



## **Integrated Municipal Sustainability Plan**

### What We Heard Report



prepared by

**UPLAND**

for



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## Executive Summary

As part of the City's review and update of the Integrated Municipal Sustainability Plan (IMSP) and Development Regulations, a comprehensive engagement strategy was implemented to collect the ideas, insights, and opinions of residents, community members, and other stakeholders. Engagement methods included three public surveys, an online interactive map, and interviews and focus groups with key informants and stakeholders. This 'What We Heard Report' summarizes the feedback that was collected and draws conclusions from the recurring themes and messages that were uncovered during the engagement. *The feedback collected is entirely the expressed opinions of residents and stakeholders, and do not reflect planned priorities of the City or of Council.*

Some of the recurring themes and topics to emerge from the engagement include:

- » The natural environment and landscape are highly valued by the community and contribute to the cultural identity of Corner Brook.
- » The quality of life in Corner Brook is second to none.
- » There are concerns related to limited access to high-quality, full time employment opportunities and the shrinking, ageing population in Corner Brook.
- » The waterfront and downtown are seen as having huge potential for future development and growth.

- » Growth within Corner Brook should be balanced with environmental sustainability and ensuring the land, air, and water within and outside of Corner Brook are healthy for all. A balance must also be struck between densifying existing areas and developing natural lands.
- » More transportation options beyond private automobiles, including active transportation (any form of human-powered transportation options) and public transportation are needed.
- » Corner Brook would benefit from a more diverse housing market. Housing that comes in different styles and tenures would benefit current and future residents.
- » Corner Brook is and has the potential to become an even greater regional hub for Western Newfoundland.

The findings above, and other conclusions drawn from this report and from the engagement will inform the policies of the IMSP and regulations within the Development Regulations.

# 1 What We Did



## 1.1 What We Did

*Corner Brook: Planning Together* is a project to review and update the City's Integrated Municipal Sustainability Plan (IMSP) and Development Regulations, and is intended to provide an updated vision and strategic direction for Corner Brook through policy and regulations that reflect the current goals of the community as well as international best practices. Undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, a variety of direct and indirect engagement tools were used to collect the ideas, insights, and opinions of residents, business owners, and other stakeholders regarding the future of Corner Brook.

A website ([www.cornerbrookplan.ca](http://www.cornerbrookplan.ca)) and an email listserve were created to share project documents, engagement opportunities, and key dates and milestones with stakeholders interested in the planning process.

In addition to the project website and email listserve, various mediums, including television, radio, and social media were utilized to draw attention to the project and the engagement opportunities that were available.

For the initial phase of engagement, information from the community was collected through the following methods:

- » an online Project Launch;
- » a set of three Public Surveys;
- » an online Interactive Map;
- » pop-up engagements; and
- » targeted stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

*Corner Brook: Planning Together* officially launched on April 28, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. with an online presentation, followed by a question and answer session. The presentation introduced the project and included an overview of the purpose of the IMSP and Development Regulations. The Project Launch was recorded and posted on the project website for individuals not able to attend.

Following the Project Launch, three public surveys became available and an Interactive Map was also launched. The surveys targeted specific stakeholder groups, and included:

- » a Community Survey,
- » a Business Owners Survey, and
- » a Developer and Builders Survey.

The surveys included open- and closed-ended questions while the Interactive Map gave community members the opportunity to leave location-specific comments on a map of Corner Brook for various themes relevant to the IMSP and Development Regulations. Responses to the surveys and on the Interactive Map were collected between May 10, 2021, and July 9, 2021.

Lastly, a series of interviews and focus groups were conducted with individuals and community groups in Corner Brook.

The input collected during this phase of engagement has been summarized in this What We Heard Report, and the results and subsequent discussion will inform the policies and regulations of the IMSP and Development Regulations.

# 2 Who Was Involved





## 2.1 Who Was Involved

Over 250 engagement interactions took place during the initial phase of engagement for *Corner Brook: Planning Together*. This included:

- » six attendees of the online Project Launch;
- » 175 respondents to the Community Survey;
- » 14 respondents to the Business Owners Survey;
- » three respondents to the Developer and Builders Survey;
- » 50 comments left on the Interactive Map;
- » two attendees at an in-person pop-up; and
- » 12 stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

The feedback collected from the engagement interactions is divided into three sections:

- » Survey results;
- » Interactive Map results; and
- » Direct Engagement results, including feedback from stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and pop-ups.

### Significance of Results

The quantity of feedback received and methods used to collect information do not represent statistically-significant surveying mechanisms, and therefore, results can not be generalized at the population level and should not be interpreted to indicate the level of support for a particular approach. Even where majority opinions are expressed, the City, community, and planners have a duty to represent minority interest.

# 3 Survey Results



### 3.1 Surveys Overview

Three surveys were released as part of *Corner Brook: Planning Together*:

- » the Community Survey,
- » the Business Owners Survey, and
- » the Developer and Builders Survey.

Information about the surveys was distributed through the *Corner Brook: Planning Together* email listserve and website; the City's Webpage, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages; television and radio advertisements; and through local and regional stakeholder networks.

#### **How to Interpret Statistics**

Statistics and tables used in this section are based on the information that was collected through the *Corner Brook: Planning Together* surveys. Survey respondents had the option to skip questions, meaning the number of respondents for each question varies.

For other questions, respondents could choose more than one selection, meaning the sum total of results may equal more than 100%. Where statistics and values are not provided, statements are used to express respondents' general sentiment regarding a theme or topic.

### 3.2 Community Survey Demographics

A total of 175 people completed the Community Survey, and the survey was disproportionately completed by individuals who identify as ‘female’. Nearly two-thirds of all survey responses (65%) were completed by individuals who identify as ‘female’, while 32% of responses were completed by those who identify as ‘male’.

As the Community Survey was intended for individuals who not only live in Corner Brook, but also for part-time residents, visitors, and other stakeholders, responses were collected from a wide geographic range. The majority (83%) of survey responses were completed by individuals who reside in Corner Brook, while responses were collected from individuals throughout the Humber Valley/ Bay of Islands region and the province. Responses were collected from individuals living outside of Newfoundland and Labrador, including in Ontario and Alberta.

Survey respondents ranged in age from their 20s to over 65 years of age (Figure 1). Exactly 50% of survey responses were collected from individuals between the ages of 20 and 39, and nearly 25% of respondents were between the ages of 40 and 49.

For respondents *living in* Corner Brook, responses were over-represented from those aged 20-49. Approximately 31% of responses collected from individuals living in Corner Brook indicated they were between the ages of 30 and 39—a cohort that makes up 10.8% of the city’s total population according to the 2016 Statistics Canada Census. Comparatively, respondents aged 50-59 who live in Corner Brook were well-represented

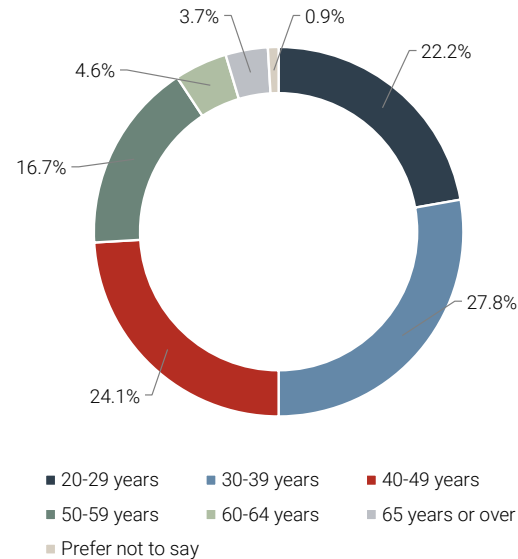


Figure 1: Age distribution of Community Survey respondents.

in the survey results—making up 16.7% of survey responses and 16.1% of the total population.

Approximately 9% of responses were collected from respondents over the age of 60 who live in Corner Brook, but this cohort makes up 31% of the city’s population. Zero responses were collected from individuals under the age of 20, though the project team facilitated conversations with youth through a focus group, the results of which are discussed later in this What We Heard Report.

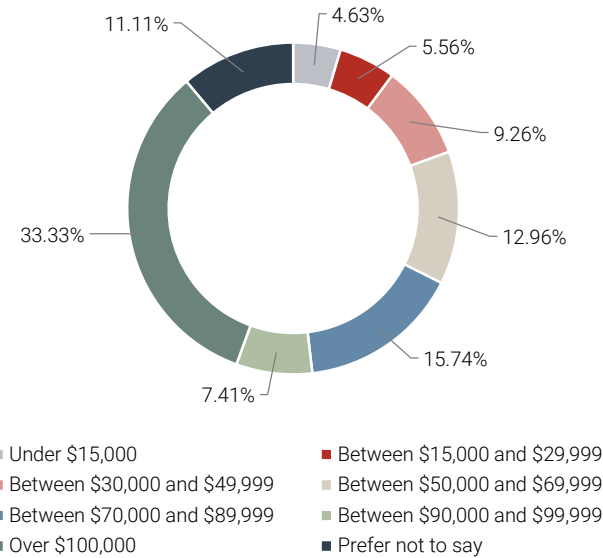


Figure 2: Income distribution of Community Survey respondents.

