

WOODGROVE AREA PLAN

Phase 1 | Engagement Summary

JUNE 2025

CITY OF NANAIMO
THE HARBOUR CITY

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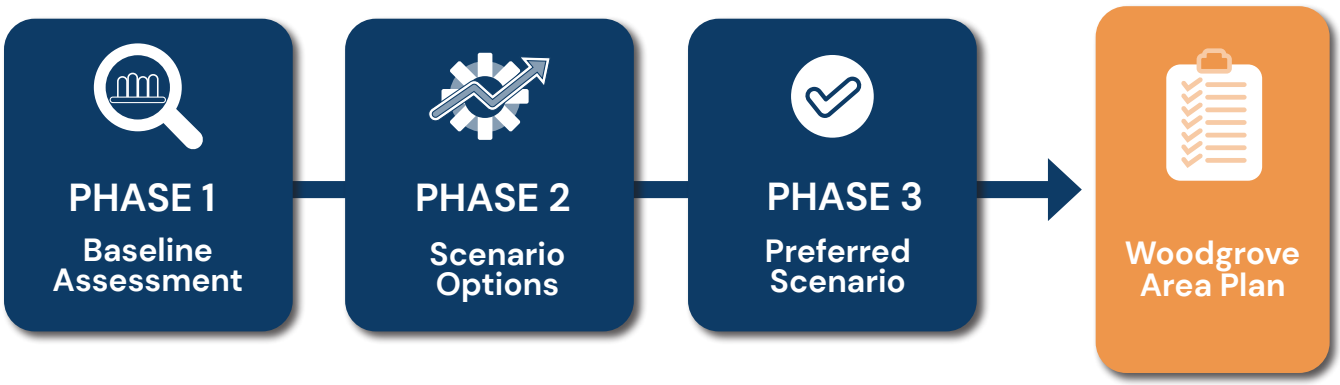
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

The *Woodgrove Area Plan: Phase 1 Engagement Summary* report presents the findings from the first round of public engagement for the Woodgrove Area Plan (WAP) project, a key component of Nanaimo's broader initiative to develop complete communities in its urban centres. This report, covering outreach conducted in March and April 2025, synthesizes the perspectives of over 1,200 participants and outlines community priorities, concerns, and aspirations for the Woodgrove Urban Centre.



PROJECT CONTEXT & PURPOSE

The Woodgrove Area Plan is designed to transform the Woodgrove Urban Centre—Nanaimo's northern gateway and a major commercial hub—into a more complete, livable, and accessible community. This initiative is funded by a Complete Communities grant through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, supporting evidence-based land use planning with a focus on housing, transportation, daily needs, and infrastructure. The engagement process aims to inform land-use decisions, assess community completeness, identify challenges and opportunities, and align with broader city and provincial objectives.

TOP THINGS PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT THE WOODGROVE AREA

1. Shopping & retail options
2. Convenience of running errands
3. Big box stores
4. Benefit of having clustered services

TOP THINGS PEOPLE DISLIKE ABOUT THE WOODGROVE AREA

1. Traffic & transportation issues
2. Pedestrian safety & cycling infrastructure
3. "Concrete jungle" feel
4. Lack of cultural & recreational amenities
5. Lack of urban design & community

1,297 PEOPLE DIRECTLY ENGAGED

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS & PARTICIPATION

Phase 1 engagement included an online survey, virtual and in-person workshops, and classroom sessions, reaching 1,297 participants. Most participants were Nanaimo residents, with representation from nearby jurisdictions. Respondents were predominantly women, homeowners, and aged 20–65, though youth and teenagers were notably underrepresented.*

Outreach efforts included social media, bus posters, media releases, newspaper ads, and a radio interview, resulting in high visibility and diverse input.



90% Nanaimo residents

4% District of Lantzville

4% Regional District of Nanaimo

1% Snuneymuxw First Nation

1% Snaw-Naw-As First Nation

(includes participation from 200+ residents living within the study area)

**Although youth and teenagers did not respond to the survey, youth were engaged via classroom sessions at elementary schools. Efforts were made to directly engage with high school students through classroom sessions but were unsuccessful.*

THEMATIC PRIORITIES

Housing: Strong support for a diverse mix of housing types and tenures, addressing affordability and inclusivity.

Transportation: Calls for improved pedestrian safety, better cycling infrastructure, and solutions to traffic congestion.

Daily Needs: Desire for more green spaces, parks, community and recreation facilities, support for local businesses, and enhanced public amenities.

Infrastructure: Concerns about stormwater management, sustainability, and electrical capacity, with limited focus on traditional utilities.

NEXT STEPS

The feedback from Phase 1 will inform the development of growth scenarios and the preferred vision for the Woodgrove Area Plan in subsequent phases. Continued community engagement will ensure that the evolving plan reflects local priorities, addresses identified challenges, and supports the creation of a vibrant, complete community.

This summary encapsulates the main findings and strategic direction emerging from the first phase of engagement, setting the stage for further collaborative planning and decision-making in the Woodgrove area.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

WOODGROVE AREA PLAN

The Woodgrove Area Plan (WAP) is part of a broader initiative aimed at developing complete communities in Nanaimo's urban centres. Its context is rooted in *City Plan: Nanaimo Relmagined* (*City Plan*) which identifies six Secondary Urban Centres, including Woodgrove. This area is envisioned as a primary hub of activity characterized by high-intensity land uses and mixed-use development. Recognized as Nanaimo's northern gateway, the Woodgrove Secondary Urban Centre serves both city-wide and regional commercial functions.

The City of Nanaimo and Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) were awarded a $200,000 Complete Communities grant to fund an assessment that would support the transformation of Woodgrove into a complete community. This assessment is comprised of three phases that explore growth scenarios to achieve implementation recommendations for the WAP (see Figure 1):

