

WOODGROVE AREA PLAN

Complete Communities Assessment- Phase 3 Engagement Summary

MAY 2026

CITY OF NANAIMO
THE HARBOUR CITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PHASE 3 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

The *What We Heard: Phase 3 Engagement Summary Report* presents the findings from the third and final public engagement for the Woodgrove Area Plan (WAP), a key component of Nanaimo's broader initiative to develop complete communities in its urban centres. This report builds upon the feedback from previous phases and synthesizes the perspectives of over 535 participants. It outlines their support for recommended policies for the Woodgrove Urban Centre and key themes that arose.



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.

683 PEOPLE DIRECTLY ENGAGED IN PHASE 3

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS & PARTICIPATION

Phase 3 engagement included a survey (both online and hardcopy made available) and two virtual sessions, reaching 683 participants. Both the survey and the virtual sessions requested level of support and suggested changes for 31 recommended policies. Much like the previous phases, most participants were Nanaimo residents, with some representation from nearby jurisdictions. Survey respondents were predominantly homeowners over the age of 20.



91% Nanaimo residents

25% Live in the Woodgrove area

5% Regional District of Nanaimo or District of Lantzville

4% Other/Did not answer

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Overall, the data indicates broad public support for creating a more complete, mixed-use, walkable urban centre; as long as growth feels balanced, human-scaled, and doesn't compromise mobility or Nanaimo's character.

STRONGEST SUPPORT FOR:

1. Shops & services close to home
2. Parks, recreation, & cultural amenities
3. Improved transit & active transportation
4. Walkable, mixed-use public spaces
5. Diverse housing options

QUESTIONS & CONCERNS FOR:

1. Building height (over 6 storeys) & density
2. Traffic impacts, congestion & parking
3. Transit exchange relocation (desire for details)
4. Competition with downtown
5. Use/access of "private parks"

NEXT STEPS

Phase 3 of the Woodgrove Area Plan leverages the data and feedback gathered in Phases 1 and 2 to explore and refine the emerging policies and actions, and to provide recommendations for supporting policies, design guidelines, actions, and monitoring framework. This information will be formulated into a technical document to meet the requirements of the Complete Communities grant and the Woodgrove Area Plan.

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:

