocation of resources to balance new projects with maintaining existing infrastructure.
Transportation	Traffic congestion, especially on main roads like 32nd Street, was a common complaint.	Rerouting highways to alleviate traffic, improving accessibility with more walking

	Respondents highlighted issues with the current transit system, including bus stops that disrupt traffic flow and inadequate connections between routes.	paths and bike lanes, and enhancing the efficiency and reliability of the transit system with better scheduling and route planning.
Community Safety and Environment	Safety concerns related to drug use in public spaces, particularly parks, were prevalent. Respondents expressed a desire for cleaner and safer public areas, free from drug paraphernalia and activities that pose risks to families and children.	Increase police presence and patrols, implement policies to address drug-related issues, and improve park maintenance to ensure they remain safe and welcoming environments for all residents.
Economic Development and Employment	There is a desire for economic growth that attracts diverse industries and provides more stable, well-paying jobs. Respondents expressed concerns about over-reliance on hospitality and seasonal work, which do not sustain families adequately.	Encourage tech and other industries to set up in Vernon, support local businesses over large corporations, and create initiatives to stimulate job creation for young people and families.
Recreational and Cultural Amenities	Respondents value recreational spaces and cultural amenities but desire more options and accessibility. There were requests for expanded parks, community centers, and programs that cater to a diverse range of interests and age groups.	Develop more parks and recreational facilities, support local arts and cultural events, and provide affordable access to recreational activities for families and individuals of all ages.
Environmental Sustainability	Preservation of green spaces and addressing environmental issues such as pollution in lakes were key concerns. Respondents highlighted the importance of sustainable development practices and protecting natural resources.	Implement energy-efficient building guidelines, promote renewable energy initiatives, and invest in projects that enhance environmental sustainability, including cleaning up local waterways and improving waste management.
Quality of Life and Accessibility	Accessibility for seniors and disabled individuals was a recurring theme. Respondents emphasized the need for infrastructure improvements that enhance mobility and make public spaces more inclusive for everyone.	Improve accessibility features in public areas, provide more affordable housing options that meet accessibility needs, and create free community spaces that are accessible to all residents.
Urban Planning and Development	There were mixed opinions on urban development, with some advocating for controlled growth to maintain a small-town feel, while others supported densification and mixed-use zoning to accommodate population growth.	Develop a balanced approach to urban planning that preserves community character while accommodating growth, update zoning laws to encourage mixed-income housing, and ensure infrastructure keeps pace with development.

Social Issues and Inclusion	Respondents expressed a desire for a more inclusive community that supports multiculturalism and provides safety and support for minorities. There were concerns about social issues such as homelessness and mental health.	Implement initiatives to support multicultural communities, provide resources for homeless shelters and mental health services, and promote social inclusion through community programs and outreach.
Retail and Entertainment	There were mentions of the need for more diverse retail options and entertainment venues within Vernon. Respondents expressed a desire for a vibrant downtown area that offers more nightlife and cultural activities.	Encourage the development of more local businesses and entertainment options, limit the proliferation of vape and liquor stores, and create policies that support a thriving retail and entertainment sector.
Government and Civic Engagement	Respondents expressed frustrations with government responsiveness and decision-making processes. There were calls for more efficient governance, with fewer referendums and more decisive action once decisions are made.	Improve communication between residents and local government, streamline decision-making processes to reduce bureaucracy, and ensure that all voices are heard in community planning and development.

The following is a summary of the main themes from comments from the pop-up events (in order of number of mentions):