Figure 1: Woodgrove Area Plan Process



COMPLETE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

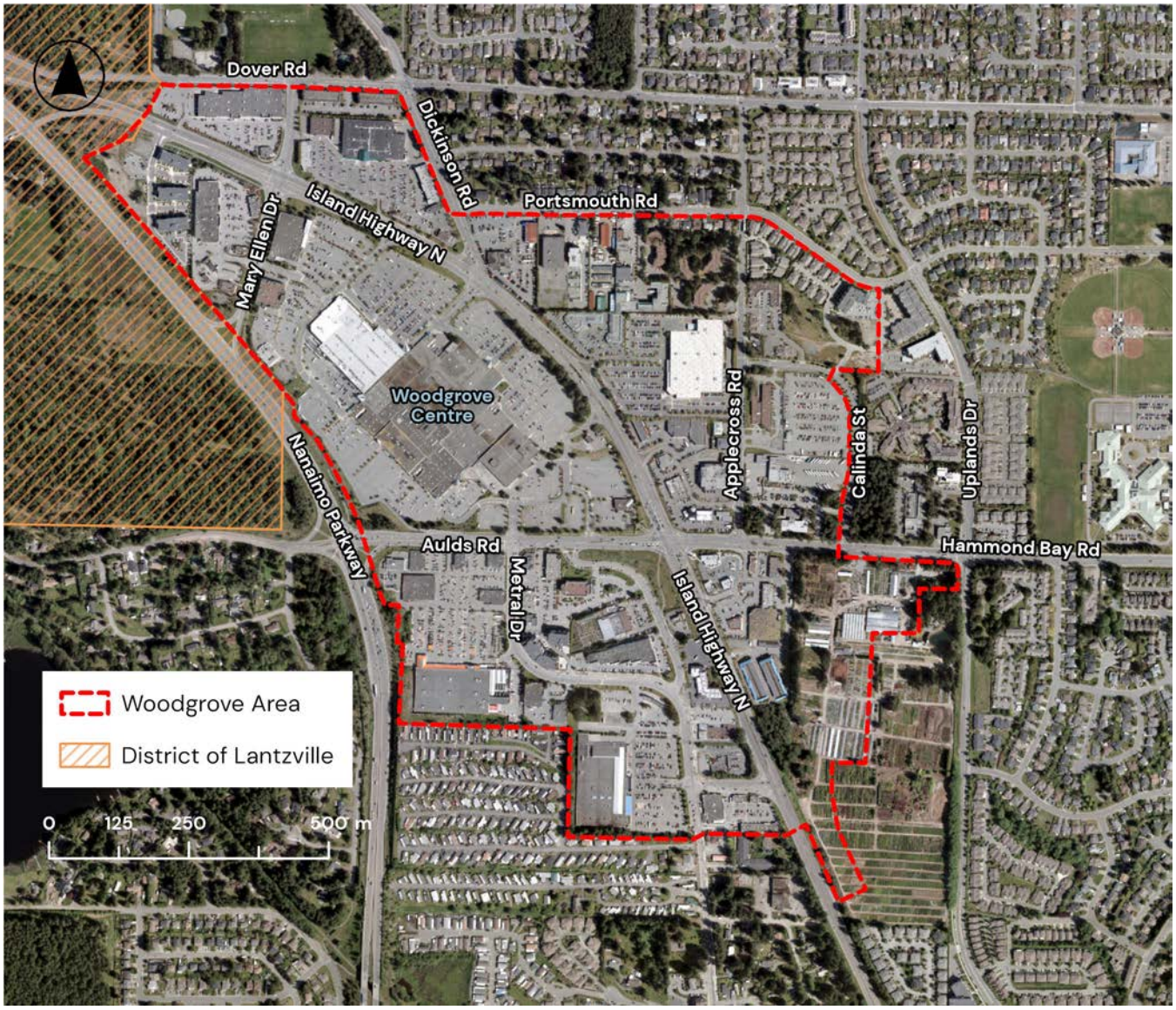
The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Complete Communities Program is a $10 million grant initiative designed to support local governments and modern Treaty First Nations in British Columbia in developing more comprehensive and integrated community environments. Grant recipients are enabled to conduct in-depth assessments of community development to determine future growth scenarios.

The program's core focus is to help communities evaluate their "completeness" through four critical lenses; housing, transportation, daily needs, and infrastructure. By supporting evidence-based land use planning, the initiative aims to create more compact, efficient, and livable communities that align with broader provincial goals, such as the CleanBC Roadmap to 2030. Local governments (i.e. the City of Nanaimo) can use these grants to undertake comprehensive assessments that inform strategic decision-making about community development, housing supply, transportation options, and more.

STUDY AREA

The Woodgrove Urban Centre is located in the northwest area of the City of Nanaimo (see Figure 2). It functions as the City's northern gateway, sharing boundaries with the Regional District of Nanaimo and the District of Lantzville. The area includes the Woodgrove Centre mall and its surrounding lands.

Figure 2: Woodgrove Area Plan Study Area



The Woodgrove Urban Centre is designated as a Secondary Urban Centre in *City Plan*. Secondary Urban Centres are intended to be large scale urban centres that serve the entire city. They are characterized as being anchored by public or civic institutions and employment centres, offer a broad range of housing types, have excellent transit access and walking, rolling, and cycling routes.

HOW & WHY ARE WE ENGAGING?

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

As part of the Complete Communities assessment to create the WAP, public input is requested during each phase of the process to shape qualitative understanding of the Woodgrove Area and to offer feedback on the outcomes (see Figure 3).

This *Phase 1: Engagement Summary Report* summarizes what was heard in the first phase of the Complete Communities process, as outlined below:

Figure 3: Woodgrove Area Plan Engagement Process



ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- Inform land-use decisions and plans for transportation and infrastructure improvements in the Woodgrove area
- Explore opportunities to create a more compact, complete, and accessible neighbourhood
- Assess the current community completeness of the Woodgrove area
- Identify strengths, opportunities, challenges, and potential actions that align with community goals
- Engage effectively with neighbouring jurisdictions and other affected parties
- Evaluate housing needs, supply, and location in the Woodgrove area

- Assess current and future connections between destinations through transit and active transportation
- Determine services required in the region to support a complete community
- Inform the implementation of *City Plan: Nanaimo Relmagined*
- Explore options for a new location for a permanent bus exchange in the Woodgrove area
- Align with the Transit-Oriented Areas (TOA) legislation requirements