Figure 1: Woodgrove Area Plan Process



COMPLETE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

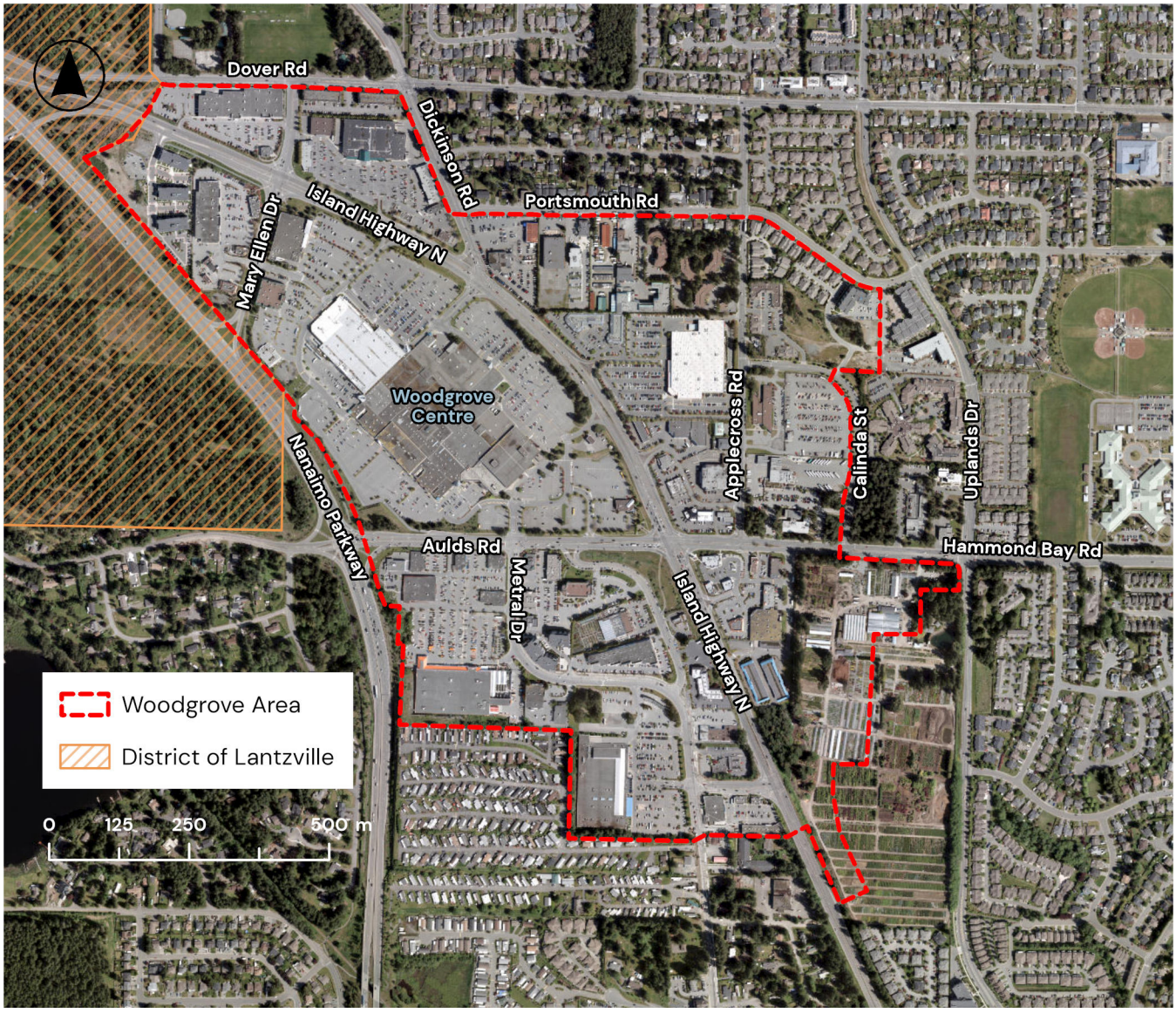
The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Complete Communities Program is a $10 million grant initiative designed to support local governments and modern Treaty First Nations in British Columbia in developing more comprehensive and integrated community environments. Grant recipients are enabled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

PHASE 1 – BASELINE

Phase 1 of the project focused on establishing a clear understanding of the current context of the Woodgrove Urban Centre. This culminated in the *Phase 1: Baseline Assessment Report*, which examined existing conditions through four critical lenses: housing, access to daily needs, transportation, and infrastructure. Insights on the findings were gathered from the community and summarized in the *Phase 1: Engagement Summary Report*.

PHASE 2 – GROWTH SCENARIOS

Phase 2 explored the implications of residential and commercial growth in the Woodgrove Urban Centre. This phase integrated the *Phase 1: Baseline Assessment Report* data and community feedback to evaluate how differing approaches to land use, mobility, and amenities could shape the future of Woodgrove as a vibrant, mixed-use urban centre. Three growth scenarios were analyzed to test options and identify trade-offs, ensuring that future planning decisions are informed by both evidence and public input. The findings were culminated in the *Phase 2: Growth Scenarios Assessment Report* and the *Phase 2: Engagement Summary Report*.

CATEGORY	PARAMETER	SCENARIO 1	SCENARIO 2	SCENARIO 3
HORIZON YEAR		10 years (2035)	20 years (2045)	30 years (2055)
POPULATION, HOUSING & RETAIL	New Population	2,500 people	5,000 people	7,500 people
	New Housing Units	1,274 units	2,548 units	3,823 units
	New Retail Space	40,000 ft^2	80,000 ft^2	120,000 ft^2

PHASE 3 – POLICIES & ACTIONS

Phase 3 focuses on the overall growth for the Woodgrove Urban Centre and provides policy recommendations to inform the Woodgrove Area Plan. This final phase translates the learnings and recommendations from earlier phases into detailed land use, policy, and infrastructure guidance.

Throughout all phases, ongoing public involvement remained a cornerstone of the process, ensuring that the evolving plan reflected the community's vision for a complete community.

HOW & WHY ARE WE ENGAGING?

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

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

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

Figure 3: Woodgrove Area Plan Engagement Process



PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

The purpose of engagement during the WAP process is to facilitate a collaborative, inclusive, and transparent process for conducting a Complete Communities Assessment.