A third (33%) of survey responses were collected from individuals with a before-tax household income over \$100,000 (Figure 2). When only considering responses from individuals *living in* Corner Brook, 34.4% of responses were collected from individuals with a before-tax household income over \$100,000, a cohort that makes up 25.4% of the city's total population. Over 23% of the city's population has a before-tax household income of less than \$30,000, according to Statistics Canada, while less than 9% of survey respondents reported a before-tax household income of less than \$30,000.

### 3.3 Community Survey Results

#### Strengths and Challenges

Capitalizing on the qualities that make Corner Brook great while finding solutions for things that create challenges in the city will be integral as the City plans for the future. From a list of more than 20 options, respondents identified what they felt were the strengths and challenges in Corner Brook (Figure 3), and could choose as many or as few options as they would like. Respondents could also provide written responses, captured as ‘Other’

Respondents overwhelmingly felt the strengths of the city lie in the trails and trail network (75%), access to natural areas (74%), and parks and open spaces (61%). Other significant strengths identified by respondents included family and friends (58%), the crime rate in Corner Brook (41%), and access to education (40%). For responses not listed in the available options, respondents felt access to outdoor recreation (e.g., alpine skiing) and beautiful landscape are strengths of the city.

Comparatively, access to employment (55%) was identified as the greatest challenge facing the city, followed closely by the overall transportation network (48%) and the businesses and stores that are available (47%). Additionally, respondents felt the sidewalk network (46%), cost of housing (42%), and access to healthcare and social services (42%) were challenges in Corner Brook. Responses listed as ‘Other’ included access to mental health services and maintenance of roads and sidewalks (including snowploughing).

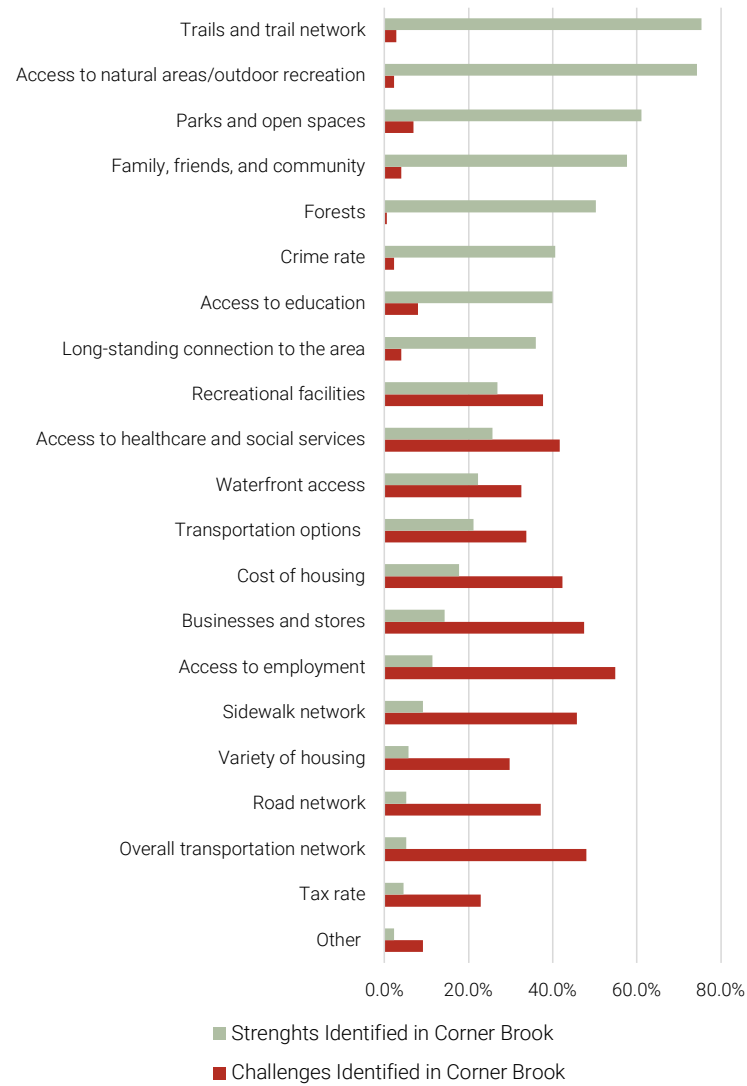


Figure 3: Strengths and challenges identified by community survey respondents.

### Residential Growth & Development

Respondents were asked to identify their level of agreement for the types of residential development that should be encouraged in Corner Brook (Figure 4). Generally, respondents feel there is potential for residential development in vacant buildings while also in housing forms that are already present in Corner Brook. Over 87% of respondents indicated they *Strongly agree* or *Agree* that vacant buildings should be converted to residential uses. Over 65% of respondents indicated they *Strongly agree* or *Agree* that apartments with fewer than five stories should be encouraged; comparatively, however, over 47% of respondents indicated they *Strongly disagree* or *Disagree* that apartments over five stories should be encouraged, and 37% of respondents indicated they *Strongly disagree* or *Disagree* that mobile homes should be encouraged.

Respondents were also asked how appropriate residential growth would be for areas throughout the city. Nearly 80% of respondents felt that new residential development was *Very appropriate* or *Appropriate* in existing neighbourhoods in Corner Brook while 73% of respondents felt undeveloped land was *Very appropriate* or *Appropriate* for new residential development. The waterfront (60%), Downtown Corner Brook (48%), and along major roadways (46%) were selected less frequently as *Very appropriate* or *Appropriate* locations for new residential development. In addition to the listed options, respondents could identify other sites appropriate for residential development.

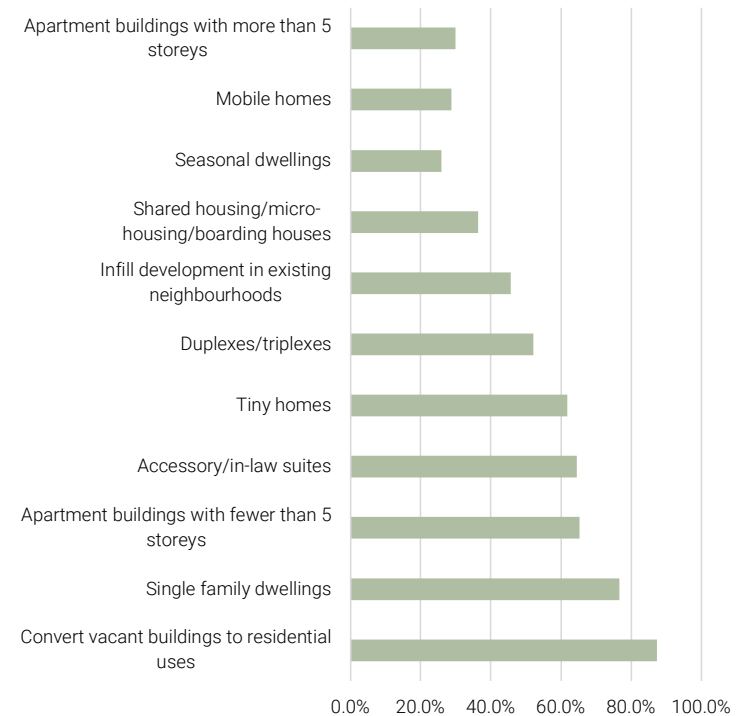


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who *Strongly Agreed* or *Agreed* certain types of residential development should be encouraged in Corner Brook.

Sites included:

- » the new hospital site;
- » the existing hospital site, once the new hospital is operating;
- » Bells Brook area;
- » Mayfair Avenue;
- » Gillams Road; and
- » Pratt Street.

### **Commercial and Industrial Growth & Development**

Following upon areas for residential growth, respondents were asked how appropriate commercial and industrial growth would be for areas throughout the city. Respondents overwhelmingly felt downtown Corner Brook (94%) is *Very appropriate* or *Appropriate* for new commercial development, while nearly 81% of respondents felt the waterfront is *Very appropriate* or *Appropriate*. New commercial development along major roadways was deemed *Very appropriate* or *Appropriate* by 72% of respondents and 62% of respondents felt new development in undeveloped lands was *Very appropriate* or *Appropriate*. However, some respondents noted that new commercial development should only occur in areas of existing commercial uses (such as the malls or the downtown) to prevent the removal of forests and natural assets in Corner Brook for development purposes.