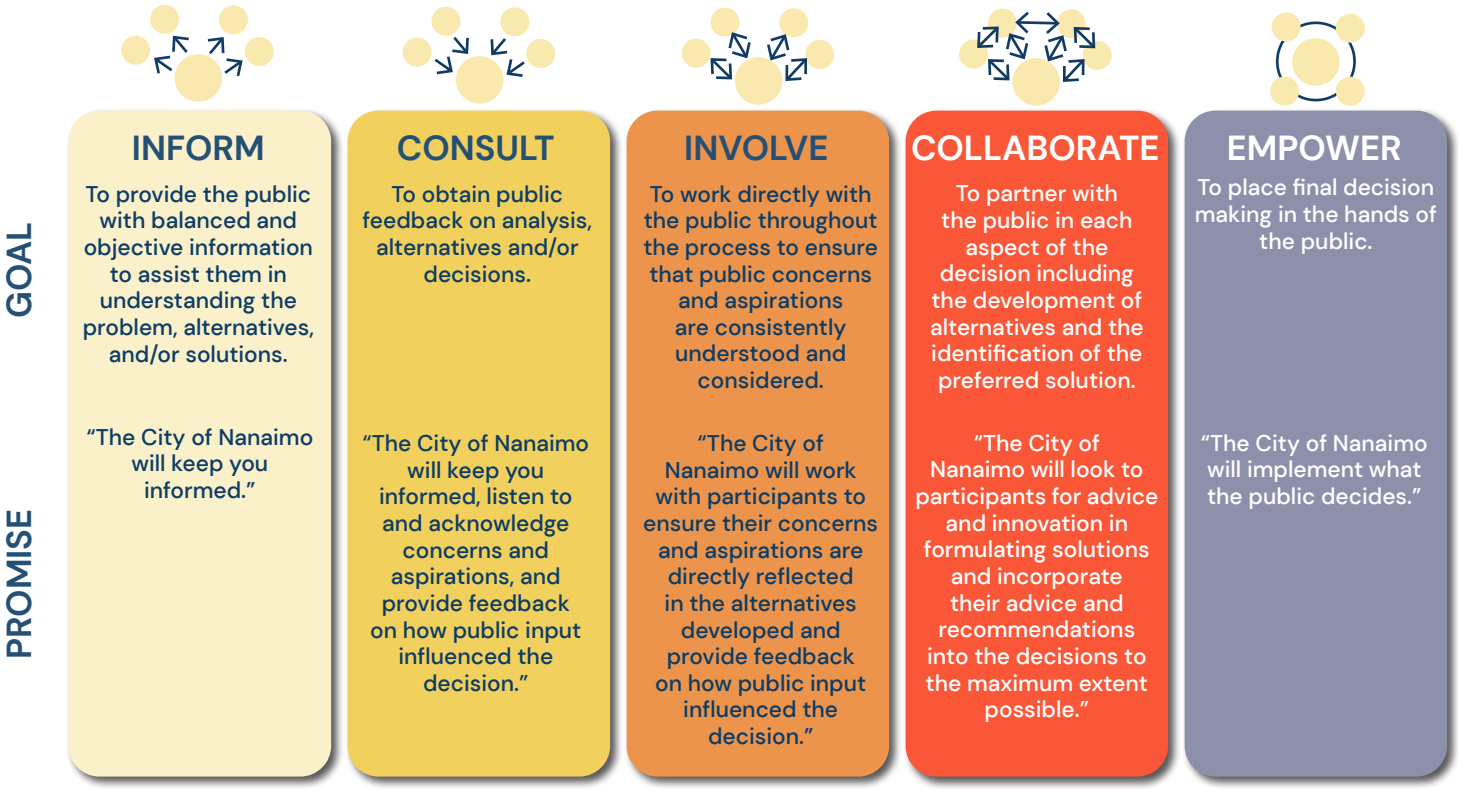
LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT (IAP2 APPROACH)

The engagement process for the WAP incorporates International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) principles throughout its various stages (see Figure 4), ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to public participation:

- maintaining clarity of purpose,
- ensuring inclusive participation,
- providing consistent feedback loops,
- promoting transparency, and
- building community capacity.

By adhering to these principles, the WAP can transform public engagement from a procedural requirement into a genuine opportunity for community empowerment and collaborative urban planning.

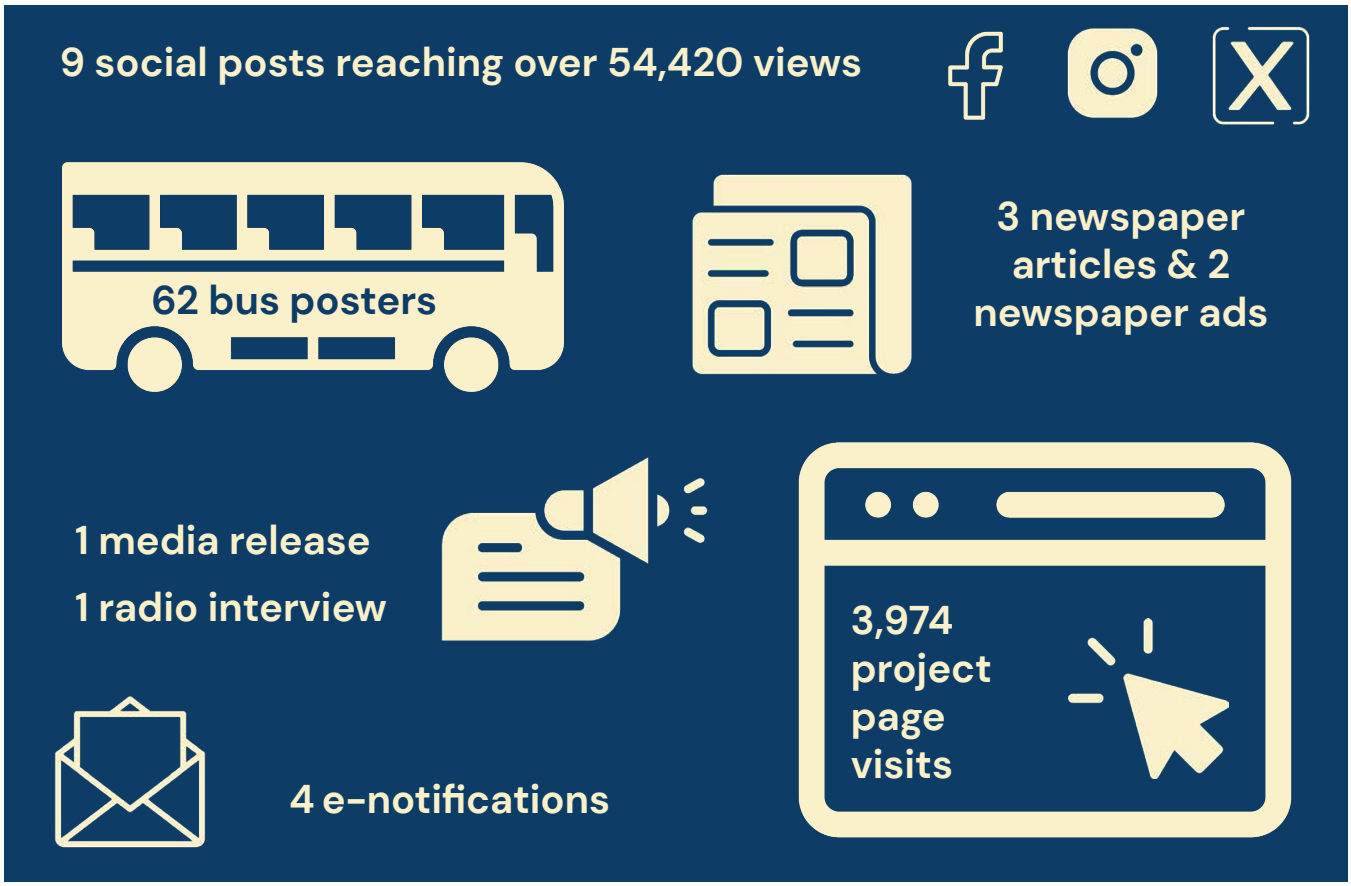
Figure 4: IAP2 Levels of Engagement



OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS

The City of Nanaimo promoted engagement opportunities through various formats, aiming to reach as wide of an audience as possible (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Outreach and Communications Summary