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)

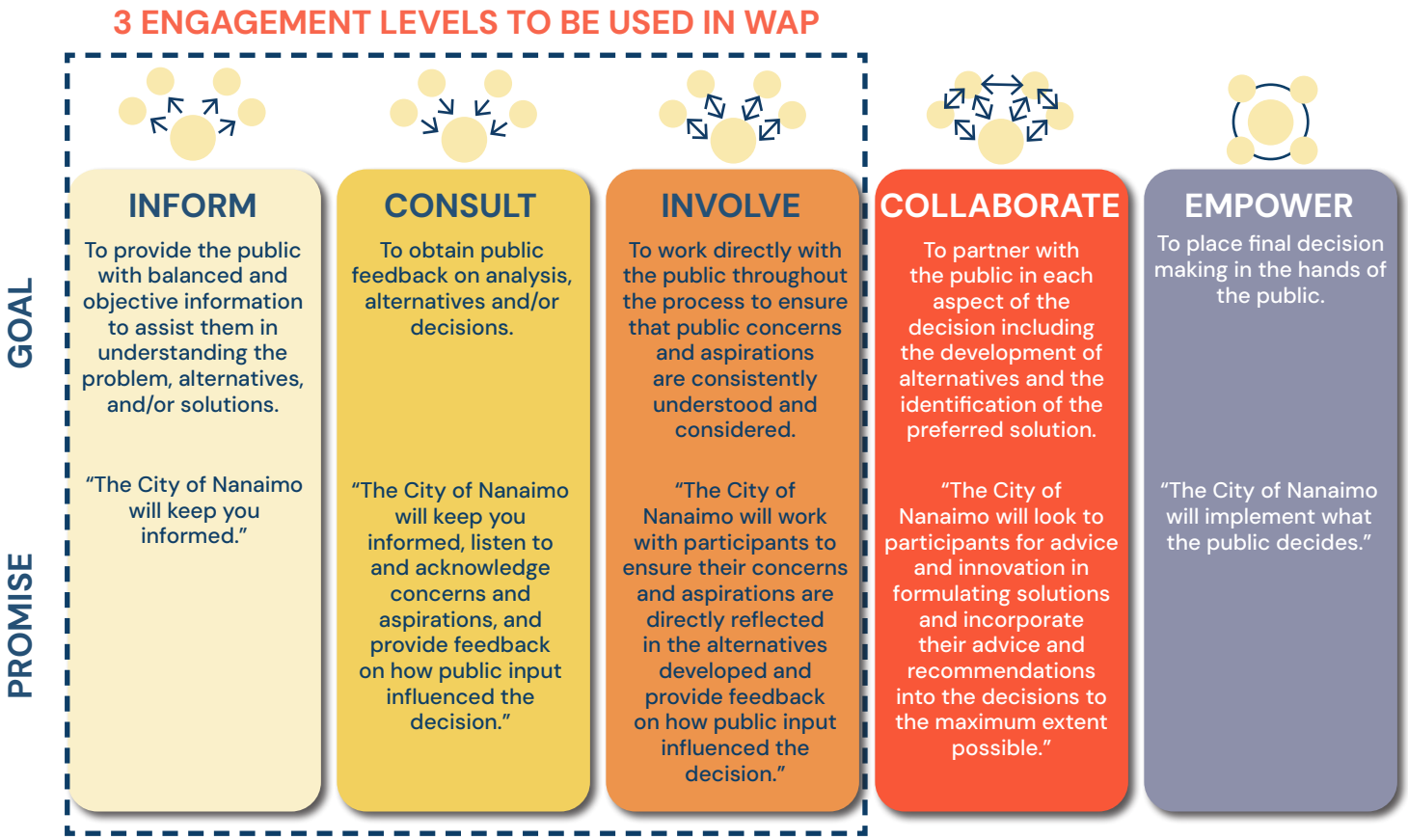
The engagement process for the WAP incorporates International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) principles throughout its various stages, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to public participation by:

- maintaining clarity of purpose,
- 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.

The process began at the "Inform" level of the IAP2 spectrum, providing balanced and objective information to help community members understand the issues, alternatives, and potential solutions related to the Complete Communities work. As the process continued, it moved into the "Consult" and "Involve" levels of the spectrum. The Project Team obtained public feedback on the analysis, alternatives, and decisions through structured feedback mechanisms such as surveys and focus group discussions.