Theme	Concerns	Suggestions
Enhancing Cycling Infrastructure	Participants expressed concerns about the insufficient number of bike paths and the poor maintenance of existing bike lanes. There were also comments regarding a lack of safety measures for cyclists, such as separated bike lanes, and bike routes that end abruptly, causing inconvenience and safety issues.	To address these concerns, the community suggests expanding and maintaining bike paths throughout the town, ensuring that existing lanes are repaved and crack-filled. Implementing separated bike lanes and improving safety measures along major cycling routes will enhance the safety and appeal of cycling. Additionally, extending and connecting bike trails to prevent them from ending abruptly will create a seamless and efficient cycling network.
Improving Public Transit and Transportation	Feedback revealed that the public transit system in Vernon faces challenges such as infrequent and unreliable bus service, limiting accessibility and convenience for residents. There is also a lack of transportation options for youth and inadequate transit connections to key areas like parks and neighboring towns. Moreover, bus stops often lack infrastructure,	To improve public transit and transportation, it is suggested to increase the frequency of bus services and improve route planning to ensure reliability and convenience. Developing targeted transit solutions for youth and ensuring bus access to provincial parks and surrounding areas will address specific needs. Enhancing bus stop

	including real-time schedule information and seating, which further reduces the appeal of using public transit.	infrastructure by posting real-time schedules and providing benches will make public transit more user-friendly.
Enhancing Recreational Facilities and Green Spaces	There are concerns about limited access to clean and well-maintained beaches and parks in Vernon. The community also notes the insufficient number of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities for children, youth, and pet owners. Additionally, parks and recreational spaces often lack amenities such as public restrooms and shaded areas, reducing their usability and appeal.	Improving and increasing public access to clean beaches and well-maintained parks, such as enhancing Kin Beach, will address these concerns. Developing new recreational facilities like spray parks, indoor trampoline parks, and off-leash dog areas will provide more options for leisure and activities. Installing more public restrooms, shaded areas, and other amenities in parks and recreational spaces will further enhance their usability and appeal.
Addressing Housing and Homelessness	High levels of homelessness and a shortage of affordable housing options are significant concerns for participants. There is also a limited supply of housing that accommodates pet owners and low-income individuals. Additionally, there is an over-reliance on apartment and condo living, resulting in a lack of diverse housing options.	The community suggests developing low-cost housing options, including tiny homes and co-op housing, to provide affordable living solutions. Creating housing that is inclusive of pet owners and supports individuals with low income or welfare assistance will further address these needs. Promoting the construction of diverse housing options, such as single-family dwellings on individual plots of land, will also help meet the housing demands of the community.
Environmental Sustainability	Respondents are concerned about high levels of pollution and waste, including plastic waste and carbon emissions from buildings. There is also an insufficient number of green spaces and urban greenery. Additionally, the lack of widespread composting and recycling programs further exacerbates environmental issues.	Implementing composting programs in all neighborhoods and banning single-use plastics are crucial steps to reduce waste. Encouraging the construction of zero-carbon buildings and providing incentives for energy retrofits and the use of renewable energy will help lower pollution levels. Increasing the number of trees, plants, and community gardens will enhance urban greenery and promote local food production, contributing to environmental sustainability.
Enhancing Public Safety and Cleanliness	Safety issues in the downtown core and along public pathways are significant concerns for participants. There are also concerns about the cleanliness of public spaces, including beaches and bike paths. Furthermore, there are inadequate facilities for pet waste disposal in	To enhance public safety, it is suggested to increase security measures in the downtown area. Implementing regular cleaning and maintenance of public spaces will ensure they are clean and safe for use. Providing more doggie clean-up bags and waste disposal stations around parks and schools

	parks and school areas, contributing to cleanliness issues.	will help maintain cleanliness and address pet waste issues.
Community and Cultural Development	There are concerns about underutilized business spaces and a lack of cultural venues in Vernon. Additionally, there is limited access to arts and cultural programs, especially for marginalized communities. Participants also noted insufficient community events and activities to foster engagement and vibrancy.	To address these concerns, attracting businesses to fill empty store fronts and developing cultural venues like an indoor concert hall and an Urban Indigenous Cultural Centre are suggested. Offering more accessible and free arts programs will ensure inclusivity and cultural enrichment. Organizing community events, such as outdoor concerts and dog-powered sports events, will promote community engagement and vibrancy, enhancing the overall cultural landscape of Vernon.

Next Steps

What was learned in this first engagement phase will be considered in Phase 2 of the project, where the focus will be on specific growth options.

Appendices

Appendix A: IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement

