

What We Heard Report

February 9, 2021



Plan

Mahone Bay

What We Heard Report

February, 2021.

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What We Did

How can land use planning support the environment and sustainability in Mahone Bay?

See last one

Ensure protection of

- Waterways
- Wetlands
- Woodland
- Harbour

Limit the area of land that can be built on.

Have construction & protected areas - 50a development & 300 use

Write your comment on the board or on a post-it note

What We Did

The review of the Town of Mahone Bay's Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB), a project called "Plan Mahone Bay", involved an extensive initial engagement process. This process sought to understand community members' perspectives, insights, opinions and ideas regarding the growth and development of the town. The second phase of engagement will take place once the MPS and LUB have been drafted.

To keep community members aware of engagement activities and any news related to Plan Mahone Bay, a website (www.planmahonebay.ca) and email list were created and updated throughout the initial phase of engagement.

Information for the initial phase of engagement of Plan Mahone Bay was collected through the following means:

- > The Plan Mahone Bay Project Launch;
- > The Plan Mahone Bay Survey;
- > The Social Pinpoint Interactive Map;
- > The Engagement 'Scavenger Hunt'; and,
- > Targeted stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

Plan Mahone Bay kicked off with a Project Launch on July 21, 2020, consisting of two socially-distanced pop-up events. The first was held at the playground in Jubilee Park between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m., and the second was held at the Michael O'Connor Memorial Bandstand between 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. At the pop-ups, community members were able to provide their feedback to a series of questions about the town and questions related to the priorities that should be considered in the planning documents. A short online video was also created and posted on the project website for any individuals who could not attend the Project Launch event.

Following the Project Launch, both the Plan Mahone Bay Survey and Interactive Map were opened to the public. Responses to the Survey and on the Interactive Map were collected between July 21, 2020, and October 9, 2020. The Survey asked respondents open- and closed-ended questions about the character of Mahone Bay, opportunities for the town and questions related to specific planning issues including housing and the environment. On the Interactive Map, respondents could leave location-specific comments about a place in Mahone Bay, and reply to comments left by other respondents.

Information from the community was also collected through the Engagement 'Scavenger Hunt'. Six plaques were placed around the town with a question regarding a specific topic written on each plaque. A map of the location of each plaque was on the project website, and respondents could text or email their responses to each question which would be sent to the Project Team. If community members did not wish to participate in the 'Scavenger Hunt', they could answer the same questions that were on the plaques through an online questionnaire.

Finally, the Project Team conducted targeted stakeholder interviews between August, 2020, and October, 2020. The interviews were held with various community organizations, in addition to cohort-specific stakeholder interviews with seniors, youth, and renters.

This What We Heard Report summarizes the input that was collected through the initial phase of engagement for Plan Mahone Bay. The engagement results and the discussion will guide the policy and regulations for the Town's updated Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw.

Who Was Involved



Who Was Involved

Between July 21, 2020, and October 9, 2020, there were over 250 engagement interactions that contributed to this What We Heard Report. This includes:

- › Over 15 participants, leaving over 80 unique responses, at the Project Launch;
- › 72 respondents to the Plan Mahone Bay Survey;
- › 92 unique Interactive Map submissions;
- › 67 individual question responses to the Engagement ‘Scavenger Hunt’; and,
- › 21 stakeholder interviews.

The Project Team also received numerous email submissions from members of the public, which will also be considered in this report.

This public feedback that provides the content for this report has been divided into three sections:

- › Feedback from the Community Survey;
- › Feedback from the Interactive Map and the Scavenger Hunt; and,
- › Feedback from the Project Launch, Stakeholder Interviews, and any other feedback that was received.

Community Survey Results

A photograph of a residential street. In the foreground, a paved road with two yellow lines runs diagonally. To the left, a blue house with a gabled roof and a wooden porch is visible. To the right, a yellow house is partially obscured by trees. The background is filled with green trees under a clear sky.

Survey Respondents

A survey was released to the public during the initial phase of engagement for Mahone Bay's Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw review. Survey responses were collected between July 21, 2020, and October 9, 2020. The survey garnered a total of 72 responses.

The Plan Mahone Bay Survey was distributed throughout the community, but also to interested stakeholders outside of the town. Based on the responses, 63% of respondents live within the Town, with the remaining residing somewhere outside of the town's boundary (or they skipped that particular question). The survey was disproportionately completed by individuals who identify as female (58%).

How to interpret statistics and tables

Statistics and tables used in this section are derived from the Plan Mahone Bay Survey. As respondents had the option to skip questions, the number of survey respondents vary for each question. The number of survey respondents has been included in the graphics and tables on the following pages (where n equals the number of respondents). For some survey questions, respondents could make multiple selections meaning results may total more than 100%. Where statistics are not provided, statements are used to express the community's general sentiment regarding a particular topic or theme.

Survey Demographics

A goal for any survey that is meant for the general public is that the results should be collected from a sample that represents the demographic characteristics of the population. Using Statistics Canada Census information, the age distribution, household tenure and size, and income characteristics of respondents to the Plan Mahone Bay Survey can be compared to the population more broadly. For this analysis, Statistics Canada's 2016 Census data was used as a comparative measure to understand how the survey sample compares to the community's profile. Where Statistics Canada data is referenced, only survey results from individuals residing in Mahone Bay were considered.

Age Distribution

Based on the results of the survey, 39% of survey respondents were between the ages of 65 and 74, 20% more than this cohort's proportion of the actual town population (Figure 1). Survey results were also over-represented from respondents between the ages of 25 and 34, 35 and 44, and 55 and 64. Conversely, residents under the age of 19, between the ages of 20-24, and over the age of 85 were under represented in the survey results. In fact, zero responses were collected from these cohorts.

Income

A comparison of income information from Statistics Canada and the information collected through the Survey indicates that survey responses were disproportionately collected from households earning \$50,000 or more annually before-tax (Figure 2). Over 70% of respondents to the survey indicated their household earns more than \$50,000

or more annually before taxes, while 52% of total households in Mahone Bay earn this amount annually. Households earning less than \$20,000 annually and between \$20,000 and \$34,999 annually were under represented in the survey results.