Figure 4: IAP2 Levels of Engagement



OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS

The City of Nanaimo promoted engagement opportunities for Phase 3 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 January 12th and February 1st, 683 people were engaged through the following activities and methods:

- Online & hardcopy survey x1
- Virtual Workshops x2

2,425 PEOPLE DIRECTLY ENGAGED THROUGHOUT PHASE 1, 2 & 3

WHO PARTICIPATED?

BY THE NUMBERS

A total of 683 people participated in the Woodgrove area engagement process for Phase 3, comprising 659 survey respondents and 24 workshop attendees across two virtual sessions.

Survey demographics for Phase 3 yielded similar results as earlier phases; respondents were primarily Nanaimo residents who visit Woodgrove for shopping, activities, services, or transit purposes. 163 survey respondents noted they lived within the study area. The age distribution was balanced between 20-65+ years, though youth and teenagers were notably underrepresented again. Non-Nanaimo participants primarily came from the Regional District of Nanaimo and the District of Lantzville.

Figure 6: Who Participated Results



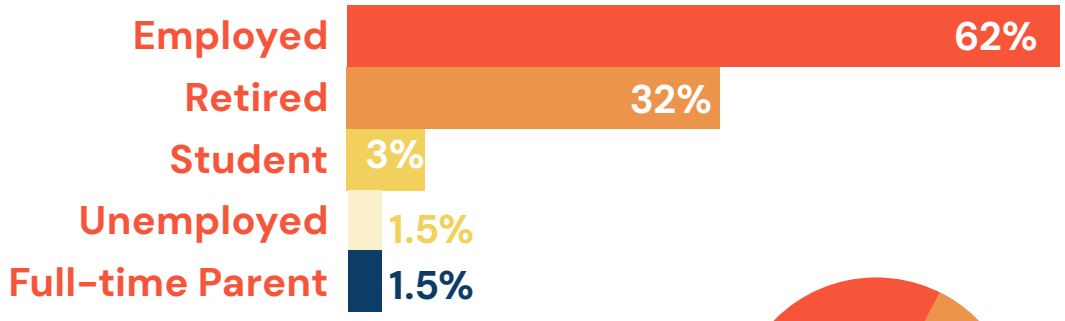
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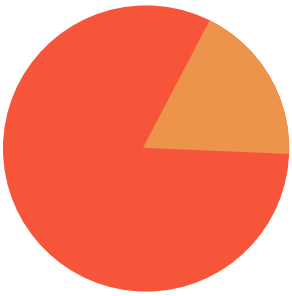
368 PEOPLE ENGAGED WITH THE PROJECT **FOR THE FIRST TIME** DURING PHASE 3





99% aged 20 to 65+ years old

teenagers notably underrepresented in survey responses & workshop attendance



80% owners

20% renters

WHAT WE ASKED

SURVEY & VIRTUAL SESSIONS

Both the survey and the virtual sessions began by providing information on the project process to date, followed by the engagement results from Phase 2. Participants had indicated preference for recommendations building towards Scenario 3, which aims to achieve the highest level of community completeness.

Policy recommendations were presented at a high-level for participant input. Participants were prompted to indicate their support/opposition for 31 of the recommended policies, as well as suggested changes, if applicable. Some of the recommendations were not included for public input due to their technical or regulatory nature.

The two virtual sessions closed with a brief overview of funding mechanisms and a nod to other parts of the report, such as recommended actions to realize the policies, a monitoring framework to track success, and design guidelines to guide form and character.

The survey was administered online and made available via hard copy.

#	RECOMMENDATION	SUPPORT	DO NOT SUPPORT	SUGGEST CHANGES
1	Woodgrove will be recognized as the city's northern gateway and a major destination for shopping and business, serving both the city and surrounding region.			
2	Woodgrove will become one of the city's busiest and most vibrant areas, with a wide variety of buildings, activities, and land uses.			
3	Woodgrove will be a complete community where people can live, work, and access daily services without needing to leave the area.			
4	Woodgrove will offer a range of services that support health, recreation, culture, social connection, and access to green spaces for residents and visitors.			
5	Woodgrove will include a mix of low, mid-rise and high-rise building forms to provide homes close to jobs, support diverse needs, and make the best use of local services and infrastructure.			
6	Woodgrove will be designed to support walking, cycling, rolling and public transit, helping reduce the need to drive.			
7	Woodgrove will offer a mix of rental and ownership housing to give people more choices in where and how they live.			