Survey respondents felt that new industrial development should be focused in certain areas of Corner Brook. Nearly 78% of respondents felt it is *Not very appropriate* or *Not appropriate at all* for new industrial development to occur in existing neighbourhoods and 79% of respondents felt it is *Not very appropriate* or *Not appropriate at all* for new industrial development to occur in downtown Corner Brook. Conversely, 56% of respondents felt it is *Very appropriate* or *Appropriate* for new industrial development on undeveloped land and 43% of respondents felt it is *Very appropriate* or *Appropriate* along major roadways. Several respondents commented that less intensive industrial uses, such as a craft workshop, may be more appropriate in closer proximity to commercial and residential areas. Another respondent noted that the existing industrial areas should be filled first before expanding to new areas. Respondents noted where new industrial development could go, which included:

- » Lewin Parkway industrial area,
- » Lundrigan Drive,
- » North Shore Highway,
- » Watson's Pond, and
- » Riverside Drive.



### Issues of Concern

Questions 7 and 8 of the Community Survey asked respondents to indicate their level of concern for a variety of issues from a list of 18 options (Figure 5). Respondents expressed the greatest level of concern for the availability of employment in Corner Brook. Almost 89% of respondents indicated they are *Very concerned* or *Concerned* about employment opportunities. Some respondents explained that limited full-time employment opportunities are exacerbating demographic challenges facing the city; Corner Brook’s aging and shrinking population ranked second and third, respectively, as issues causing the greatest level of concern for respondents.

Food security also ranked highly (77%) among respondents. Many respondents commented that the City should take a more proactive role in promoting food security and local food development. Similarly, 69% of respondents indicated they were *Very concerned* or *Concerned* about access to goods and services in the city. One respondent commented that there are limited opportunities for young families in Corner Brook, making it difficult to attract new residents to the city.

Other significant issues of concern included the availability and affordability of housing, and quality of trees and forests—especially regarding development and invasive species, climate change and sea level rise, and limited transportation options.

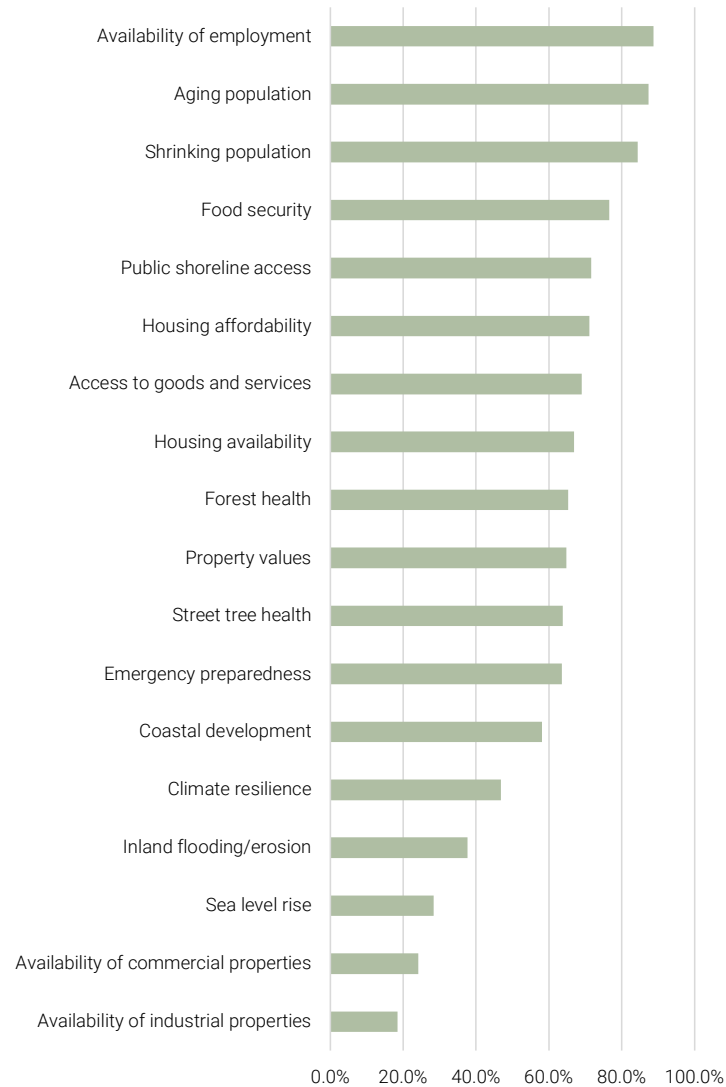


Figure 5: Percentage of respondents *Very concerned* or *Concerned* regarding individual topics.

### Environmental Sustainability Priorities

Respondents could select their top three priorities from a list of potential environmental sustainability priorities, while also being able to indicate their own environmental sustainability priorities the City should undertake (Figure 6). Nearly 65% of respondents selected support for clean energy sources as an environmental sustainability priority, and 55% of respondents want to expand and improve the active transportation network. Backyard food development (50%) and forest and wildlife protection (48%) also ranked highly among the priorities.

Respondents also listed other potential environmental sustainability priorities, which included:

- » tiny home subdivisions;
- » reducing waste, including a recycling/composting program and a wastewater treatment facility;
- » environmental sustainability education programming and learning opportunities; and
- » more outdoor recreation opportunities to cultivate a greater appreciation for the natural environment.

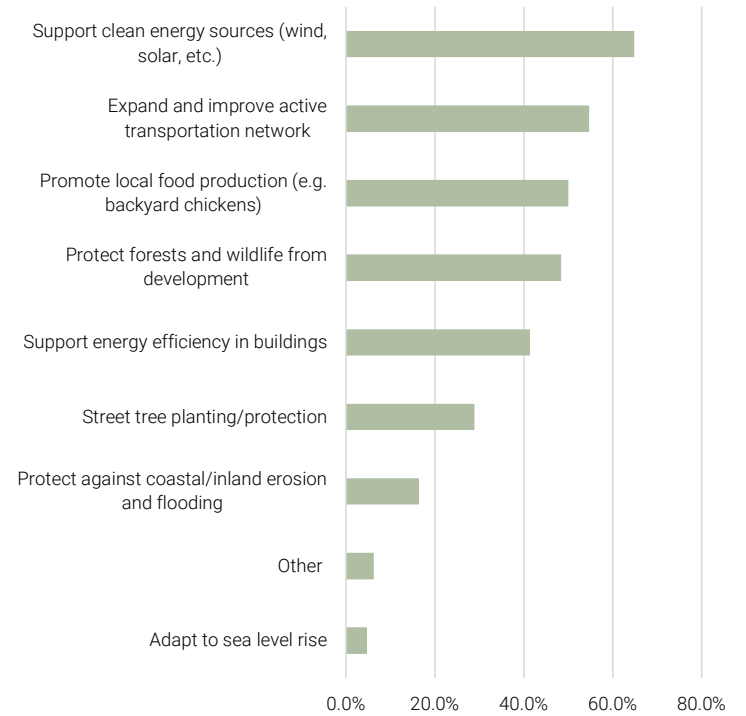


Figure 6: Percentage of respondents who selected each environmental sustainability priority.

### Economic Sustainability Priorities

Respondents could select their top three priorities from a list of potential economic sustainability priorities (Figure 7). Supporting small businesses ranked highest (59%) among respondents, and was followed closely by supporting locally produced goods (54%). Promoting local businesses (46%) and encouraging more development in the downtown (41%) also ranked highly among economic sustainability priorities.

Respondents also provided economic sustainability priorities that were not listed which included:

- » attracting more employers with “good paying” jobs to support the existing population and to spur population growth;
- » develop more active transportation and public transportation options;
- » promote and advertise Corner Brook as a great place to live and work;
- » leverage current assets, including Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic;
- » tax incentives to draw businesses and people to the area; and
- » pursuing opportunities that fill regional service gaps.

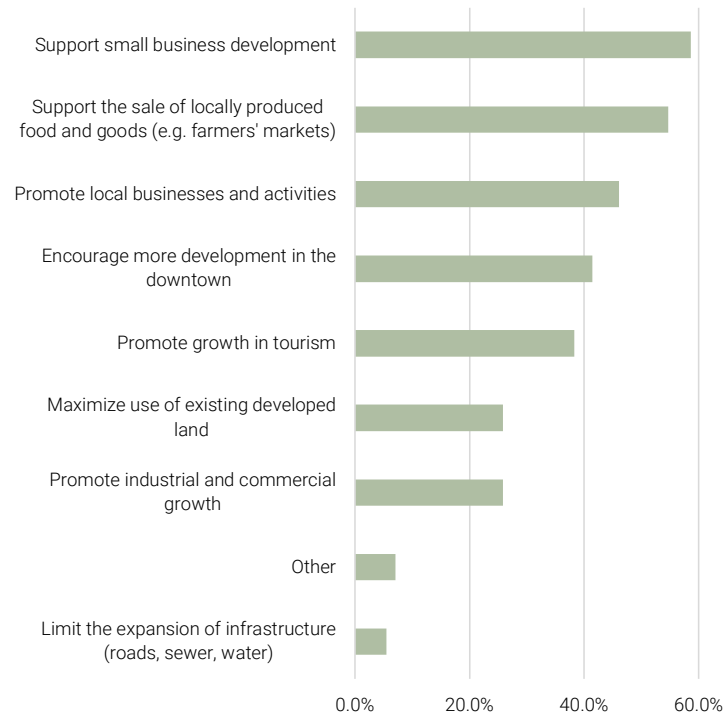


Figure 7: Percentage of respondents who selected each economic sustainability priority.

### Socio-cultural Sustainability Priorities

Respondents could select their top three priorities from a list of potential socio-cultural sustainability priorities (Figure 8). Respondents could also indicate socio-cultural sustainability priorities of their own.

Providing parks and recreation spaces for all ages ranked highest (49%) among respondents for potential socio-cultural sustainability priorities. Supporting an active and engaged citizenry also ranked highly among respondents, with 44% selecting it as a socio-cultural sustainability priority.

In addition to those listed, respondents suggested socio-cultural sustainability priorities, including:

- » preserving the World War I Prisoner of War Wall in Curling;
- » increasing the number and diversity of opportunities for newcomers to Corner Brook;
- » improving accessibility, especially for people with limited mobility or who require assist mobility devices; and
- » diversifying mobility options while also strengthening existing options.

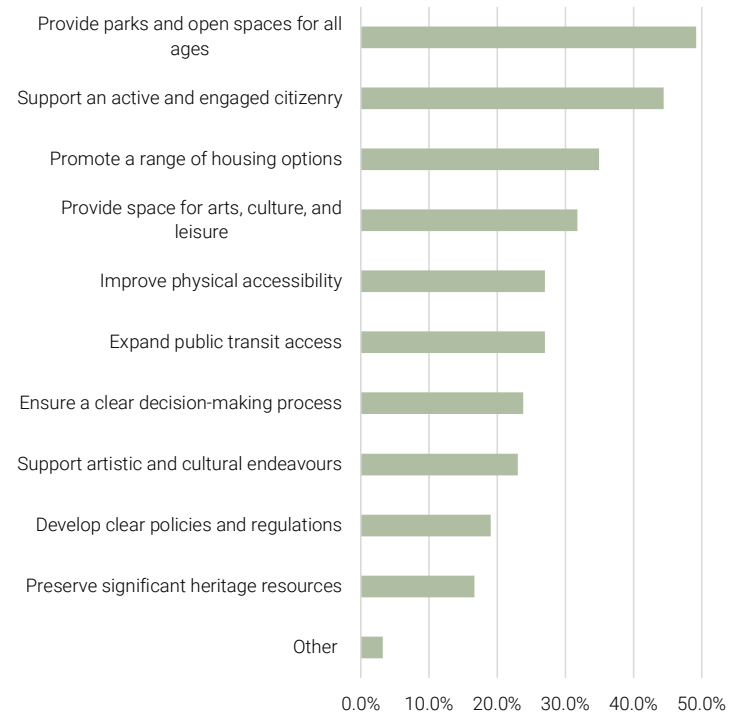


Figure 8: Percentage of respondents who selected each socio-cultural sustainability priority.

## **Character, Opportunities, and Challenges**

Questions 12, 13, and 14 of the Community Survey were open-ended questions asking respondents about the character of Corner Brook, opportunities for the future, and challenges the city may face in the coming years. Each response was reviewed, analyzed, and categorized based on recurring themes throughout all the open-ended responses.

Some open-ended responses were categorized into more than one theme, but, for the purpose of this section, they will only be considered under one theme. As with the other questions of the survey, respondents had the option to partially or fully skip these questions. The recurring themes will be presented according to theme frequency.

### **Economic Development**

There were 189 comments related to economic development in the open-ended survey responses. Respondents hope a variety of economic and employment opportunities, including those in tourism, will define Corner Brook's future. Another respondent commented they hope to see greater Indigenous-owned land and businesses in Corner Brook, while other stakeholders want an economically stronger and more attractive downtown.

Respondents feel the waterfront has huge potential for both residents and visitors of the city. Other opportunities for economic development noted by respondents included:

- » capitalizing on remote working capabilities created by COVID-19;

- » revamping existing commercial areas and filling vacant spaces;
- » promoting Corner Brook as a service hub for Western Newfoundland and as a tourist destination;
- » partnering with local institutions and businesses to promote innovation;
- » developing more strategic and targeted land use policies and regulations; and
- » further developing industrial and resource sectors in Corner Brook.

Despite these opportunities, many respondents feel limited economic development will be one of Corner Brook's greatest challenges. Respondents noted a lack of jobs and limited job growth would severely limit the potential of the city, and this could be exacerbated if growth chooses to go elsewhere, such as Deer Lake or Pasadena.

### **Demographics**

Comments related to the demographic changes appeared in 104 responses. Many respondents were concerned with Corner Brook's shrinking and ageing population and felt that more needs to be done to attract and retain youth and newcomers to Corner Brook. Several respondents noted that slowing the city's population decline and turning it into growth will require a coordinated approach to improve employment opportunities. However, many respondents were hopeful that Corner Brook can leverage its location and landscape

to attract individuals who are able to work from home full-time—an outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Services and Amenities**

Over 80 open-ended comments (83) submitted through the survey were concerned with services and amenities in Corner Brook. Respondents commented that Corner Brook should embrace the value of the educational institutions in the community and leverage them to create a better future for the city. Many respondents wished for more indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be available to support an active community.

Many respondents noted they can see Corner Brook becoming a healthcare, education, and recreational hub for the province with the many natural- and human-made opportunities available.

Survey respondents noted that local food production could help the community deal with food insecurity, and could also assist in economic development endeavours and sustainability practices. Other services and amenities respondents noted as potential needs and opportunities for Corner Brook included:

- » midwifery;
- » wastewater treatment;
- » youth and family programming;
- » wayfinding and signage; and
- » snow clearing, especially for sidewalks.

### **Community Character Ambitions**

Respondents left 70 comments related to the character ambitions of Corner Brook. Many of these comments outlined what respondents would like the future of Corner Brook to be described as and focused on leveraging Corner Brook's greatest asset—its people. Words and phrases respondents would like Corner Brook to be described as included:

- » cozy and welcoming;
- » quiet and peaceful;
- » adventurous and active;
- » convenient;
- » family-friendly;
- » professional;
- » engaged;
- » challenging the status quo; and
- » additive, with co-operative attitudes.

### **Development Patterns**

There were 68 comments left related to development patterns in Corner Brook. Many of the comments focused on improving areas within the city. One of the primary suggestions under this theme was for the City to enable development of the waterfront and to improve access to this asset. Many respondents feel it is an underutilized asset that could facilitate residential and commercial growth as well as play host to outdoor parks and trails, such as a boardwalk. Some respondents would like to

see connections made between the port and adjacent lands to facilitate better movement of people.

Respondents commented on how they see opportunities in improving the function of the downtown as well as enabling development in this area. However, as one respondent noted, future growth and development in Corner Brook must be balanced with environmental sustainability. An additional opportunity identified by a survey respondent was the potential that is held in undeveloped land which could enable residential or commercial growth or be used for local food production.

One barrier and challenge to growth and development that was frequently cited by respondents was infrastructure. Many respondents feel aging infrastructure has, and will continue to create financial barriers for the city. One respondent emphasized that existing infrastructure needed to be re-purposed and used more efficiently, while another noted that the municipal infrastructure requirements were unsustainable and prohibited growth.

### **The Environment**

Comments related to the environment appeared on 65 occasions within the open-ended responses. Comments related to this theme focused on the natural landscape Corner Brook is situated in and how it is integral to the city and its people. Respondents noted the forests, the sea, and the landscape as important characteristics of the city that should be protected. One respondent stated, “Corner Brook is a very beautiful city and

maintaining the natural elements of our community is paramount to preserving our cultural identity.”

Many respondents noted they used the natural environment in their day-to-day lives to escape city life, providing them with physical, social, and emotional benefits. With these benefits, and the many others that are derived from the natural environment, respondents felt there is an opportunity to grow with environmental sustainability in mind, for the City and its residents to be stewards of the environment, and to be a city of environmental excellence.

The ongoing and continually worsening situation with climate change has many respondents worried about the future of Corner Brook. Flooding of the watercourses and sea level rise has many respondents focused on climate change adaptation, mitigation, and resilience.

Just as climate change and sea level rise is a concern for some respondents, it is also viewed as an opportunity to create a “greener” Corner Brook. Many respondents see opportunities in clean energy development, the potential of the waterfront, and how economic development and the environment can go hand in hand. Other initiatives respondents would like to see are reducing pollution and waste and developing a wastewater treatment facility to clean up the harbour.