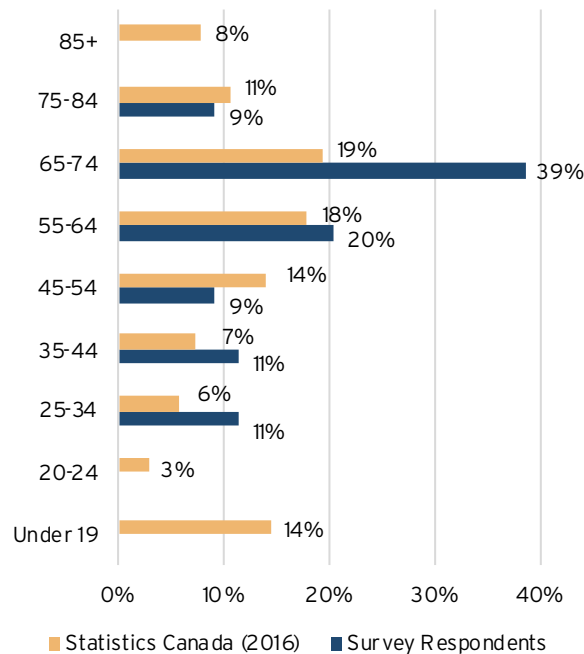


Figure 1: Age distribution of survey respondents compared to the Statistics Canada 2016 Census. (n=54)

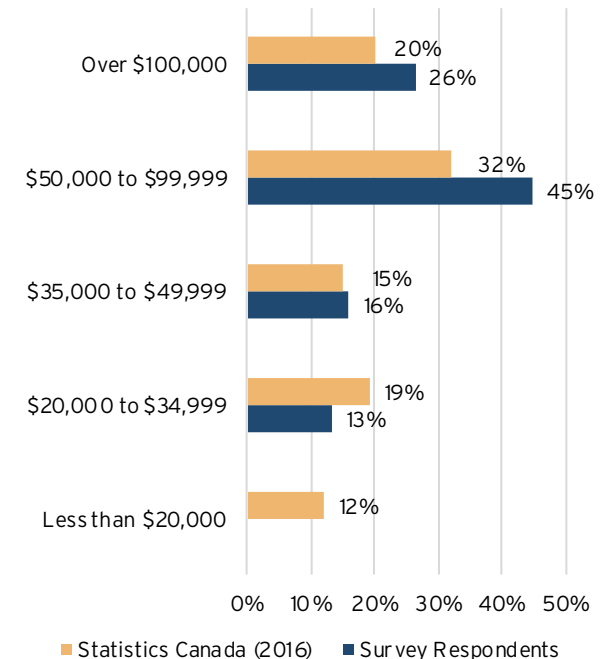


Figure 2: Income distribution of survey respondents compared to the Statistics Canada 2016 Census. (n=53)

Household Tenure and Size

According to 2016 Statistics Canada Census information, the average household size in Mahone Bay is 1.9 people; however, the average household size of survey respondents was 2.2. Survey respondents living in households with two persons made up 53% of total respondents, while 40% of households in Mahone Bay are composed of 2 persons (Figure 3). Households composed of one person were underrepresented in the survey results by over 15% compared to their actual composition in Mahone Bay.

With regards to home ownership, the results from the survey were skewed towards homeowners. Homeowners, who make up 63% of Mahone Bay households, represented 82% of survey respondents while renters, who make up 37% of households in Mahone Bay, represented 18% of survey respondents.

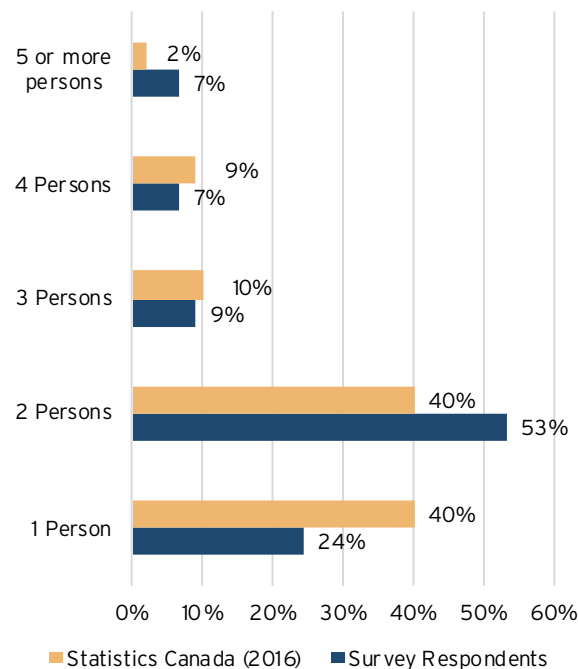


Figure 3: Household Size of survey respondents compared to Statistics Canada 2016 Census. (n=54)

Underrepresented Cohorts

Based on the results of the survey, input from three cohorts within the Town's population—youth, seniors, and renters—was not sufficiently collected. To garner input from these groups, the Project Team strategically targeted individuals from these cohorts through individuals interviews and focus group conversations. The input that was collected from these cohorts is presented in the Direct Community Input Section.

Survey Results

What did the community say about what makes Mahone Bay a great place to live?

Survey respondents feel that Mahone Bay’s small-town feel is the primary characteristic that makes it a great place to live (Table 1). Over 63% of respondents indicated that Mahone Bay’s small-town feel makes it a great place to live, while 36% of respondents noted family, friends, and community make Mahone Bay a great place to live. Respondents also mentioned additional factors that make Mahone Bay a great place to live, including:

- > houseboats,
- > access to the highway and city, and
- > displays of inclusivity in Mahone Bay.

Table 1. Top 10 responses to “What makes Mahone Bay a great place to live?” (n=72)	
1.	Small-town feel
2.	Family, friends and community
3.	Parks and open spaces
4.	Coastline
5.	Waterfront access
6.	Festivals and events
7.	Heritage
8.	Restaurants
9.	Architecture
10.	Businesses and stores

What did the community say about Mahone Bay as a place for different lifestyles?

Generally, survey respondents are satisfied with Mahone Bay as a place to raise a family and own a home. Nearly 58% of respondents stated they were either *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with Mahone Bay as a place to raise a family, and 64% of respondents stated they were either *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with Mahone Bay as a place to own a home. Conversely, only 16% of respondents stated they were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with Mahone Bay as a place to rent a home, with 23% stating they were *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* with Mahone Bay as a place to rent a home. Finally, over 75% of respondents expressed they were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with Mahone Bay as a place to retire.

What did the community say about land use zoning and regulations in Mahone Bay?

Survey respondents have mixed feelings about the current land use zoning and development regulations in Mahone Bay. Approximately 30% of survey respondents *agree* or *strongly agree* that the regulations are too restrictive, while another 30% *disagree* or *strongly disagree* with that statement. Over 40% of respondents either *agree* or *strongly agree* that the current land use regulations are hard to follow or are confusing.

When considering if the current land use zoning and development regulations allow bad land uses, 36% of survey respondents *agree* or *strongly agree* with that statement, while 17% *disagree* or *strongly disagree*. A greater proportion of survey respondents expressed that regulations are not advantageous and do not improve quality of life (28%), compared to respondents that feel the opposite (26%).

What did the community say about residential development?

When asked, “What types of residential development should be encouraged in Mahone Bay?”, respondents expressed support for a wide variety of development styles (Table 2). Over 93% of respondents *agree* or *strongly agree* with encouraging home-based businesses, and 91% of respondents *agree* or *strongly agree* with encouraging supportive housing/nursing homes. Comparatively, nearly 70% of respondents *disagree* or *strongly disagree* with encouraging mobile homes in Mahone Bay (Table 3).

1.	Home-based businesses
2.	Supportive housing/nursing homes
3.	Accessible housing for persons with disabilities
4.	Single dwellings
5.	Accessory suites/in-law suites

1.	Mobile homes
2.	Seasonal dwellings
3.	Multi-unit apartments
4.	Upscale rental units
5.	Single homes converted to apartments

What did the community say about urban agriculture?

There is a high level of support for urban agriculture in Mahone Bay (Figure 4). Based on the results of the survey, 76% of respondents either *agree* or *strongly agree* that urban agriculture should be permitted in the town. Conversely, 14% of respondents either *disagree* or *strongly disagree* that urban agriculture should be permitted in the town, and 10% of respondents expressed they were *neutral* to permitting urban agriculture.

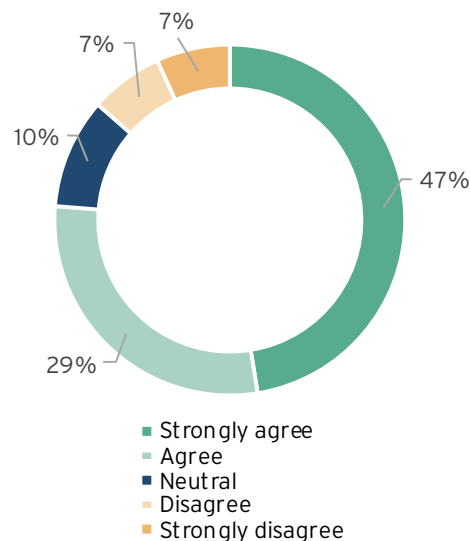


Figure 4: Support for urban agriculture in Mahone Bay. (n=59)

What issues are of greatest concern for the community?

Four of the top five issues of concern for survey respondents have to do with the environment (Table 4). Over 93% of respondents were either *concerned* or *very concerned* with coastal erosion and 90% were *concerned* or *very concerned* with coastal flooding. Other issues of concern included housing availability and affordability, access to the shoreline, and availability of employment options.

1.	Coastal erosion
2.	Coastal flooding
3.	Sea level rise
4.	Public shoreline access
5.	Forest health
6.	Housing availability
7.	Housing affordability
8.	Regional population decline
9.	Availability of employment
10.	Seasonal economy

Questions 7, 8, 9, and 10 of the survey asked respondents open-ended questions about the character of Mahone Bay, opportunities for the town, and concerns respondents have. Each response to the open-ended questions was analyzed and grouped into themes, with some responses falling under more than one theme. For the following results, responses with more than one applicable theme will only be discussed under one theme category, with the themes presented based on the frequency of responses.

Inclusivity

Inclusivity was mentioned most frequently in a total of 49 responses made in the survey. Comments related to inclusivity spoke to how inclusive and welcoming the Town and community are in Mahone Bay. Respondents hope that Mahone Bay will be a welcoming town for all people and ideas, where everyone feels they belong, and where everyone can work together. Respondents also feel that promoting inclusivity and diversity represents an opportunity that can create possibilities for new successes and that it can also help in the pursuit of social justice and meeting human needs. Finally, respondents feel affordability and accessibility are critical pieces of inclusivity that must be considered.

Sustainability

Throughout the survey, respondents made 44 comments that dealt with the topic of Sustainability. Although *sustainability* can take on many different meanings (including social, environmental, and economic sustainability), the majority of comments focused on environmental sustainability. Many respondents feel the Town needs to focus on becoming more environmentally responsible and responding to the climate crisis, including sea level rise. One respondent commented on the need to replace trees in the town as they die, while another suggested developing living shorelines and breakwaters to protect against sea level rise.

There were several comments related to environmental sustainability that intersected with economic sustainability. Some respondents feel there is an opportunity for the Town to promote and develop clean energy and 'green' jobs.

Governance

Respondents left a total of 39 comments that related to Governance. These comments primarily dealt with the governing structure of Mahone Bay, the regulations and policies that currently exist, and the tax structure.

Some respondents feel Council needs to have a more coherent vision for the future and that greater transparency is needed between the Town and its residents. Some respondents were critical of, and cited the past sale of municipal property, municipal spending, and the municipal governance model as issues that need to be addressed in the future.

Several respondents feel that Council must also take a more proactive role in protecting the shoreline, gaining control of the harbour, and limited certain types of development. One respondent suggested that Council should actively pursue the annexation of areas within the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg so the town's land area and population can grow.

As it relates to the taxation structure, some respondents feel the residential and commercial tax rates are too high and that too many restrictions are placed on new businesses. Respondents also suggested there was a need to lower the rate for temporary business permits.

Finally, respondents noted their desire to see more participation, including from a diversity of participants, in municipal politics.

Economic Diversity and Development

There were a total of 38 comments from survey respondents that were tagged as Economic Diversity and Development. Generally, respondents wish to see more effort and support for economic development in Mahone Bay to promote a variety of year-round shops and services. Respondents want to see more support for green businesses, businesses in the technology sector, and home-based businesses.

Some respondents hope to see Mahone Bay strengthen its local economy and to capitalize on its ocean-front location. One respondent noted the potential for economic development activities, including food and beverage services along the waterfront, while another respondent suggested the development of a business park would benefit the community. There are concerns that there are not enough child care options in town and too few incentives for small businesses.

While several comments suggested the need to move away from a largely tourism-based economy (discussed later on this page), one respondent noted the need to understand the Town's and community's economic dependence on people visiting Mahone Bay.

Community Character

There were a total of 37 comments made in the survey that relate to Community Character. Respondents hope that Mahone Bay continues to be a safe, charming, and vibrant community where there is a strong sense of community with a robust social and cultural network.

Environment

The topic of the Environment was tagged in 37 comments left in the survey. Many respondents feel the Town should prioritize environmental protection and management, and that the environment should be considered in all Town decision-making. Respondents value all the natural aspects of the town including the harbour and waterfront, the forests within the town, and other watercourses in Mahone Bay.

Respondents are concerned with raw sewage that ends up in the harbour, litter and garbage around town, and light pollution, and feel that there needs to be clarity on houseboating in the harbour.