ENGAGEMENT METHODS & EVENTS

Between March 21st and April 7th, 1,297 people were engaged through the following activities and methods:

- Online & hardcopy survey x1
- Virtual Workshops x2
- In-Person Workshop x1
- Classroom sessions x2



1,297 PEOPLE DIRECTLY ENGAGED

WHO PARTICIPATED?

BY THE NUMBERS

A total of 1,297 people participated in the Woodgrove area engagement process, comprising 1,155 survey respondents, 52 workshop attendees across three sessions, and approximately 90 children from two school groups who participated in three classroom activities.

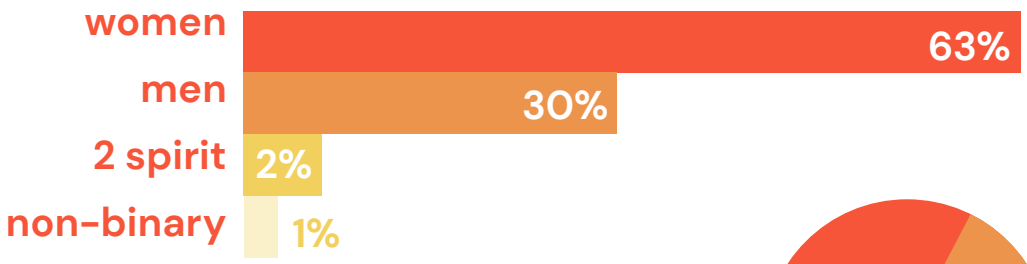
Survey demographics revealed respondents were primarily Nanaimo residents who visit Woodgrove for shopping, activities, services, or transit purposes, with strong representation from Dover, Townsite, and Rutherford/Pleasant Valley neighborhoods. 172 survey respondents and nearly 30 workshop attendees noted they lived within the study area. The age distribution was balanced between 20-65+ years, though youth and teenagers were notably underrepresented. Participants were predominantly women. Non-Nanaimo participants primarily came from the Regional District of Nanaimo and the District of Lantzville (see Figure 6).

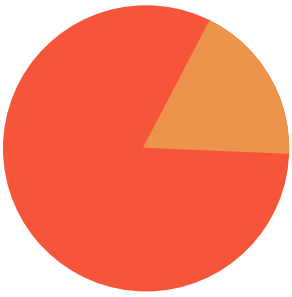
Figure 6: Who Participated Results



90% Nanaimo residents

- 4% District of Lantzville
- 4% Regional District of Nanaimo
- 1% Snuneymuxw First Nation
- 1% Snaw-Naw-As First Nation





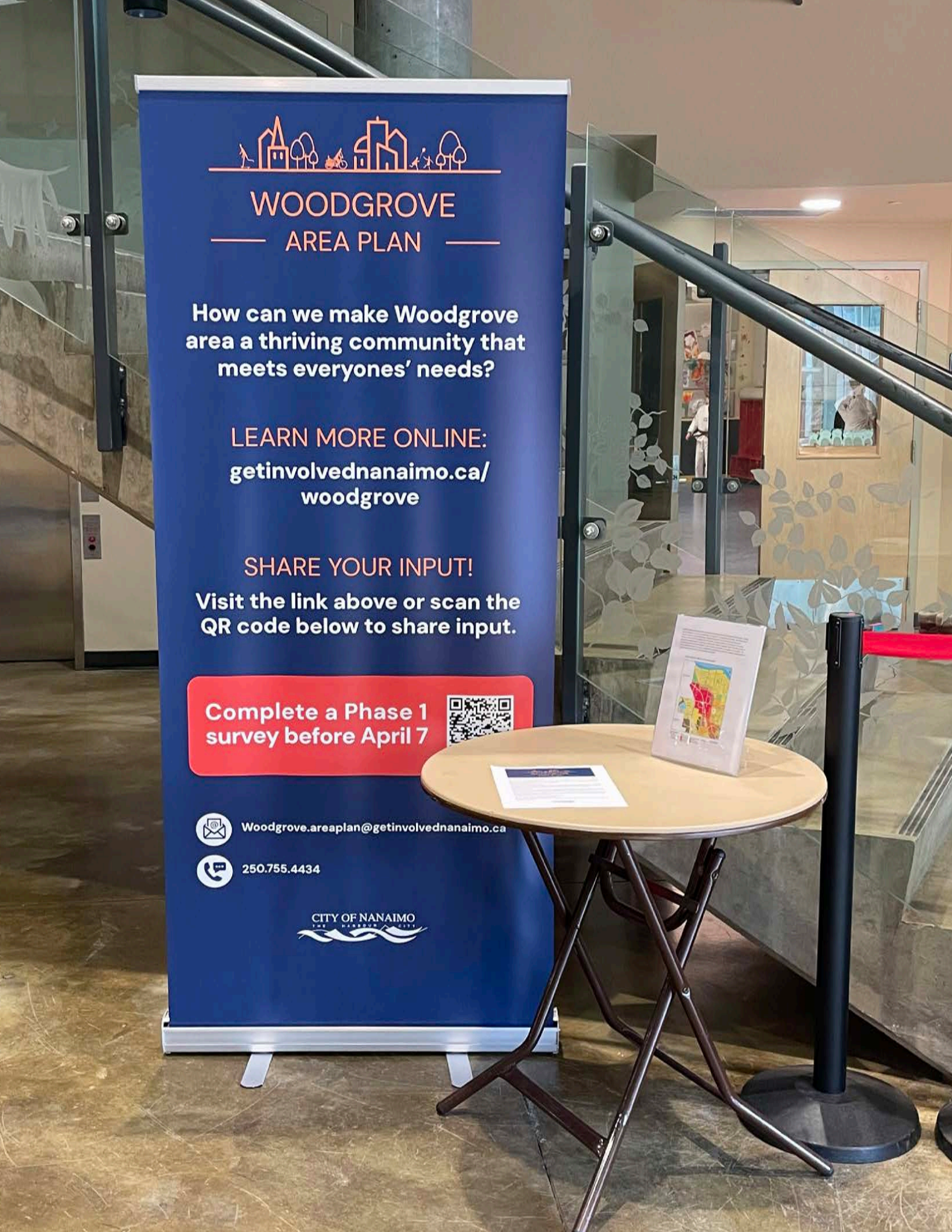
80% owners

20% renters



100% aged 20 to 65+ years old

teenagers notably underrepresented in survey responses, workshop attendance & classroom sessions