### **Parks and Trails**

Respondents left 39 comments related to parks and trails in the open-ended questions of the Community Survey. Survey respondents felt very strongly about the value the open space, parks, and trail networks bring to the city but want to see them made more widely accessible and usable by everyone in Corner Brook.

Respondents commented how they see a huge opportunity for the City to expand the parks and trail network, with the hope of connecting all areas of Corner Brook through these assets. One respondent suggested that development should be closely integrated with parks and open spaces to provide benefits to all users.

### **Transportation and Public Transportation**

Nearly 40 comments left by respondents focused on the transportation network in Corner Brook (39) and a further four comments dealt exclusively with public transportation. Many respondents want to see Corner Brook become more pedestrian friendly to make the city more accessible to all. One respondent noted West Street and the downtown core as areas that needed improvements with regard to becoming more pedestrian friendly. Respondents also suggested the city could use more sidewalks, especially on local streets to improve mobility.

In addition to becoming pedestrian friendly, respondents expressed their desire to see more active transportation (any form of human-powered) options, especially as a way to reduce the use of the private automobile as

a primary mode of transportation. One respondent suggested bike escalators as a strategy to help negate the challenges created by Corner Brook's hilly topography.

There were also several comments related to streets and the transportation network more broadly. Many respondents want a more proactive system for fixing the roads and streets. Some survey respondents see the potential of a transportation hub at the port, while another respondent noted the cost to travel outside the province as a major barrier and there needs to be better access to the mainland.

Specific to public transportation, respondents want to see increased bus hours throughout the week, including weekends.

### **Housing**

There were 39 comments related to housing left in the open-ended questions of the Community Survey. Respondents felt there is an inadequate supply of housing, especially affordable housing, and they feel the housing stock in the city lacks a diversity of options. One respondent suggested mobile homes and tiny homes are an opportunity to improve the affordability and diversity of housing.

One respondent suggested housing built on or near transportation routes could help with affordability and mobility, while another cited high taxes as a barrier to new housing development. Finally, a respondent, focusing on Townsite, cited the need for government grants to revamp the existing homes.



### **Governance**

Comments related to the governance of Corner Brook appeared 25 times throughout the open-ended question responses. Among respondents, there was a perceived bias in decision-making in Corner Brook who felt greater transparency is needed. Respondents also felt new and diversified voices are needed in decision-making roles and that greater participation by the public in decision-making will improve the future for all. Finally, many respondents cited the need for a new vision for the city to guide decision-making as Corner Brook moves into the future.

### **Arts and Culture**

Comments related to arts and culture appeared 24 times in the open-ended survey responses. Respondents indicated they see huge opportunities and value in embracing Corner Brook's varied history and culture for the future of the city. Comments referenced the need for greater support for creative endeavours and the arts (visual, performance, music), while other respondents hoped to see more space for youth and young professionals for arts and social enterprise.

Respondents commented how they hope Corner Brook can solidify its status as a cultural hub of Newfoundland while others want to see more efforts put towards public art and festivals. One respondent commented on the specific opportunity to promote Corner Brook's World War I heritage for visitors and residents.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

There were 20 comments related to diversity and inclusion left in the open-ended responses of the Community Survey. Respondents noted they want Corner Brook and its residents to embrace diversity of all types in the city, including through greater programming, decision-making, and opportunities suited for newcomers and immigrants.

Respondents also cited the need for greater inclusion with regards to people who are part of the LGBTQ+ community and Indigenous people. One respondent noted Corner Brook needs a greater presence of Indigenous people, culture, and businesses.

### **Progressive**

Respondents left 20 comments related to the need for the City of Corner Brook to be progressive and proactive in its decision-making. Many comments focused on developing clean energy and 'green' development practices to set a provincial and national standard. Other respondents expressed their desire to see Corner Brook become an innovation and technology hub through public-private partnerships.

### **Accessibility**

There were 14 comments related to accessibility. Many respondents indicated they hoped to see the city become more accessible as a whole through transportation options, while others focused on the need to make buildings more accessible. Many respondents referenced the need to make decisions through an accessibility lens.

### 3.4 Business Owners Survey

#### Type of Businesses

A total of 14 business owners completed the Business Owners Survey. Several business sectors were represented in the survey results, including, Forestry, Fishing and Mining (7%); Retail (29%); Professional Services (21%); Accommodation and Food Services (21%); among others.

The businesses that responded to the survey also employ a wide number of employees. Nearly 29% of the businesses that responded employ 21 or more individuals and 43% employ one or two people. Every business owner that responded (100%) to the survey operates a business year-round, as opposed to operating only select months of the year.

The responses that were collected are skewed towards businesses that have operated in Corner Brook for 10 or more years. Over 64% of businesses have operated for 10 or more years, while 14% have operated for one to three years and 21% have operated for four to nine years. No responses were collected from business owners operating a business that has been open for less than one year.

#### Business Operation and Barriers

Of the businesses owners that responded to the survey, 18% plan to sell their business, 18% plan to renovate their businesses, 9% plan to expand at the same location, 9% plan to relocate to a smaller location, and 45% plan to remain the same over the next five years.

For the business owners that plan to sell, they cited changing market dynamics, limited infrastructure and lack of promotion as reasons for their plans.

Business owners cited several factors that limit their business' ability to expand in Corner Brook, including:

- » business and property tax rates;
- » competition created from larger organizations (“chains”) in Corner Brook;
- » a limited sized population that is shrinking;
- » limited parking;
- » market and institutional uncertainty; and
- » inefficiency in permitting.

#### Land Use Planning Policies and Regulations

Business owners that responded have a range in knowledge regarding the planning policies and regulations in Corner Brook—over 33% of business owners indicated they are *Very aware*, 22% are *Somewhat aware*, and 44% are *Somewhat unaware*. No business owners were *Very unaware* of planning policies and regulations in the city.

Many of the businesses owners responded they were *Neutral* (44%) with regard to their satisfaction of the planning policies and regulations in Corner Brook, while 11% indicated they were *Satisfied* and 11% indicated they were *Very dissatisfied*, and 33% did not indicate a level of satisfaction. Business owners cited overly stringent regulations, limited flexibility of the regulations, and the length of time to obtain an approval as contributing factors for their level of satisfaction.

Business owners were also asked about their satisfaction with signage regulations. Nearly half (44%) of the business owners feel signage regulations are too restrictive, while 22% of business owners feel the regulations are appropriate. One-third (33%) of respondents did not know the signage regulations for their property or they were not applicable.

### Servicing and Land Availability Satisfaction

Generally, business owners felt *Neutral* or *Satisfied* with various servicing and land availability factors in Corner Brook (Figure 9).

Over 77% of survey respondents indicated they were *Satisfied* or *Very Satisfied* with the water and sewer capacity in the city. Respondents also generally felt there are enough serviced properties in Corner Brook for their business and there is enough land suitably zoned for their businesses. However, some respondents noted the topographical challenges in Corner Brook and strict land use controls as challenges to development.

Respondents indicated they were generally *Satisfied* (44%) with the road and sidewalk system in Corner Brook, while 22% indicated they were *Dissatisfied* and 11% indicated they were *Very dissatisfied*.

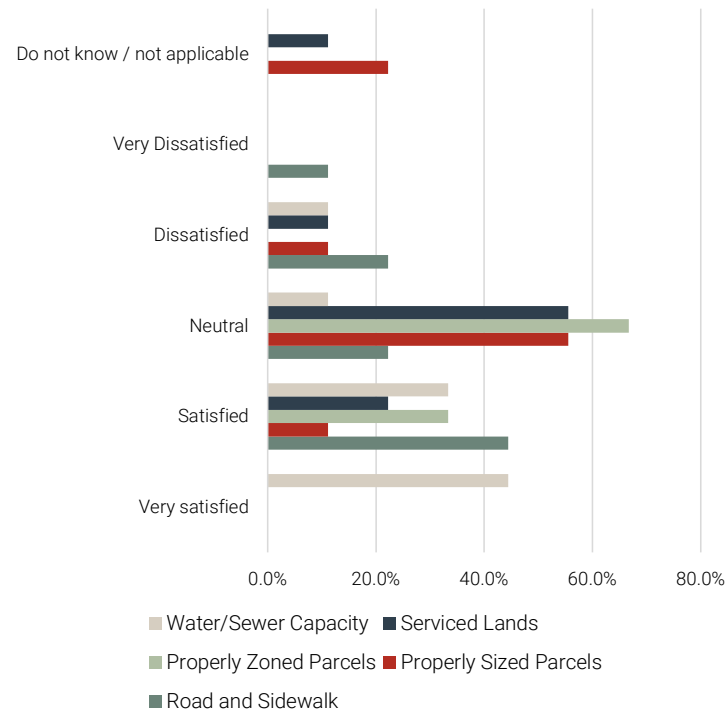


Figure 9: Business owners satisfaction with various factors.