Land Use

There were a total of 37 comments made in the survey that relate to Land Use. While many respondents wish to see the Town actively pursue and promote growth, some respondents want to see Council adopt a zero-growth policy. There were also diverging opinions as to whether or not the waterfront should be developed or not. Nevertheless, many respondents to the survey want clearer, more transparent development rules and want to see zoning used to protect sensitive areas from development.

Specific land use topics respondents want to see addressed in the new MPS are:

- > temporary businesses,
- > urban agriculture, and
- > short-term (vacation) rentals.

Tourism

Throughout the survey, respondents made 28 comments that dealt with the topic of Tourism. While some respondents feel that visitors are an important asset and that the tourism industry should be expanded, others feel there needs to be a better balance between tourism development and focus on the local community. Some respondents feel that the local housing stock has been

impacted by the tourism industry and the proliferation of short-term (vacation) rentals.

Built Form

There were a total of 26 comments made in the survey that relate to the Built Form of Mahone Bay. These comments primarily focused on retaining and reinforcing the town's beauty and built form, and protecting the small-town nature of Mahone Bay. One respondent noted their desire to see drive-through uses limited, while other respondents want to see greater walkability and universal accessibility in Mahone Bay.

Transportation and Public Transportation

The topic of Transportation was tagged in 26 comments left in the survey and an additional six comments were left that related to Public Transportation. Many respondents expressed that there is an excess of automobiles on some of the Town's streets—particularly Main Street—creating unsafe conditions for pedestrians, and that measures needed to be implemented to slow down traffic. Some respondents also commented on the noise created by automobiles and how delivery trucks can create safety concerns for automobile drivers and pedestrians.

Many respondents suggested the need to focus on improving walkability in Mahone Bay to enable community members to access the services they need as a pedestrian, and another respondent suggested the need to integrate land use and transportation planning as the topics are intricately linked.

With regard to public transportation, respondents expressed their desire to see a public transportation option established in the region, while a few respondents see opportunity in enabling golf carts as a transportation option in Mahone Bay.

Housing

There were a total of 25 comments made in the survey related to Housing. These comments primarily focused on expanding housing options within Mahone Bay including affordable housing, assisting-living, and shared housing such as co-housing,ⁱ among other innovative styles of developments. One respondent recommended the development of housing that would support Mahone Bay

ⁱ By motion of Town Council on January 28, 2021, Town Council has amended this statement to read "shared living arrangements such as co-living, home sharing, cooperative housing, and cohousing" though this information does not reflect what was collected during the initial engagement phase for Plan Mahone Bay.

to become the first choice senior-friendly retirement community.

Some respondents suggested the need to be more strategic when planning where housing should be developed, while one respondent proposed developing the Old School Lands for housing. Several respondents also commented on the need to better manage short-term (vacation) rentals as they are impacting the available housing stock.

Parks, Open Space, and Trails

The topic of Parks and Open Space was tagged in 25 comments left in the survey and an additional seven comments were left regarding Trails. The majority of comments related to these topics focused on protecting the existing parks and trail network, and where possible, expanding it. Respondents specifically noted the importance of the Jubilee Woods, Old School Lands, Water Garden, and the playing fields to the open space network. Several respondents commented on the need to improve access to waterfront areas, and that the open spaces and trails are important to the town's overall character. Finally, one respondent requested greater policing of irresponsible trail users and off-leash dogs.

Attract New Residents The topic of Attracting New Residents was tagged in 24 comments left in the survey. All comments that were tagged under this theme focused on attracting a diversity of people (including age, ability, skills, ethnicity, lifestyle, and culture) to Mahone Bay. Many respondents hope to see actions taken to attract young families to the town, which some respondents feel could support entrepreneurship and innovation.

Progressive

There were a total of 19 comments made in the survey that related to Progressiveness. Many of these comments suggested the need for the Town and the community to be more forward-thinking and to be open to adopting innovative and diverse ideas from different members of the community.

Parking

Throughout the survey, respondents made 13 comments that dealt with the topic of Parking. The majority of comments related to parking focused on improving, and in some instances, increasing the number of automobile parking options in Mahone Bay. Some respondents suggested limiting parking along Main Street, while also developing parking outside of the core areas to make the town less automobile-

oriented. Nevertheless, respondents support the development of more sidewalks as part of a parking strategy so people can park their automobile farther away and walk/wheel to their destination.

Heritage

There were a total of 12 comments made in the survey that relate to Heritage properties and architecture. Respondents commented on the need, and opportunities created through the protection, enhancement, and celebration of Mahone Bay's history and heritage architecture. One respondent recommended the adoption of mechanisms to encourage heritage designation (e.g. grants), while another respondent suggested the development of a heritage district in the town. Finally, a respondent advocated for promoting development that can integrate both heritage and modern architecture.

Recreation

Throughout the survey, respondents made 10 comments that dealt with the topic of Recreation. Respondents wish to see a greater emphasis on recreation and leisure options for all residents and suggested there is an opportunity to make Mahone Bay into an outdoor recreation hub.

Amenities

The topic of Amenities was tagged in seven comments left in the survey. Respondents wish to see more amenities including, public washrooms, waterfront picnic tables, and public art throughout the town.

Arts and Culture

The topic of Arts and Culture was tagged in five comments left in the survey. Respondents admire Mahone Bay's rich cultural diversity but also support actions that promote and encourage artistic and creative endeavours. One respondent hopes to see more public art and performances in Mahone Bay in the future.

Digital Community Input

A photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a grassy field with a large, gnarled tree trunk on the left. In the middle ground, there is a large, two-story wooden house with a weathered, shingled roof. To the left of the house is a smaller building with a corrugated metal roof. The background shows more trees and a clear sky. The text "Digital Community Input" is overlaid in white on the upper part of the image.

Overview

In addition to the online survey, two additional digital methods were used to obtain information from the community during the initial phase of engagement. The first, Social Pinpoint, was an interactive online map where community members could place pins in a map of Mahone Bay and identify places they value, areas of concern, and ideas they have for the town. Community members were also able to like, dislike, or respond to pins in the map placed by others.

The other digital engagement method used during the initial phase of engagement was the Engagement 'Scavenger Hunt'. Six plaques with unique questions were placed around Mahone Bay, and community members could go to each plaque and respond to each question by texting or emailing their response to the Project Team. A map of the location of the plaques was posted on the project website. For people who did not want to take part in the scavenger hunt but wanted to answer the questions, an online questionnaire was set up and posted on the project website.

Interactive Map

The interactive map provided community members the opportunity to provide location-specific comments on a map of Mahone Bay. In total, there were 92 individual comments left on the map. Each comment was analyzed and organized into themes. The themes that emerged from the Interactive Map coincided with the themes that appeared in the Plan Mahone Bay Survey. As with the survey results, some comments fell under more than one theme, with the frequency of themes shown in Figure 5.