WOODGROVE
AREA PLAN
How can we make Woodgrove area a thriving community that meets everyones' needs?
LEARN MORE ONLINE:
getinvolvednanaimo.ca/woodgrove
SHARE YOUR INPUT!
Visit the link above or scan the QR code below to share input.
Complete a Phase 1 survey before April 7
Woodgrove.areaplan@getinvolvednanaimo.ca
250.755.4434
CITY OF NANAIMO

TOP THINGS PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT THE WOODGROVE AREA



1. Shopping & retail options
2. Convenience of running errands
3. Big box stores (Costco, Superstore, etc.)
4. Benefit of having clustered services

WHAT WE LEARNED

HOW DO PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT THE CURRENT WOODGROVE EXPERIENCE?

The community's feedback on the Woodgrove area reveals a mix of positive aspects and significant concerns. While residents appreciate the area's convenience for running errands and the presence of major retail stores, they also express dissatisfaction with issues such as traffic congestion, inadequate pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and a lack of green spaces, recreational and cultural amenities. Additionally, safety concerns and a perceived lack of community spirit highlight areas needing improvement.

LIKES

A large majority of survey respondents expressed strong satisfaction with the **shopping and retail options** at Woodgrove, with services such as banks and clinics, as well as restaurants and bars, also receiving positive feedback. Many people highlighted the **convenience of running errands** in the area, noting that a wide range of necessities—from grocery stores and the movie theatre to dentists, hardware stores, and coffee shops—are all located nearby. **Big box stores like Costco and Superstore are significant draws**, with respondents appreciating both the cost savings and the variety of services available in one place. Free parking was also cited as a valued feature.

Convenience and accessibility emerged as key themes, with many respondents emphasizing **the benefit of having essential services clustered** within a compact area. The complete street design on Metral Drive received positive mentions for contributing to this accessibility.

Overall, many comments reflected a utilitarian perspective: **people visit the area primarily for specific services rather than for the overall experience**. While some described Woodgrove as "underwhelming and unmemorable," they acknowledged its practical benefits and the convenience it offers for everyday needs.

TOP THINGS PEOPLE DISLIKE ABOUT THE WOODGROVE AREA



1. Traffic & transportation issues
2. Pedestrian safety
3. "Concrete jungle" feel
4. Lack of cultural and recreational amenities
5. Lack of urban design and community feel

DISLIKES

Survey respondents ranked the lack of walking and rolling routes, limited entertainment and cultural options, and a shortage of restaurants and bars as major dislikes of the Woodgrove area. These concerns were echoed in 235 open comments, reflecting widespread dissatisfaction with the area's current amenities and design.

Traffic and Transportation Issues: Respondents reported heavy congestion at key intersections like Hammond Bay/Island Highway and Applecross/Hammond Bay, citing poor road design and narrow lanes on Metral Drive. Difficult vehicle navigation between shopping centers, removal of turn lanes, and bus stops blocking traffic were also concerns, with calls for new traffic lights at problem spots.

Pedestrian and Cycling Concerns: The area was described as unfriendly to pedestrians, lacking sidewalks, crosswalks, and safe routes between shopping areas. Large intersections are intimidating to cross, and sidewalk connectivity is poor.

Urban Design and Environmental Critiques: Many criticized the area's visual appeal, calling it a "concrete jungle" dominated by big box stores, sprawling parking lots, and major roads with little green space, shade, or natural elements, resulting in a disconnected and characterless environment.

Safety and Social Issues: Safety concerns include increased crime, especially car break-ins and theft, a growing unhoused population, and reports of feeling unsafe in parking lots.

Amenities Lacking: Respondents want more entertainment and cultural venues, such as theaters and sports facilities, as well as more recreation options and community gathering spaces. Dining choices are mostly chain restaurants, and neighborhood conveniences are limited.

Community Feel: The area was described as "cookie-cutter" and overly car-dependent, lacking unique local businesses and public spaces that encourage social interaction. Many expressed a desire for a more walkable, connected community with better traffic flow, green spaces, safety, and diverse amenities beyond just shopping.



HOUSING

Community feedback underscores a clear consensus that Woodgrove's housing strategy must embrace an "all-of-the-above" approach, emphasizing the need for diverse housing types (apartments, townhouses, duplexes) and tenures (rental, ownership, subsidized) to serve residents of all ages and incomes. Participants prioritized family-friendly housing—such as adaptable two- to three-bedroom units—while advocating for expanded options like senior-specific developments, co-housing, and smaller homes to address affordability and demographic shifts. Residents highlighted the importance of integrating these housing choices with pedestrian-friendly design, green spaces, and transit access, ensuring density enhances livability without compromising Woodgrove's neighbourhood feel. This input reinforces a shared vision for inclusive, sustainable neighbourhoods that balance growth with community identity.

TOP THINGS PEOPLE HAD TO SAY ABOUT HOUSING



1. Supportive of increased density
2. Need for affordable housing options
3. Desire for greenery and visual variety (less concrete & fewer 'boxy' structures)
4. Create spaces where residents feel safe

DENSITY & GROWTH



- Support for increased housing density with thoughtful implementation
- Concerns about traffic impacts from population growth
- Worries about parking needs as population increases
- Desire for controlled mix of owners/renters

AFFORDABILITY



- Need for housing affordable for all ages and incomes
- Recognition that younger people need affordable options
- Interest in smaller homes/lot sizes as alternatives to large houses

DESIGN & CHARACTER



- Strong desire to establish unique Woodgrove character/identity
- Opposition to "concrete jungle" aesthetic
- Preference for natural materials and visual variety
- Support for gradual height changes rather than uniform tall buildings
- Desire for buildings to be visually interesting, not just "boxy"

GREEN SPACE & ENVIRONMENT

- Interest in sustainable features like permeable surfaces
- Support for green roofs, solar panels, and covered bike parking

SAFETY & LIVABILITY



- Desire for spaces accommodating families and pets
- Worries about homelessness and drugs, break-ins
- Emphasis on creating spaces where residents feel safe



TRANSPORTATION

Most residents and visitors rely on cars as their primary mode of travel to and within Woodgrove, with grocery stores ranking as the most common destination, followed by chain retailers and restaurants. Participants identified significant barriers to using public transit, including concerns about convenience, safety, and overall comfort. Challenges with traffic were noted at specific intersections, and pedestrian and cyclist safety were paramount across all transportation-related conversations. These insights highlight a strong dependence on personal vehicles and point to the need for improvements in transit accessibility and user experience to better serve the mobility needs of the community.