### Automobile and Bicycle Parking

There were diverging opinions with regards to automobile and bicycle parking availability in Corner Brook (Figure 10). Over half of the respondents (56%) felt there are too few automobile parking spaces for their business, while one-third of respondents (33%) felt there is more than enough automobile parking.

Comparatively, one-third of respondents (33%) felt there are too few bicycle parking spaces, but 22% of respondents felt there are more than enough bicycle parking spaces, and 11% felt there is an appropriate number of bicycle parking spaces.

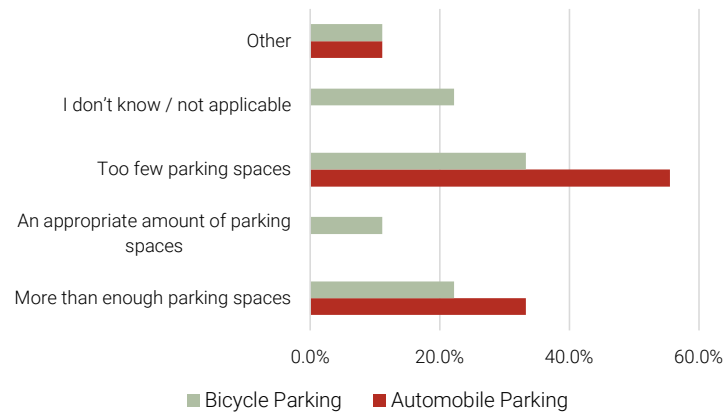


Figure 10: Business owners satisfaction with automobile and bicycle parking

### Corner Brook as a Place to do Business

Opinions ranged among survey respondents about Corner Brook as a place to do business (Figure 11). One-third of respondents (33%) felt Corner Brook is a

*Fair* place to conduct a business, while 11% felt it is an *Excellent* place and 11% feel it is a *Good* place to conduct a business. However, over one-fifth (22%) of respondents felt Corner Brook is a *Poor* place to conduct a business.

Respondents offered several suggestions for improving business conditions in Corner Brook, which included:

- » improving communication between City Staff and business owners;
- » streamlining the regulatory process;
- » requiring better upkeep of properties and amenities;
- » incentivizing and supporting small business; and,
- » leveraging assets to help attract businesses.

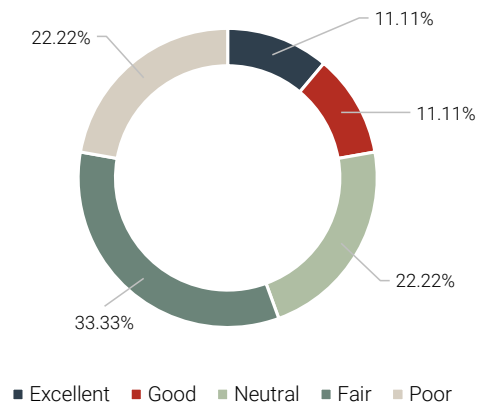


Figure 11: Business owners satisfaction with various factors.

### 3.5 Developer and Builders Survey

#### Type of Businesses

Three individuals who own or operate companies within the development, construction, or building trades sector across Newfoundland and Labrador, including development-related services such as architecture, engineering, and land use planning, completed the Developer and Builders Survey.

The businesses, headquartered in Corner Brook, St. John's, and Saint Leonard (QE), employ between 10 and 1,200 people across Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada. All three businesses operate in Corner Brook, Humber - Bay of Island Region, and Western Newfoundland, while two-thirds (66%) of the business owners operate businesses extending from Central Newfoundland to areas outside of Atlantic Canada.

Two-thirds (66%) of the business owners who responded to the survey operate businesses that do not build structures, while the remaining respondents operate a business that builds between zero and five structures annually.

#### Development Trends

Over the next 10 years, respondents felt residential and commercial markets will shift (Figure 12) for certain development types. Two-thirds (66%) of respondents felt the demand for single-dwellings, double dwellings, multi-dwellings, mini-homes, and co-op housing will stay the same over the next 10 years. However, 100% of respondents felt demand for secondary suits will increase and demand for office space will decrease over the next 10 years.

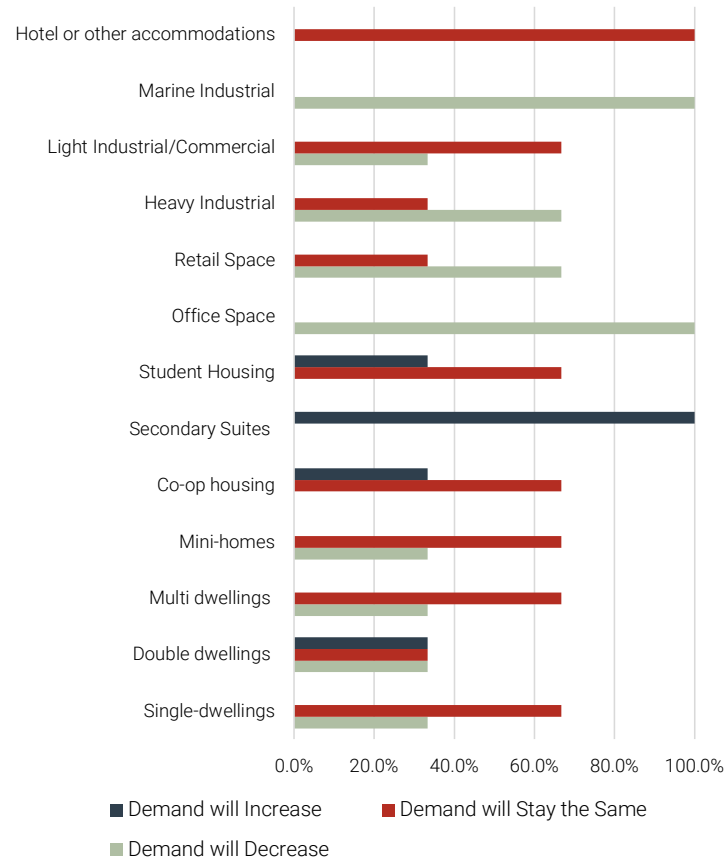


Figure 12: Builders and Developers expected demand trends for residential and commercial development in Corner Brook.

### **Development Potential**

Respondents commented on areas in Corner Brook where new development potential exists. These included:

- » the downtown core;
- » industrial parks (e.g., Lundrigan Drive);
- » between Lundrigan drive and Elizabeth Street;
- » the waterfront;
- » Humber Road and the Marine Drive areas;
- » West Street and Broadway; and
- » Commercial Street.

Respondents also commented on existing neighborhoods where development potential exists. These include:

- » Commercial Street;
- » O'Connell Drive and University Drive;
- » the area between Marine Drive and Herald Avenue; and
- » adding second floor residential to West Street.

### **Barriers to Development**

Finally, business owners in the development and building sector commented on barriers to development in Corner Brook. Respondents generally felt there are two barriers to development in Corner Brook:

- » building and development regulations; and
- » land availability and cost.

### **Building and Development Regulations**

Respondents felt building and development codes and regulations are overly stringent. They felt these regulations and codes create barriers to development and may be causing growth to occur in communities outside of Corner Brook. One respondent noted that regulations should be flexible and match demand as opposed to being fixed.

### **Land Availability and Cost**

Respondents suggested that there is a limited land supply in Corner Brook, making the cost of development and growth very high. One respondent noted that lot sizes in Corner Brook can be too small to be profitable for some developers while another respondent noted that there is a lack of adequate warehousing space in Corner Brook.

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# 4 Interactive Map Results





## 4.1 Overview

The Interactive Map gave community members and stakeholders the opportunity to provide location-specific comments on an online map of Corner Brook. The Interactive Map guided respondents through four topics:

- » Growth and Development,
- » Transportation,
- » the Environment, and
- » City Well-being.

In total, there were 50 comments left on the Interactive Map. The results to the Interactive Map are presented on the following pages based on the four guiding topics.

## 4.2 Growth and Development

Respondents left eight comments on the Growth and Development section of the Interactive Map. This section of the Interactive Map sought input regarding how, where, and what types of development the City should prioritize in the IMSP and Development Regulations.

Respondents felt there were opportunities for future residential development on either side of the Lewin Parkway near O'Connell Drive. Another respondent suggested any future industrial development should be concentrated in the existing industrial areas and that industrial development should not be situated along the waterfront. Rather, they thought there was an opportunity for residential and commercial development with a boardwalk along the waterfront. There was also a respondent that suggested more efforts needed to be undertaken to attract more tenants to the shopping centres in Corner Brook, while another sees development opportunities for the existing hospital site once the new hospital opens.

Finally, one respondent felt the Town of Massey Drive should be amalgamated into the City of Corner Brook.

## 4.3 Transportation

There were 22 comments left on the Transportation section of the Interactive Map. Respondents were asked to highlight future opportunities for the transportation network in Corner Brook.