Nearly 50% of the comments on the Social Pinpoint map were tagged as being related to Transportation. Respondents often identified intersections and sections of roadways that they felt were unsafe or needed to be redesigned. This includes the 'Cenotaph' intersection, the intersection at Main Street and Clearway Street, and the intersection at Main Street and Longhill Road. Respondents also commented on how a harbour front boardwalk from the Three Churches parking lot to Keddy's Landing could benefit the community.

Approximately 35% of all comments were related to Parks and Open Spaces and an additional 30% of all comments focused on

Trails. Respondents value the open spaces and trails within the town, including, Jubilee Woods, the Old School Lands, and harbour front areas. However, several comments left on the Interactive Map indicated that the use of motorized vehicles within the forests and along the trails needed to be limited to protect the health of the forests.

Several respondents also commented on their desire to see an off-leash dog park established in the town, and other respondents noted the benefit that additional sidewalks would bring.

There were a total of 32 comments left on the Interactive Map about Recreation. In addition to comments about the trails for walking and cycling, respondents value the many outdoor public recreation spaces in Mahone Bay, including the pool, tennis courts, playing field and playground. Several respondents focused their comments on the Mahone Bay Centre and how they value the Centre and the playing field. Several respondents commented that the field should be preserved, and proposed ways to increase the use of the space including the addition of fire pits, BBQ pits, a community oven, and picnic tables.

Finally, respondents identified areas where amenities could be placed to improve the daily lives of residents. Respondents mentioned installing more garbage cans, benches, and wayfinding signage for trail users as ways to improve these areas of Mahone Bay.

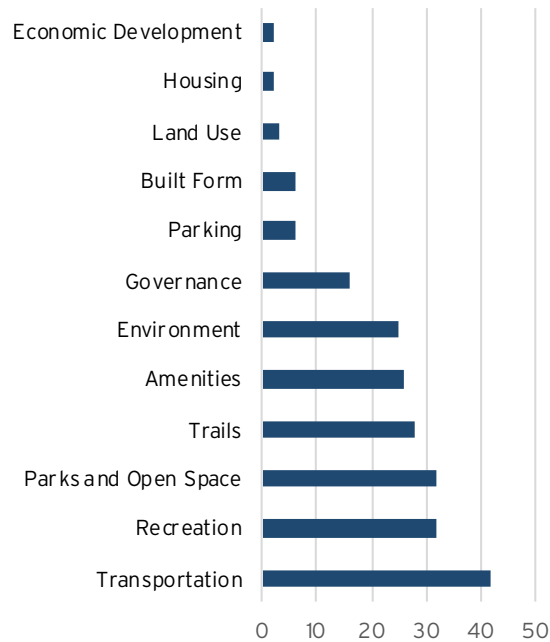


Figure 5: Theme frequency for comments left on Social Pinpoint.

Engagement Scavenger Hunt

The plaques that were placed around the town posed six unique questions to community members to answer regarding the future of Mahone Bay. The questions focused on six topics:

- > Housing
- > The Environment
- > Transportation
- > Recreation and Leisure Spaces
- > Built Form and Heritage
- > Town Priorities

The results from the scavenger hunt will be presented according to the six topics.

Housing

To explore the topic of housing, respondents were asked the question, “What would improve access to housing in Mahone Bay?” Generally, respondents feel that enabling and supporting additional forms of housing development could help to improve access to housing. Respondents cited shared housing such as co-housing,ⁱ affordable seniors

ⁱ By motion of Town Council on January 28, 2021, Town Council has amended this statement to read “shared living arrangements such as co-living, home sharing, cooperative housing, and cohousing” though this information does not reflect what was collected during the initial engagement phase for Plan Mahone Bay.

housing, low-rise (three to five storeys) apartments, backyard/garden suites, and multi-family homes as potential solutions to improve housing access. Other comments and suggestions made by respondents include:

- > Limiting short-term (vacation) rentals in town as they often remove residential units from the housing market.
- > Support the conversion of existing commercial buildings to residential structures.
- > The need for the Town to undertake a housing needs assessment to better understand current and future housing needs.
- > Expanding the road network and the number of serviced lots could promote residential development. However, other respondents feel new residential development should be limited to areas with existing services.
- > Creating an “Affordable Housing Zone” for the new planning documents and applying it throughout the town.
- > Establishing a Municipal Housing Development Corporation with a mandate to buy, sell, develop and redevelop serviced real estate to supply affordable housing.

- > Requiring building lots to be handed over to the town when large lots are subdivided.
- > Supporting greater flexibility in the subdivision process to enable small home (1,000 square feet or less) development.

The Environment

There are a tremendous number of natural assets within and surrounding Mahone Bay that can be easily accessed by residents of the town. Respondents to the Scavenger Hunt not only feel these assets play an important role in the character of the town, but are important to humans and other plant and animal species. The harbour, Jubilee Woods, the Old School Lands, the Water Garden and the playing fields were frequently cited by respondents when asked the question, “What do you value most about the environment in Mahone Bay?” Some respondents feel that development decisions should first and foremost be evaluated for their potential impact on the environment, and as part of the evaluation, mitigation measures should be determined to minimize impacts on the natural and human environments. Respondents also feel the zoning around existing parks and natural spaces should be strengthened.

“The diversity and accessibility of the natural environment is one of the most attractive and desirable aspects of living in Mahone Bay.”

-Engagement Participant

In addition to the natural assets noted above, respondents value:

- > The recreation spaces including the soccer field, the basketball courts, trails, pool and tennis courts
- > The trails that traverse throughout the town and its natural green spaces.
- > Public access to the water and views to and from the coastline.
- > The watercourses (Ernst Brook and the Mush-a-Mush River) that flow throughout the town.
- > The diversity of flora and fauna in and around Mahone Bay.

Transportation

When asked the question, “What objectives should guide decisions about the transportation network?”, respondents overwhelmingly supported prioritizing the needs, comfort, and safety of pedestrians over automobiles. Respondents noted the need to create a transportation network where pedestrians, including cyclists, feel safe. Other ideas and insights that were shared about the transportation network include:

- > Reducing greenhouse gas emissions should guide decisions about the transportation network which can be achieved by promoting active transportation, adopting an all-electric municipal fleet, and promoting and incentivizing electric vehicles.
- > The Town should adopt ‘safe streets’ by slowing traffic, including by instituting a 30 kilometre per hour speed limit throughout the town and installing mechanisms such as speed bumps to slow traffic.
- > The Town should be proactively planning for scenarios where flooding, caused by climate change and extreme weather events, results in the inundation of critical transportation infrastructure.
- > The development of new roads should only be considered where there is an obvious need.
- > A road running behind the town could help divert truck traffic from Main Street.
- > Regional public transportation could help provide mobility options to residents and to reduce the Town’s and community’s greenhouse gas footprint.