TOP THINGS PEOPLE HAD TO SAY ABOUT TRANSPORTATION



1. Improvements needed for pedestrian & cycling infrastructure
2. Challenges with traffic congestion (specific intersections, Costco parking area)
3. Desire for more frequent transit service

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY & ACCESSIBILITY

- Concerns about dangerous pedestrian crossings, especially in poor weather conditions
- Issues with discontinuous sidewalks
- Desire for speed bumps at key crossings and lower traffic speeds in residential areas
- Desire for cycling paths, separate from roads, similar to the waterfront pathway in Downtown Nanaimo



TRAFFIC FLOW & CONGESTION

- Worries about impact of 3,000+ new residential units on existing road structure
- Concerns about street parking issues and traffic flow, particularly around Costco
- Consider rerouting main arteries that feed into smaller areas
- Explore alternatives to traffic lights



ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

- Need for more frequent transit service
- Suggestion to create indoor transit terminal for comfortable and weather-protected access to public transit
- Interest in creating well-maintained bike lanes
- Desire for complete, walkable communities with welcoming, human-scale design
- Questions about electrical infrastructure capacity for EVs and heat pumps





TRAFFIC CHALLENGES

During the in-person workshop session, residents were asked which specific intersections and roads within the study area face transportation challenges. Survey respondents also gave suggestions via open-ended commentary.

Several areas mentioned are noted on the map adjacent (see Figure 7), which categorizes intersections based on level of service:

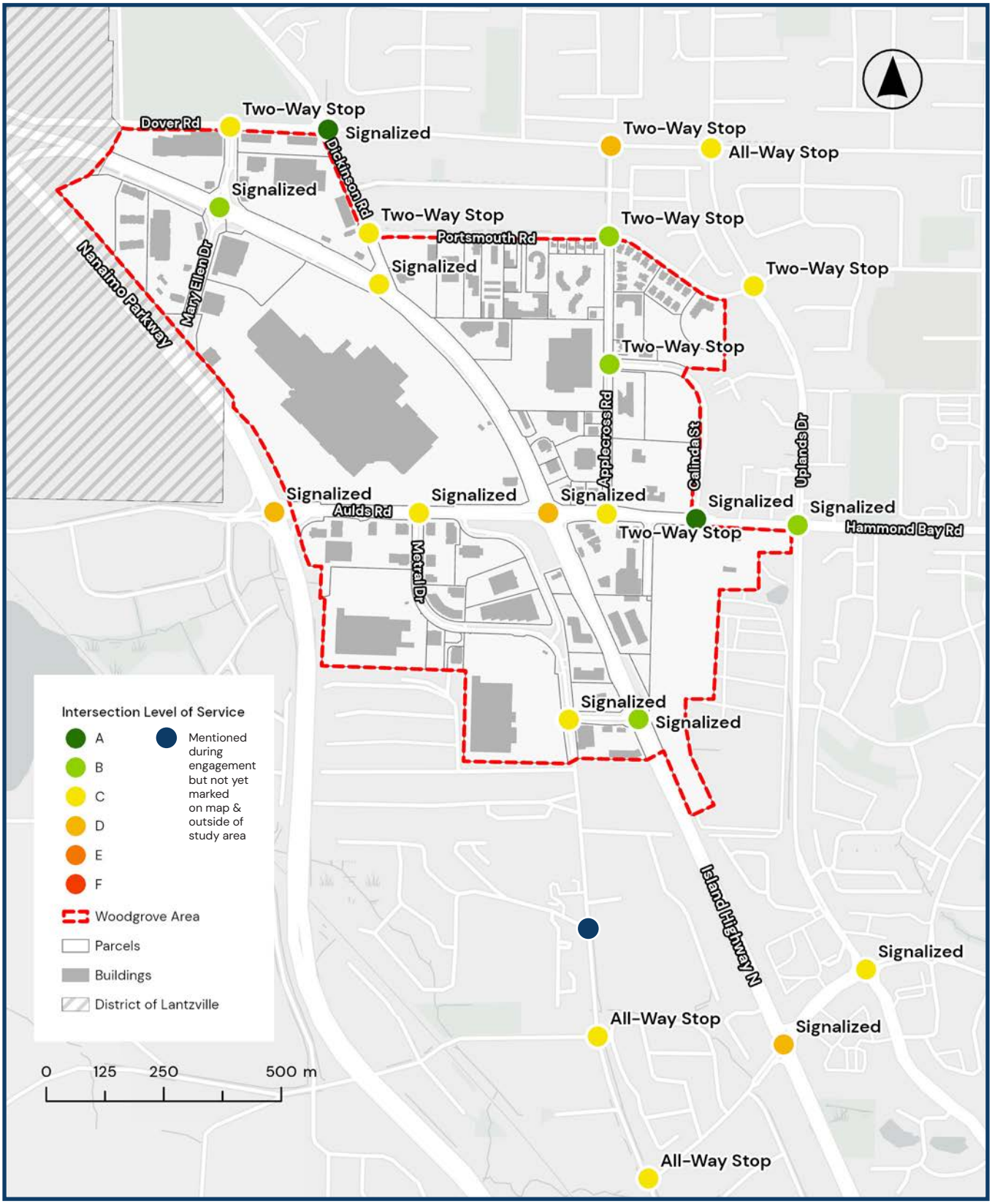
- Desire for improved cycling and pedestrian support at Island Highway & Aulds/Hammond Bay Road
- Suggested traffic calming and sidewalks along Island Highway
- Concern with Costco customers causing congestion and street parking along Applecross Road
- Observations regarding Dickinson Road and short signal length time
- Noted rolling stops and increased traffic speed with poor sight lines at Pinewood Lane & Applecross Road
- Perceived congestion at Enterprise Way & Metral Drive
- Safety concerns and lack of pedestrian infrastructure at Dover Road & Applecross Road
- Request for improvements to signalized light at Dunbar Road & Metral Drive crosswalk to ensure Pleasant Valley Elementary School children may cross the road safely*
- Noted increased traffic speed at Dover Road and Lantzville Road, perceived as too fast*

**This location is outside of the study area, but was cited as a place that contributes to the overall perception of traffic challenges in the neighbourhood.*

"We're seriously lacking in decent infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, and anyone who wants to use transit. I would LOVE to live in a community in Nanaimo where I can live, work and play, and where I can easily walk or take a bus to get to where I need to go."