Several respondents noted the need to improve conditions for pedestrians in the city, including:

- » improving crosswalks at the intersections of Lewin Parkway and Broadway, and Park Street and Chestnut Street;
- » along Broadway, between Valley Road and Herald Avenue, the solar crosswalk does not operate correctly in the winter, the missing stairs creates accessibility concerns, and the abrupt end of the sidewalk also creates challenges for pedestrians; and
- » creating more stroller- and accessibility-friendly sidewalks and trails.

There were several comments from respondents focusing on the need to integrate existing and future trails into the broader transportation network. One respondent suggested connecting the new hospital site to the broader trail network while another suggested connecting Cook's Lookout to the trail along the rail line. Respondents would also like to see a boardwalk implemented along the waterfront.

A respondent also commented on the need for more traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps, to reduce automobile speed in residential areas.

Respondents also noted potential locations for future roundabouts, including:

- » the Lewin Parkway, Humber Road, Service Road, and Main Street interchange;
- » Confederation Drive access to the Corner Brook Mall; and
- » the Grenfell Drive and Corporal Pinksen Memorial Drive intersection.

Finally, respondents made the following comments about the automobile network:

- » dangerous conditions at Elizabeth Street and Charles Street need to be improved;
- » the left-turn light at the intersection of Main Street and Brook Street needs to be prolonged;
- » connections between Park Street and Mt. Bernard Avenue are needed; and
- » another left turn lane is needed for Elizabeth Street at O'Connell Drive.

## 4.4 The Environment

Five comments were left on the Environment section of the Interactive Map. This section of the Interactive Map focused on the natural environment in Corner Brook.

One respondent commented on the need to prevent all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and snowmobile use within the protected watersheds in the city. Other respondents focused on improving the quality of the waterfront, especially by limiting the amount of raw sewage that goes into the harbour and by cleaning up industrial waste along the shoreline.

Finally, one respondent commented on the need to look at creative solutions for development within the flood prone areas of the city, and another respondent suggested a street-tree planing initiative would help reinforce the natural environment in Corner Brook and help to replace the City's ageing street trees.

## 4.5 City Well-being

There were 15 comments left on the City Well-being section of the Interactive Map (Figure 13). Respondents could leave comments regarding the physical, social, emotional, and mental health factors in Corner Brook.

Many respondents commented on the potential to increase access to green spaces within Corner Brook. Respondents cited Sunnyslope and the new hospital site as two potential areas for new and improved green spaces. Respondents also requested to see an increased number of community gardens around the city. Several locations were cited by respondents, such as the waterfront, downtown, and in various neighborhoods.

As an extension of green spaces and community gardens, respondents commented on how new trails, especially along the waterfront, could help improve the physical health of the community while also contributing to the tourism sector.

One respondent commented on the opportunity to create a heritage conservation district in downtown Corner Brook to protect significant buildings, while another suggested Brook Street needed greater focus on its aesthetic quality.

Finally, one respondent noted the need to enable a more welcoming city, especially through the establishment of places of worship, perhaps at the existing hospital site once the new hospital opens. This respondent noted that Corner Brook attracts many newcomers and immigrants and that the City and community should take on a more proactive role in ensuring they feel welcome.

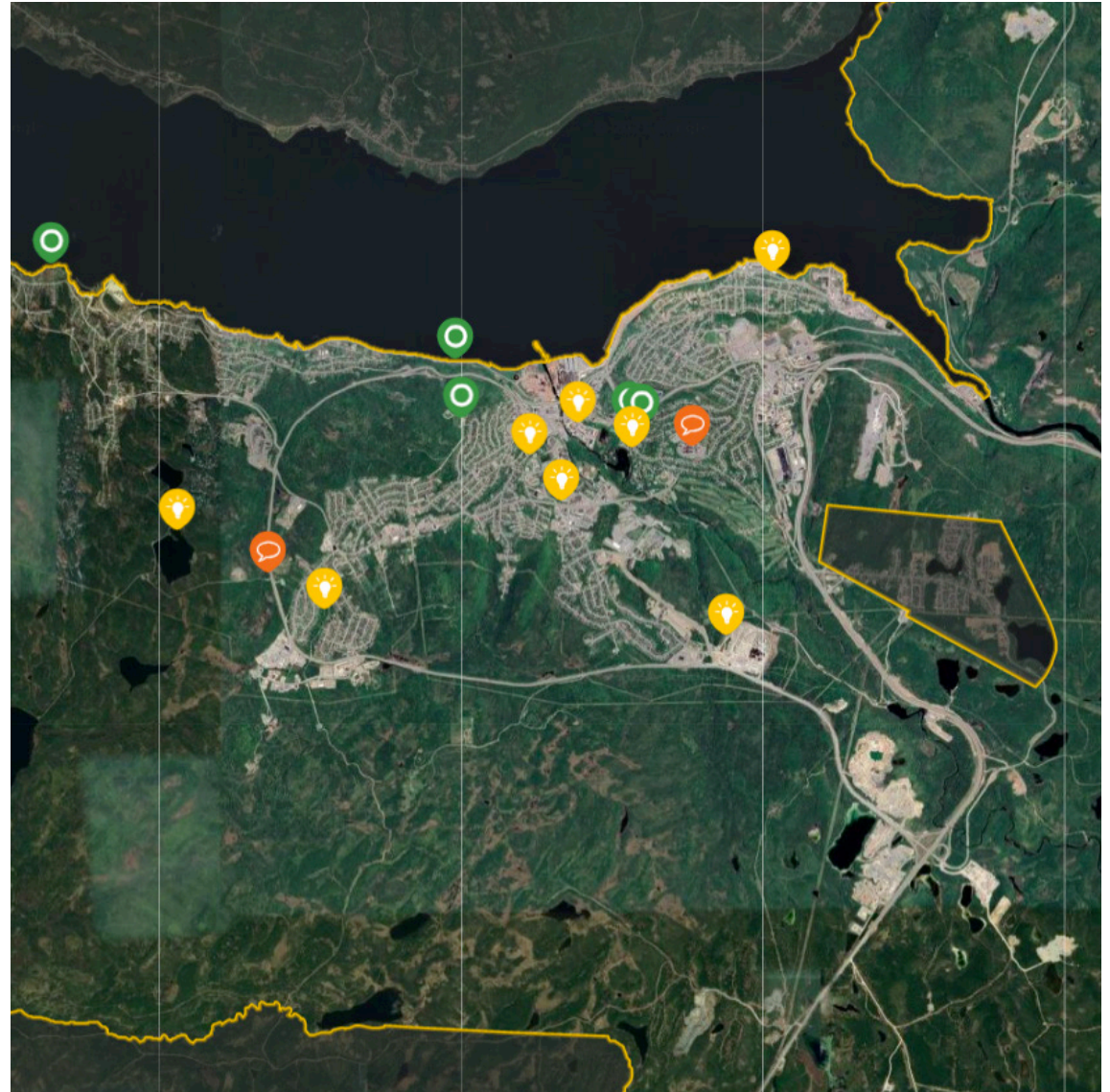


Figure 13: Interactive Map results for City Well-being.

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# 5 Direct Engagement



## 5.1 Direct Engagement Overview

Engagement activities that involved speaking directly with a diverse group of organizations and stakeholders in Corner Brook were held between May and July 2021.

Conversations and focus groups were held with the following organizations and stakeholder groups:

- » Humber Community YMCA;
- » Corner Brook Youth Advisory Committee;
- » Social Justice Co-op;
- » Sir Wilfred Grenfell College Students' Union (GCSU);
- » Qalipu First Nation;
- » Greater Corner Brook Board of Trade;
- » Property owners in flood-prone areas;
- » Property owners of vacant storefronts in the Downtown;
- » West Coast Cycling Association;
- » Western Environment Centre (WEC); and
- » Empower- The Disability Resource Centre.

Additionally, a pop-up event was also held at Margaret Bowater Park in July 2021.

The results from the direct engagement were analyzed and grouped into themes. The recurring themes from the Community Survey results (pages 16-22 of this What We Heard Report) were used as theme categories; however, not all themes that appeared in the Community Survey results appeared in the direct engagement.

## 5.2 Thematic Analysis

### Economic Development

One of the primary themes to emerge from the direct engagement was a need to improve economic conditions and opportunities in Corner Brook and to facilitate more economic development initiatives. Many respondents described a lack of meaningful employment opportunities for Corner Brook residents, including newcomers and students. Respondents feel attention should focus on catalyzing economic development by encouraging the production and sale of locally produced goods and services. As one respondent put it, “money made in Corner Brook needs to stay in Corner Brook.” Additionally, respondents feel resources should be used to strengthen the downtown as the economic hub of the city and to capitalize on Corner Brook being the springboard for the West Coast and tourism in the region. One respondent also suggested a ‘placemaking lens’ should be applied to the downtown so people will want to spend more time in the area.