Recreation and Leisure Spaces

Despite its small footprint, respondents, when asked the question, “What is special about your favourite place in Mahone Bay to play, relax, or socialize?”, reported that there are a plethora of natural and human-made spaces that are enjoyed by residents. Respondents noted the bandstand, the Water Gardens, the waterfront, trails, green spaces, shops and cafes, and playing fields as important spaces. Respondents value the quiet and often peaceful nature of these spaces, but also the ability to socialize with friends and family.

Built Form and Heritage

Based on the question, “How can the contemporary needs of Mahone Bay be met, while also preserving heritage?”, there are diverging opinions as to how the Town should balance development and heritage preservation. While some respondents commented on the need for total heritage preservation, other respondents suggested a more balanced approach that permits development while maintaining what’s historically important. Other ideas and comments to emerge from this question include:

- > New development in more 'historic' areas should be required to follow certain design guidelines. Conversely, another respondent suggested that all development should be guided by lot requirements and design guidelines so that it fits into the streetscape.
- > Allowing for change and innovation is important.
- > Greater focus needs to be paid to the natural heritage of the town. Trees, which form an important part of the natural heritage and streetscapes, should be protected along with viewplanes and landscape features.
- > Greater enforcement of the architectural controls are needed, and there needs to be more mechanisms to prevent the demolition of heritage buildings.
- > A Heritage Conservation District should be established and expanded past the existing architectural control area.
- > Attracting and retaining young families and businesses;
- > Developing community facilities such as a library or pool, and community amenities like water bottle fill stations and community wifi;
- > Developing affordable housing;
- > Protecting the safe water supply;
- > Putting residents first in decision-making (as opposed to visitors);
- > Protecting and growing in harmony with the environment;
- > Adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change;
- > Attracting and retaining year-round local businesses;
- > Promoting a healthy lifestyle for all residents;
- > Adopting a systematic approach to parking; and,
- > Preserving the natural environment.

Town Priorities

Respondents were asked the question, "What are the top priorities for the town over the next 20 years?", to which many different priorities were suggested. These included:

Direct Community Input



Overview

Two pop-up events were held in Mahone Bay on July 21, 2020, reaching a cross-section of residents of the town. The events were held at Jubilee Park and the Michael O'Connor Memorial Bandstand. Approximately 15 people attended these events.

The direct community engagement also included communication with stakeholders from organizations in the community. The Project Team conducted telephone/video interviews with the following community organizations:

- > Mahone Bay Tourism and Chamber of Commerce
- > South Shore Housing Action Coalition
- > Mahone Bay Civic Marina
- > Mahone Bay Centre
- > Talking Trees
- > Mahone Bay Museum
- > Mahone Bay Legion
- > Lunenburg County Seniors Safety Advisory Partnership
- > South Shore Multicultural Association
- > Lunenburg County Accessibility Advisory Committee
- > Mahone Bay Age Friendly Committee

The results from the pop-up events and the stakeholder interviews have been grouped into themes that are discussed on the following pages.

In addition to the pop-up events and stakeholder interviews, the Project Team sought input from the following three groups within the community who were underrepresented in the Plan Mahone Bay Survey results:

- > Youth,
- > Seniors, and
- > Renters.

The Project Team conducted telephone interviews and focus group conversations with these groups to discuss issues, challenges, and opportunities specific to these stakeholders. The input from these three stakeholder groups will be considered separately from the pop-up events and organization stakeholder interviews.

Thematic Analysis

Several themes emerged from the feedback during the pop-up events and the stakeholder interviews. The feedback has been analyzed and categorized into themes which are presented on the following pages.

Housing

Housing was one of the most frequently cited themes through these engagements. Feedback focused on a variety of factors related to housing, including housing affordability, access to housing, and potential ways to diversify the types of available housing. Other comments related to housing that arose include:

- > The regulations surrounding short-term (vacation) rentals should be looked at, especially for their impact on the housing market and available housing.
- > Boarding houses, backyard suites, secondary suites, and shared housing such as co-housingⁱ are all good options for housing that should be permitted.

ⁱ By motion of Town Council on January 28, 2021, Town Council has amended this statement to read “shared living arrangements such as co-living, home sharing, cooperative housing, and cohousing” though this information does not reflect what was collected during the initial engagement phase for Plan Mahone Bay.

- > Mahone Bay has the potential to increase residential density, but there were diverging opinions as to how increased density could be accommodated. Some respondents feel residential development should only occur where existing services (roads, sewer, water, etc.) are present, while others feel the Town should expand these services to promote residential development.
- > Regulations should provide greater flexibility to allow heritage property owners to renovate and upgrade heritage properties. For example, greater flexibility for indoor renovations and on-roof solar.
- > If residential development occurs, there must be an adequate provision of services and amenities to surrounding residents (e.g. playgrounds, community centres, etc.).
- > Improving housing availability and the types of housing that are available could help attract young families and immigrants to the town.
- > The Town should take on a greater role in the provision of affordable housing, whether that is through rent supplements or providing funding for support services.
- > The conversion of existing dwellings, particularly single dwellings, into more

units represents a potential way to increase the housing stock.

- > There is a need for universally accessible housing.
- > Minimum housing standards and a landlord registry are potential tools that could be implemented in Mahone Bay to help renters.
- > Affordable housing is needed to support population growth
- > Parking space requirements for new development can hinder the ability to develop housing.

The Environment

A second theme that arose through the engagement dealt with the environment. The environment is not only loved and cherished by many community members in Mahone Bay but it directly and indirectly contributes to the local economy. Comments related to the environment include:

- > Sea level rise and coastal erosion could create many challenges for the town and coastal development should be discouraged to prevent potential damage to properties and harm to individuals.

- > All of the town's green spaces and wetlands, watercourses, and harbour should be managed and protected from development.
- > The environment and sustainability should be central to decision-making.
- > Development should not be permitted in common spaces (E.g. the playing field at the Mahone Bay Centre).
- > Some of the town's green spaces and trails need greater protection from incompatible uses such as ATV use.
- > There should be stronger regulations that protect existing trees through the development process as trees bring aesthetic, environmental, economic benefit to the town.
- > Open, public, access to the waterfront should be preserved and enhanced.
- > Greater attention needs to be paid to the quality of water in the harbour.
- > The Water Garden is an important asset in the community.
- > Houseboat and sailboat waste in the harbour needs to be considered and controlled.
- > A causeway could be extended across the harbour and used to protect against sea level rise
- > The banks of Ernst Brook should be raised

to protect against the impacts of sea level rise.