#	RECOMMENDATION	SUPPORT	DO NOT SUPPORT	SUGGEST CHANGES
8	Woodgrove will include affordable housing within new developments to support people with different income levels.			
9	Woodgrove will include homes with a mix of bedroom types (i.e. studio, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom and 3+bedroom) to meet the needs of individuals, couples, and families.			
10	Woodgrove will incorporate space and amenities for all modes of transportation, including transit, cycling, rolling and pedestrians.			
11	Relocate the current transit exchange to a central location within the Woodgrove Urban Centre, to better support bus service within the Woodgrove Urban Centre, city and region.			
12	Transit service to and within Woodgrove will be improved as the area grows, with more frequent buses and better connections.			
13	Woodgrove will include improvements to existing roads as well as the construction of new roads to provide a complete road network.			
14	Island Hwy (19A) through the Woodgrove Urban Centre will transition to accommodate all modes of transportation with an enhanced streetscape character.			
15	Woodgrove will include traffic calming features like speed bumps, raised crosswalks, sidewalk extensions and textured cross-walks to make streets safer and more pleasant.			
16	Woodgrove will include new active mobility routes, intended solely for walking, cycling and other rolling modes of transportation, to provide mid-block connections and reduce travel distances.			
17	Intersections will be improved to better serve all road users by adjusting traffic signals and turning lanes.			
18	New developments will be designed to be compact, in mixed-use building forms, with the majority of parking underground, to support resident's accessing their daily needs within a 15-minute walk and cycle.			
19	At least 20% of land in Woodgrove will be dedicated to parks, trails, plazas, trees, recreation, and other public spaces.			
20	Public spaces in Woodgrove will be designed to be walkable, shared, accessible and integrated with housing and businesses, with creative use of space like rooftop play areas.			
21	Woodgrove will include a mix of public and private parks, trails, and open spaces for recreation, socializing, and nature, designed for people of all ages and abilities.			

#	RECOMMENDATION	SUPPORT	DO NOT SUPPORT	SUGGEST CHANGES
22	Woodgrove will support a mix of recreation, culture and wellness facilities of varying sizes and functions, to support future population growth and provide recreational, culture and wellness opportunities for residents, employees and visitors.			
23	Woodgrove will include cultural spaces such as art studios, theatres, performance areas, and creative gathering places to support a vibrant community.			
24	Woodgrove will include a new elementary school, to meet the needs of School District 68's Long Range Facility Plan.			
25	Woodgrove will include a variety of shops and services to meet the daily needs of residents, workers, and visitors.			
26	Commercial spaces in Woodgrove will be located within mixed-use buildings to support walking, cycling, and transit use.			
27	Woodgrove will support a compact, mixed-use building form, with ground-floor commercial uses and residential and/or office and/or institutional above.			
28	Woodgrove will support a mix of businesses that create jobs, such as offices, shops, restaurants, hotels, and child care centres.			
29	Woodgrove will support a mix of commercial floor plate sizes to attract a diverse range of tenants, and to provide diversity and adaptability to future market demands (including small-scale retailers).			
30	Woodgrove may include an Entertainment District with restaurants, cafés, pubs, theatres, and other venues for socializing and events.			
31	Woodgrove will support office spaces designed to meet the changing needs of businesses and promote job growth.			

WHAT WE LEARNED

PARTICIPANT SUPPORT

Overall trends indicated very strong support (between 70 and 90% of participants total) across all 31 statements.

Support was highest for the following recommendations (listed by order of popularity, with at least 87% of participants indicating support for each):

- *#25 Woodgrove will include a variety of shops and services to meet the daily needs of residents, workers, and visitors.*
- *#4 Woodgrove will offer a range of services that support health, recreation, culture, social connection, and access to green spaces for residents and visitors.*
- *#22 Woodgrove will support a mix of recreation, culture and wellness facilities of varying sizes and functions, to support future population growth and provide recreational, culture and wellness opportunities for residents, employees and visitors.*
- *#12 Transit service to and within Woodgrove will be improved as the area grows, with more frequent buses and better connections.*
- *#28 Woodgrove will support a mix of businesses that create jobs, such as offices, shops, restaurants, hotels, and child care centres.*
- *#20 Public spaces in Woodgrove will be designed to be walkable, shared, accessible and integrated with housing and businesses, with creative use of space like rooftop play areas.*