Specifically regarding youth in Corner Brook, there is a concern that there are not enough employment opportunities, leading to low employment among this cohort. Because of this, a lot of youth choose to leave the community. Despite this, however, the high quality of life and lifestyle in Corner Brook is highly attractive to current youth and respondents feel greater youth and professional employment can help to retain and attract people to Corner Brook. One respondent commented that fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship among youth would greatly benefit Corner Brook.

Overall, respondents feel Corner Brook needs to be “open for business” and the City and community needs to look at processes and barriers to growth.

### Services and Amenities

Comments related to services and amenities were frequently mentioned during the direct engagement. Many respondents, including youth, feel promoting more local food production would not only enable greater access to healthy, local foods, but they also feel that it could be a catalyst for economic development and mental health improvements.

Although Corner Brook may not have extremely arable land, there are areas outside of the city’s boundary that have the ability to grow more crops. Respondents suggested an inter-municipal food strategy could help to keep locally grown food in the region.

Suggestions for other services and amenities in Corner Brook included:

- » developing a wayfinding strategy;
- » creating a farmers’ market;
- » building a wastewater treatment facility;
- » expanding the existing small-scale composting program;
- » more sidewalk clearing in the winter;
- » services directed at newcomers to provide information regarding life in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Canada(e.g., taxation, residency, health care, etc.)



Youth feel that greater mental health programming, services, and initiatives are needed and would benefit the whole community. One respondent noted there is a large, ever growing, group of youth becoming disconnected from school—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth in Corner Brook feel there are limited spaces meant for them. Through the pandemic, many youth have become comfortable being “excluded” and one respondent noted that more services were needed to get youth engaged and involved.

### Development Patterns

Closely tied to economic development, the future development and growth of Corner Brook were frequently mentioned by respondents. Generally, respondents feel development should occur in a way that ties green assets (parks, trails, etc.) and blue assets (watercourses, the ocean, wetlands, etc.) together. Respondents commented, however, that despite being a city located on the coast, there is a distinct lack of access to the ocean for residents.

While there is potential for growth and development in Corner Brook according to respondents, they felt it must be done in a systematic way to leverage valuable lands and assets. Respondents feel that long-term strategies need to be developed for the waterfront and other important areas in Corner Brook. As one respondent suggested, any growth in Corner Brook needs to be associated with a growth in neighbourhood associations and hubs to bring people together.

However, several respondents also suggested challenges to growth and development which included:

- » land is expensive to develop;
- » zoning regulations can limit the development potential of a property and are perceived to be pushing businesses to develop and grow elsewhere;
- » there is limited room for discretion and more flexibility is needed in planning decisions; and
- » the city has areas within a flood plane which limits development potential so creative solutions are required to ensure businesses stay in Corner Brook while also maximizing the potential of the land.

### The Environment

Mentioned throughout the engagement for *Corner Brook: Planning Together*, the landscape and beauty within Corner Brook is highly valued. Access to wilderness and outdoor activities are a few of the things respondents focused on when speaking about the environment. Respondents commented that the City should actively protect and conserve the natural assets in Corner Brook. One respondent commented that although land use planning can help with conservation, it is best done through stewardship as any legal protections on the environment can be undone.

One respondent noted that the future of Corner Brook must be planned through the lens of the climate crisis, indicating that the use of land and decisions about growth should be evaluated for their impact on climate change adaptation, mitigation, and resilience. Other respondents see the potential and value in promoting greater on-site stormwater management instead of relying on traditional infrastructure.

### **Transportation and Public Transportation**

Transportation and public transportation emerged as an important theme during the direct engagement. Generally, respondents feel improvements to the city's transportation network, both in mode options and the overall network, are needed, and respondents feel the transportation network prioritizes private automobiles. Specifically, comments about transportation included:

- » More sidewalks and crosswalks are needed.
- » Biking in Corner Brook is generally limited to a recreational activity and not many people use it as a utilitarian mode.
- » For residents without a private automobile, accessing services can be especially challenging.
- » There may always be a need for a private automobile in Corner Brook, but the City should look to integrate other modes of transportation.
- » Bike shares—including e-bike rentals—could improve mobility options.
- » ATVs form part of the transportation network and can be a mechanism to reduce the number of private automobiles on the road and to promote tourism growth. However, some respondents feel ATVs create concerns for wildlife protection and noise disruptions.
- » The trail network should be considered as and developed as part of the transportation network. The amount of Crown Land in Corner Brook creates opportunities for

trail development as the land is generally undevelopable and there are fewer landowners.

- » The public transportation system has gaps that can limit mobility for people without a private automobile. One respondent noted that limited transit access, especially on weekends, limited job prospects.
- » Digital maps and information about transit routes and times would be helpful.
- » The tourist train is a great example of improving accessibility and promoting economic development.
- » Youth without access to an automobile are limited for mobility options.

### **Housing**

The affordability and diversity of housing emerged as a theme during the direct engagement. Respondents feel Corner Brook's housing stock is dominated by single-detached dwellings which has resulted in a limited number of options for people looking to move to Corner Brook. With a limited supply, respondents mentioned that it can be challenging to find affordable housing.

Because of the limited diversity of housing, respondents commented that it can be difficult to find housing in some areas of the city. Respondents mentioned that some university students looking for housing off campus find it challenging to find affordable and appropriate housing to meet their needs.

Because of these factors, and related to limited economic opportunities, one respondent noted there is a growing population of “hidden homeless” residents—that is, residents who do not have stable housing but do not necessarily require the services of a shelter. Relatedly, a respondent noted that a Mens’ Shelter was needed in Corner Brook.

### **Governance**

Generally, respondents feel that communication and consultation between the City and its residents can be improved for future projects and initiatives. One respondent suggested more efforts needed to be focused on bringing organizations together to coordinate and strategically manage resources, while another respondent stated there is an opportunity for the City to engage directly with newcomers of Corner Brook.

Additionally, youth in Corner Brook feel it is important that they are integrated into the decision making process.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

Comments related to diversity and inclusion in Corner Brook emerged throughout the direct engagement. Respondents commented that indigenous history and culture should be promoted to ensure cultural awareness among all Corner Brook residents. One respondent suggested this could include Indigenous interpretation panels in parks and green spaces or Indigenous designed gardens.

Despite many respondents stating Corner Brook has a very “welcoming” feel, some respondents cited instances where they experienced racism in the city.

### **Accessibility**

Closely related to transportation, accessibility also emerged as a theme. Respondents focused on Corner Brook’s hilly topography as something that creates challenges for moving throughout the city, especially for people with limited mobility. With the public transportation system not fully accessible and with limited accessible cabs, respondents noted that there are few transportation options for people who do not have access to a private automobile.

Respondents also noted physical barriers, including lack of sidewalks or curb cuts that create challenges for residents.

Finally, one respondent noted that accessibility includes ensuring online content is fully accessible for all (legible fonts, closed captions, etc.).

# 6 Discussion



## 6.1 Discussion

Comments and feedback for the initial phase of engagement for *Corner Brook: Planning Together* were collected through a variety of methods. From the input that was collected, it is abundantly clear respondents hold the natural environment and landscape in high regard. Along with the people and community in Corner Brook, the natural environment and landscape contribute to the high quality of life in the city. Maintaining this quality of life and supporting an active, healthy, and engaged citizenry is important to many.

Despite this, there are omnipresent concerns regarding the economic and demographic future of Corner Brook. Limited employment opportunities—especially professional employment—and a shrinking and ageing population have put people on alert. Youth and students in Corner Brook are especially concerned about what the city holds for them.

However, despite the challenges facing the community and city, there is optimism for the future. The potential for further economic growth in tourism and outdoor recreation, in addition to having many of the prerequisites for growth (infrastructure, institutions, etc.), respondents feel the city can capitalize on regional growth.

Respondents feel that growth in any industry or development of landscapes should not compromise what is valued most by the community—the natural environment and sense of community. There is a sense among respondents that economic development and sustainability can, and should be balanced with environmental and cultural sustainability; that they act

in symbiosis, rather than competition with one another. For example, greater access to active transportation options may not only reduce the use of private automobiles, but it may also allow people to access a greater range of goods and services and to come together with friends and family. Respondents feel sustainability encompasses all aspects of daily life and is built on a stable foundation where human needs are met, including, housing, accessibility, and stable employment, without compromising the integrity of the natural environment.

Respondents acknowledge and appreciate that some decisions are difficult to influence when it comes to planning for the future, but there is consensus that there should be affordable, appropriate, and accessible housing for anyone who chooses to live in Corner Brook.

Finally, a balance must be struck as the City considers how and where growth and development should happen. Growing upwards—densifying existing areas— or growing outwards—developing on natural lands —presents different challenges and opportunities to the city over the next decade and beyond. Despite diverging opinions on these matters, there is consensus on the potential that exists in the downtown and the waterfront. Building on these assets will be critical to the future of Corner Brook.

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