Governance

Many comments were received that dealt with the theme of Governance. Comments related to governance focused on the relationship between Town Council and residents, existing policies and regulations, and the general functioning of the Town. Comments, opinions, and ideas related to governance include:

- > There is a need for greater clarity of Town policies and regulations. Some respondents feel there is a lack of understanding in the community which can create challenges between the Town and residents.
- > More transparency between the Town and residents/organizations is needed, especially with regards to decision-making.
- > Some residents feel the Town can get in the way of innovation and new ideas/development.
- > As a small town, Mahone Bay and its governance structure can be more resourceful and react nimbly to challenges, but there is a limited ability of the Town to raise funds.

- > Residents would benefit from the re-establishment of the Recreation Department.
- > Greater collaboration between the Town and the private sector could help promote economic development.
- > The Town Hall building is generally inaccessible for many.
- > Zoning should be considered from a public health perspective, especially as it relates to where certain uses are permitted (E.g. the proximity of alcohol and cannabis sales to schools).
- > Attention should be paid to how the Town interacts with residents and look to improve methods of engagement on issues.
- > Urban agriculture can play a role in healthy living and access to food.
- > Online mapping and GIS data should be available from the Town.

Transportation and Parking

Transportation and parking was also a theme that many stakeholders spoke about through the engagement. On the whole, stakeholders appreciate the transportation network and options within Mahone Bay and value the ability to access services as a pedestrian. Stakeholders also shared the

“There is a need to protect and nurture how people interact with one another.”
-Engagement Participant

following comments and opinions through the engagement:

- > There is a need for additional parking in the town to help accommodate traffic during the busy tourism season. One respondent suggested using the Bayview School Parking lot during the summer months as an overflow parking lot.
- > Any parking strategy should be developed with a wayfinding and signage strategy.
- > Sidewalks and active transportation infrastructure should be expanded throughout the town.
- > Active transportation can play a key role in promoting and facilitating a healthy community.
- > Current and prospective residents without access to a private automobile, or residents who do not drive, have challenges accessing services not available in Mahone Bay.
- > Sidewalks play a key role in connecting people throughout the town to one another and places.
- > There is a need for more parking in the south end of town (near the marina)
- > Lack of regional transportation options can result in people passing up Mahone Bay as a place to reside.

- > Greater care and attention needs to be paid to how intersections and sidewalks in town are designed and built.
- > One-way streets could help with traffic congestion on Main Street
- > Mahone Bay could benefit from dedicated bike lanes.
- > Parking should be limited on Main Street because it creates dangerous driving conditions.

Community Cohesion

Throughout the engagement, stakeholders mentioned Mahone Bay’s strong community and huge volunteer base that help to put on the many events and festivals in the town. Mahone Bay residents were frequently cited as one of the town’s greatest assets and that Mahone Bay is a very welcoming town. Residents feel a great pride towards Mahone Bay. Several respondents noted, however, that the cohesion of the community feels threatened at times by an *us versus them* mentality but could be aided by bringing interest groups together.

Services and Amenities

Although Mahone Bay has an array of services and amenities available to its residents, throughout the engagement

respondents cited the following challenges that are faced:

- > Access to healthcare can be difficult, especially for people with young children and seniors.
- > There are limited after-school care options in Mahone Bay.

Heritage

There is a great appreciation of the history of the town and the heritage architecture that is present in Mahone Bay. Respondents noted that the town’s history partially manifests in its built form and that one can learn about the town by simply walking down the streets. However, several respondents commented how older structures create accessibility challenges for community members because of the building’s design. Other comments and ideas shared about heritage include:

- > While all housing needs to evolve to make structures comfortable, more needs to be done to preserve homes from being demolished.
- > Building footprints and the location of a building on a lot should be considered for their relationship to the past and surrounding structures.

- › The existing architectural control area should be expanded.
- › Height restrictions should be retained.
- › The Town should consider developing design requirements to promote cohesive design.

Economic Development and Tourism

There were many comments from stakeholders that dealt with local economic development and tourism. Based on the feedback, there are diverging opinions as to what extent tourism should play a role in Mahone Bay's economy. Some stakeholders feel the community should continue to leverage its popularity as a tourist destination while others hope to see a shift away from tourism. Some respondents feel tourism in Mahone Bay works because of the informality of it. However, some feel Mahone Bay has reached saturation in terms of tourism development. Other comments and ideas related to economic development and tourism include:

- › Winter months in the town can be tough for businesses and other operators.
- › Community internet is important for business attraction and retention.
- › The waterfront and harbour can be used more efficiently and capitalized on for economic development. One respondent noted that the waterfront along the Three Churches is an undersold area that could be redeveloped.
- › The current application of commercial zoning is too narrow. It could be expanded instead of spot zoning for commercial uses.
- › Mixed use development should be promoted
- › The town would benefit from more businesses and entrepreneurs
- › The community should focus upon building local capacity instead of drawing investment from outside of the community.
- › The skyline and views in Mahone Bay are intrinsically and economically important to the future of the town.
- › There are several anchor businesses and organizations that are key to the community's success.
- › Urban agriculture and locally produced goods represents an economic development opportunity.

Arts, Culture, and Recreation

Throughout the engagement, respondents noted some of their favourite arts, culture, and recreation spaces, and how the Town can support these endeavours. Frequently mentioned were the many trails and natural spaces that respondents use for recreation and leisure, but there were diverging opinions as to whether or not the playing field near the Mahone Bay Centre should be developed or not. Some respondents feel this area represents a development opportunity while other stakeholders wish to see the field preserved. Additional comments shared about arts, culture, and recreation include:

- › Public art and artist residency are potential opportunities for the town.
- › The trails and natural spaces should be protected, and expanded, and should be planned for greater connectivity.
- › The Town should consider creating a 'Recreation Zone' within the Land Use Bylaw to protect recreation areas.
- › Recreation needs to be considered for all-youth and seniors included.
- › The Town could play a greater role in the provision of arts and cultural activities, including by supporting busking.

Youth Input

To gather input from youth, the Project Team conducted one-on-one telephone interviews with four youth, between the ages of 13 and 18, living in Mahone Bay. Through these interviews, the Project Team looked to understand what youth love about the town, what their favourite places are, and what the Town should be prioritizing for the future. Generally, youth in Mahone Bay appreciate and value the small-town nature of Mahone Bay but would like to see more opportunities in the community for employment, skill development, and recreation and leisure.