STRONGEST SUPPORT FOR:

1. Shops & services close to home
2. Parks, recreation, & cultural amenities
3. Improved transit & active transportation
4. Walkable, mixed-use public spaces
5. Diverse housing options

PARTICIPANT CONCERN

Concern was highest for the following recommendations (listed by order of popularity, with 12 to 20% of participants indicating concern for each):

- *#15 Woodgrove will include traffic calming features like speed bumps, raised crosswalks, sidewalk extensions and textured cross-walks to make streets safer and more pleasant.*
- *#11 Relocate the current transit exchange to a central location within the Woodgrove Urban Centre, to better support bus service within the Woodgrove Urban Centre, city and region.*
- *#14 Island Hwy (19A) through the Woodgrove Urban Centre will transition to accommodate all modes of transportation with an enhanced streetscape character.*
- *#2 Woodgrove will become one of the city's busiest and most vibrant areas, with a wide variety of buildings, activities, and land uses.*
- *#8 Woodgrove will include affordable housing within new developments to support people with different income levels.*
- *#6 Woodgrove will be designed to support walking, cycling, rolling and public transit, helping reduce the need to drive.*

QUESTIONS & CONCERNS FOR:

1. Building height (over 6 storeys) & density
2. Traffic impacts, congestion & parking
3. Transit exchange relocation (desire for details)
4. Competition with downtown
5. Use/access of "private parks"

KEY THEMES

Written comments highlighted recurring themes around traffic impacts, height and density, parking, and protecting Nanaimo's character. These themes closely echoed what was heard during the previous two phases of engagement, but provided further nuance for certain details.

COMMUNITY VISION

A More Complete, Vibrant Centre

People largely agree with creating a more complete, vibrant, urban centre. They vocalized some fears of Woodgrove becoming 'too busy' or overly urban, and several participants stated their desire not to draw economic activity away from the downtown core. Many supported building walkable, village-like amenities.

HOUSING

Varied Housing Types & Tenure

Strong support was evident regarding a mix of housing types and tenure to make housing more attainable for families and young people.

High Rise Buildings

Building heights were a source of contention, with several people vocalizing opposition to high rise buildings, indicating a preference for 6-8 storeys maximum instead.

Defining Affordable Housing

Some people also asked for clarification of the term 'affordable housing' and how it would be implemented in the future.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

Improvements & Flow

Strongest support was vocalized for intersection improvements, building out a complete road network, and improving active mobility routes.

Skepticism Towards Multi-Modal Options

Reduction of vehicle capacity and parking availability made some folks nervous, with a few pleas "not to forget about the drivers!". Seniors cited their appreciation towards driving and many expressed skepticism about traffic calming measures, while cyclists requested safer bike lanes and slower routes. Many people across the survey were against the suggestion of speed bumps.

Transit Exchange Relocation

Some confusion was noted about relocation of the transit exchange, and many expressed a desire for more details.

PARKS, GREEN SPACE & PUBLIC REALM

Increase Natural Areas for All

A strong desire was noted for more green space, accessible public parks, trees, plazas, and rooftop play areas. Some questioned whether the 20% parkland target was achievable, while others wanted to increase the target as much as possible. Quite a few people were confused about 'private parks', requesting further definition or clear opposition to natural areas that would be perceived as off-limits to the public. Clear preference for full public access was noted several times across the survey.

ACCESS TO DAILY NEEDS

Shops, Services, & Local Businesses

Very strong support was noted for diverse neighbourhood serving shops, with mixed-use commercial buildings and businesses that would increase employment. Local businesses were noted as needing economic support in Woodgrove among the big box retailers, while other expressed desires for more retail chains.

Entertainment District

Concerns about a future entertainment district pulling nightlife and vibrancy away from the downtown core were echoed, with a fear of noise or other unpleasant activities being brought into the Woodgrove area. Overall, some people do not want to duplicate or compete with the existing urban core.

NEXT STEPS

Phase 3 of the Woodgrove Area Plan leverages the data and feedback gathered in Phases 1 and 2 to explore and refine the emerging policies and actions, and to provide recommendations for supporting policies, design guidelines, actions, and monitoring framework. This information will be formulated into a technical document to meet the requirements of the Complete Communities grant and the *Woodgrove Area Plan*.



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