- Survey Response

Figure 7: Intersection Level of Service





ACCESS TO DAILY NEEDS

Residents and survey respondents noted the lack of green spaces, recreational and cultural amenities in the study area and were quick to comment their desire for parks, open spaces, and recreational amenities such as swimming pool and ice arena.

Engagement responses to daily needs also reveal a strong call for more accessible and inclusive community spaces and services. Residents are especially interested in additional meeting places, gathering areas, and affordable "third spaces" that foster social connection. There is also a clear demand for expanded medical services, such as walk-in clinics and specialty care, along with support for creatively repurposing existing structures like The Bay for community benefit.

Finally, residents are keen on enhancing green infrastructure and promoting mixed-use development with pedestrian-friendly streets. Despite this, barriers remain, including safety concerns for walking and cycling, along with a desire for more retail and dining options. The goal is a lively, green, and walkable Woodgrove enriched with local services and character.

TOP THINGS PEOPLE HAD TO SAY ABOUT ACCESSING DAILY NEEDS

1. Desire for more parks, green spaces, natural areas, cultural & recreational facilities
2. Opportunities for placemaking & "third spaces"
3. Desire for swimming pool & ice arena
4. Support for local businesses & smaller retail

GREEN SPACE & PARKS

- A dominant theme is the desire for more parks, green spaces, and natural areas
- Many respondents feel the area is overwhelmed by pavement and would like to see more space dedicated to community gathering and outdoor activities
- Emphasis on preserving and creating more green spaces
- Interest in green roofs, bee boxes, and ecological features
- Desire for parks, trails, picnic areas, and covered outdoor spaces



COMMUNITY & RECREATION FACILITIES

- Numerous calls for more community centers, recreation facilities (swimming pools, ice rinks, sports centers), and family-friendly activities
- The need for indoor, low-cost activities, especially for families, is also emphasized
- Strong desire for more meeting spaces and community gathering areas
- Support for "third spaces" that are free or affordable for community interaction
- A community pool and arena are needed, as current resources are already maximized



SUPPORT FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES & CULTURE

- Supporting local businesses, promoting cultural norms, and recognizing First Nations are recurring themes
- Suggestions include farmers' markets, local shops and cafes, and opportunities for Indigenous businesses and cultural expression
- Interest in smaller retail spaces to encourage local businesses



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & OUTDOOR AMENITIES

- Interest in green roofs, bee boxes, and ecological features
- Desire for parks, trails, picnic areas, and covered outdoor spaces
- Need for more trees and landscaping



MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT & PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

- Support for blending retail and residential spaces (ground floor retail, upper floor residential)
- Enthusiasm for Metral Drive-style streets that prioritize pedestrian experience
- Desire for better pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalks, benches)



COMMUNITY SPACES & SERVICES

- Strong desire for more meeting spaces and community gathering areas
- Need for medical services (walk-in clinics, doctors)
- Interest in repurposing existing structures (like The Bay) for community use

"It feels like a sea of pavement up there. With more and more density it would be great to see less land dedicated to the car and more to community gathering places and parks."

– Survey Response

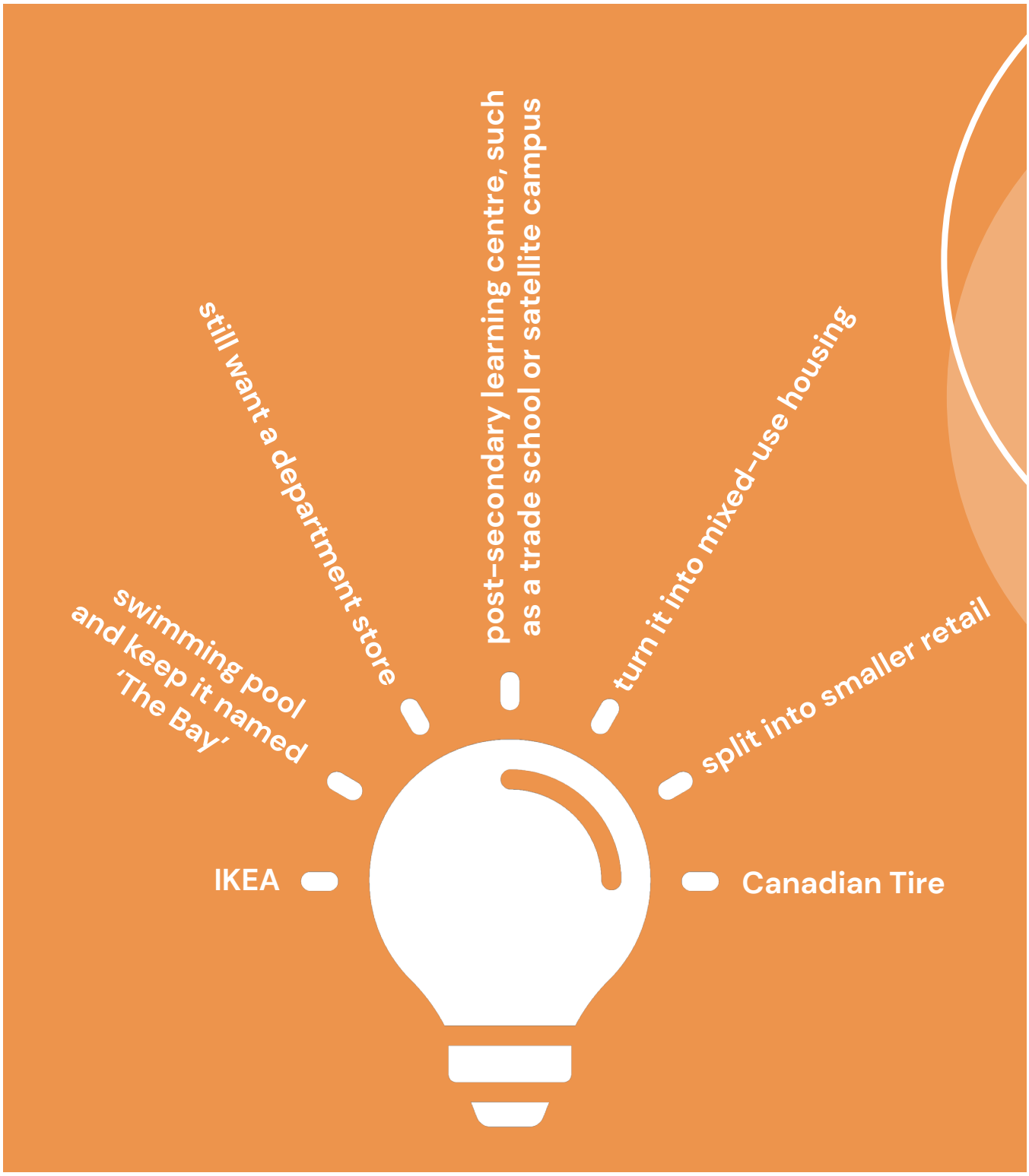
WHAT AMENITIES DO PEOPLE WANT TO SEE IN WOODGROVE?