The most frequent comments, ideas, and suggestions to emerge from the conversations with youth include:

- › Protection of the environment should be prioritized, and the community should be paying more attention to protecting all aspects of the environment.
- › The trails within the town are really important for youth and their families to enjoy the outdoors.
- › Mahone Bay provides a happy medium between urban and rural life.
- › Being able to walk around and visit different stores/shops in town is important.
- › Some areas of town need better sidewalks because youth feel unsafe, especially the area between the churches and Keddy's Landing.
- › Youth appreciate the mobile library in town but think the community would benefit from a more permanent location.
- › While youth can get a lot of what they need in Mahone Bay, they often have to go to larger urban centres, primarily Bridgewater and Halifax Regional Municipality, for school and other services.
- › Youth feel there needs to be more places and spaces specifically for them.
- › Having a good 'Main Street' is important.
- › Development should be limited along the shoreline because it takes away from the character of the town and could be impacted by sea level rise.
- › The town could benefit from being more flexible by allowing different types of businesses.
- › The Town should take on more of a role in the adoption of clean energy production, particularly solar energy production.
- › The soccer field at the Mahone Bay Centre is a great place to go play with friends but the basketball court could use some repairs.

Renter Input

The Project Team sought input from renters in Mahone Bay to better understand the experience of tenants and to discuss what should be considered as the Town plans for the future. Using one-on-one telephone interviews and a focus group, the Project Team spoke with four renters in the community.

Generally, renters in Mahone Bay feel that there are not enough rental options in Mahone Bay, which has created a volatile, uncertain, rental market. Renters pointed to long-term rental units being converted to short-term (vacation) rentals, decreasing the total stock of rental units in the town. Because of these factors, some renters feel insecure in their housing because a landlord can simply choose not to renew a lease or to increase the rent to a point that is unaffordable for some renters. Other comments and perspectives shared by renters include:

- › There is often a negative stigma attached to renters as people who cannot afford to purchase a house. Renters bring a lot of value to the community. Many sit on boards, committees, and volunteer in town.

- › Rent is very expensive in Mahone Bay, which often requires some renters to take on additional roommates or to help their landlord to keep the cost of rent down.
- › If a renter were to get evicted, there are little to no options within the town to go.
- › There is a lot of potential in repurposing existing homes and structures to create more rental housing in Mahone Bay but it needs to be approached through an innovative and creative lens.
- › The land use regulations need to enable flexibility to facilitate housing variety.
- › There is potential for the existing nursing home to accommodate multi-generational housing.
- › There is an inherent link between social justice and housing.
- › Purpose-built seniors housing is great for seniors, but not great for young families looking to live in town.
- › Renters face discrimination all the time. Individuals have been denied housing because they have pets, their hair colour, or because they have tattoos.
- › There are no rental options for individuals with supportive housing needs in town.

“The inherent value brought to the town by long-term renters surpasses the financial wealth brought by short-term rentals.”
-Engagement Participant

Senior Input

The final cohort-specific stakeholder group the Project Team collected information from was seniors. The term senior was defined as *any individual over the age of 65*. The Project Team collected information from four seniors living in Mahone Bay through one-on-one telephone interviews. Generally, seniors in Mahone Bay feel they are able to meet most of their day-to-day needs with the services and amenities available in town; however, the need for a regional transit system was cited to help residents get to and from larger centres like Bridgewater and Halifax. Some respondents have seen other Mahone Bay residents, including seniors, hitch-hiking to appointments outside of the town.

Other perspectives and ideas shared by seniors include:

- › There have been a lot of positive changes in Mahone Bay over the years, including the growth in the number of young families.
- › The development of more housing options, especially rental units, has enabled people to age in place. Homeownership as a senior can be difficult, especially with the cost of upkeep for larger homes.
- › Jubilee Park, the Water Garden, and other natural areas are important assets in the community.
- › Mahone Bay could benefit from more medical services and personal, including doctors.
- › Greater attention needs to be paid to building accessibility. Older structures were not designed with accessibility in mind and it can be difficult accessing these structures at times.
- › The Mahone Bay Centre offers great programming (physical and intellectual) for seniors, and there are many other opportunities to get involved in the town.
- › The walkability of town is very important to getting around.
- › There are physical barriers in town, especially along Kinburn Street.
- › Development along the coastline should be prohibited.
- › The location and orientation of crosswalks should be examined. Some lead directly into traffic which is unsafe.
- › Short-term (vacation) rentals are impacting the availability of rental units.

Discussion

Discussion

Feedback from the initial phase of engagement for Plan Mahone Bay was received and collected from a wide cross-section of community members and stakeholders in, and surrounding Mahone Bay. The results from the engagement reveal there are many characteristics of the town that the community almost unanimously values and issues they feel need to be addressed. However, there are also different, and often competing values that the town must try to balance as Mahone Bay plans for the future.

Respondents strongly value the built form in Mahone Bay that has evolved over the town's history. Mahone Bay's small footprint, the many shops and services available in the town, the convergence of human and natural environments, and the streetscapes and architecture all contribute to the character of Mahone Bay. However, just as respondents wish to see the town's continued evolution, many engagement participants hope the historic qualities of the town will be preserved.

There is also an appreciation and understanding of the connection between built form and physical, social, and

environmental health. A community that is accessible as a pedestrian and readily has access to nature can support the physical and social health of humans, and the environment more broadly. Planning for the future of Mahone Bay must support a healthy community, and should be built upon the town's walkability and access to nature.

There is an overwhelming consensus about the importance of the environment in Mahone Bay. It is foundational to the very nature of the town. The community holds the harbour, watercourses, forests, and the trails that traverse these natural areas in high regard.

Part of ensuring the environment is prioritized in the future must also involve responding to the sense of urgency regarding the climate emergency. An approach that promotes adaption and mitigation to climate change is needed. The community not only sees this as a necessity but also as an opportunity to create jobs and support the local economy.

There is also a growing sense of urgency to support more housing options in Mahone Bay. As was expressed during the engagement,

the community feels there is a shortage of housing options, especially for renters. Volatility and uncertainty in the housing market have made it challenging to establish roots in the community. The community also feels a need to examine regulations to control short-term rentals in the community. As the town has grown in popularity as a tourism destination, respondents feel the availability of adequate housing has decreased.

Finally, as the Town and community consider growth and development, a balance must be struck of where and how development should occur. On one hand, there is support for residential development to help provide housing options and opportunities, while on the other, community members are hesitant and resistant to development in some areas of Mahone Bay.

This discussion and the results from this engagement will be used to develop the policies and regulations for the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw. Once drafted, the public will have the opportunity to examine and provide their feedback regarding the proposed planning documents.

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TOWN OF
Mahone Bay