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide open-ended commentary on how to make the Woodgrove area a complete community. Of the 582 comments received, 218 mentioned specific amenities or programming needs that they would like to see in the area. The most popular suggestions and themes are depicted in the word cloud below, with the size of the text indicating popularity. The larger the font, the more popular the suggestion:



WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO THE BAY RETAIL SPACE?

At the time of engagement, the Hudson's Bay Company announced plans to close several locations, including their retail space within the Woodgrove Mall. The closing of the Bay will have impact to vacancy rates within the study area. Participants at the virtual and in-person sessions, as well as the survey respondents had several suggestions for transforming the space into a meaningful community amenity for the Woodgrove Area. Over 30 comments were received:

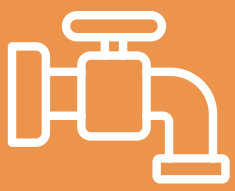




INFRASTRUCTURE

Community engagement regarding infrastructure for the Woodgrove Area Plan focused on stormwater management and electrical capacity concerns. Participants expressed interest in stormwater management practices that enhance the perception of greenery, such as permeable road systems for large developments and green roofs. There were also specific concerns about the electrical grid's capacity to support increased adoption of heat pumps and electric vehicles.

TOP ACTIONS THE CITY SHOULD TAKE TO PRIORITIZE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT/ REDEVELOPMENT:



1. Planting trees to absorb rainwater
2. Installing previous landscape (rain gardens, bioswales) to collect runoff
3. Implementing green roofs on buildings
4. Utilizing stormwater retention pods to manage water flow

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

- Engineering requirements have been updated since Woodgrove was built and will be reflected in the area as new development takes place.
- Interest in permeable road systems for large developments like the mall parking lot
- Indirect connections through green infrastructure (green roofs)

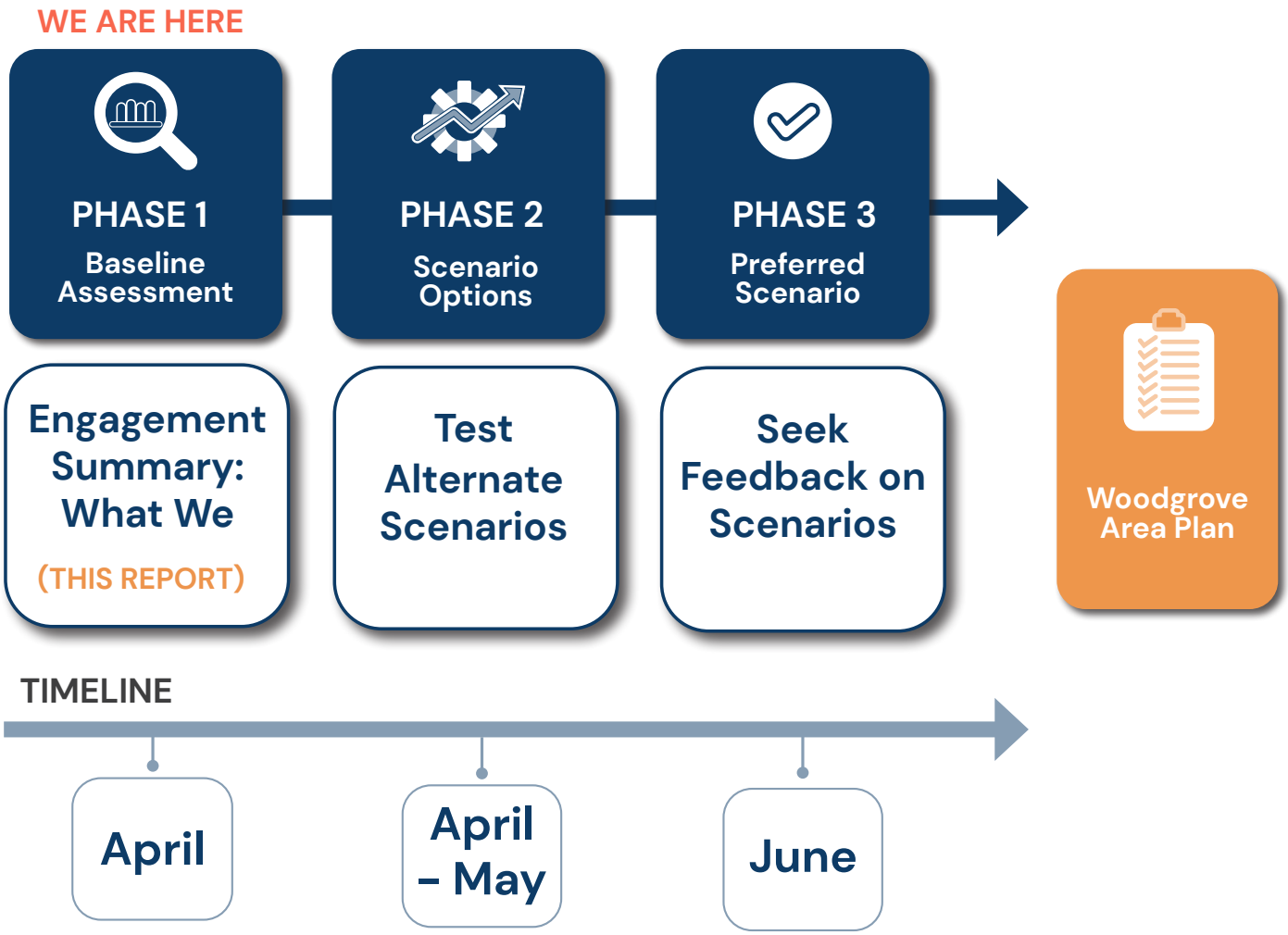
ELECTRICAL CAPACITY CONCERNS

- Questions about electrical grid capacity
- Specific concerns about supporting heat pumps and electric vehicles



NEXT STEPS

Phase 2 of the Woodgrove Area Plan will leverage the data and feedback gathered in Phase 1 to develop several potential growth scenarios. These scenarios will be rigorously evaluated through the lenses of Housing, Transportation, Daily Needs, and Infrastructure, to assess their feasibility and impact as the population increases. The public will be re-engaged during this phase, with opportunities to provide feedback on each of the proposed scenarios.



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