



ALBERTA
REAL ESTATE
FOUNDATION

Enabling Housing Choice Project

What We Heard Report

The Town of Bow Island

December 2022





LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

RDN acknowledges that it is located on the unceded Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada.

RDN is committed to supporting the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, and believes in the need for meaningful engagement and consent with Indigenous stakeholders in the community.

PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the Alberta Real Estate Foundation for their funding and support of this project. We would also like to express our appreciation for the Town of Bow Island for hosting the engagement event and helping the Enabling Housing Choice tackle housing diversity and choice.

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THE PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to present a summary of the process, overall ideas, opinions and concerns provided by residents in the Town of Bow Island. Engagement was done through an online survey conducted between November 3 to November 17, 2022 and an engagement event was conducted on November 30, 2022.

The purpose of the online survey and engagement event was to inform residents and seek feedback regarding the creation of a Land Use Study on the Westview Lands lot in the Town. Several questions were asked in the online survey to obtain opinions of the residents of Bow Island to help formulate three land use concepts. These were presented at the engagement event with numerous activities to understand what the residents liked and disliked about the land use concepts, and to help garner community buy-in and support for housing diversity. This document and the information contained herein was reported by the Sustainable Housing Initiative (SHI). It has not been endorsed by the Town of Bow Island, nor does it necessarily reflect the views of the Town of Bow Island.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The desired outcomes for the online survey and engagement event was to:

- » Ensure that community members were up to date and informed on the Enabling Housing Choice project's plan to assist the Town of Bow Island with the concept generation of the Westview Lands lot.
- » Obtain opinions from the residents of Bow Island on the land use concepts and open the discussion to gain feedback on land use features that could be changed or improved.
- » Garner community buy-in and support for housing diversity to increase education and openness to housing diversity and development.

ONLINE SURVEY

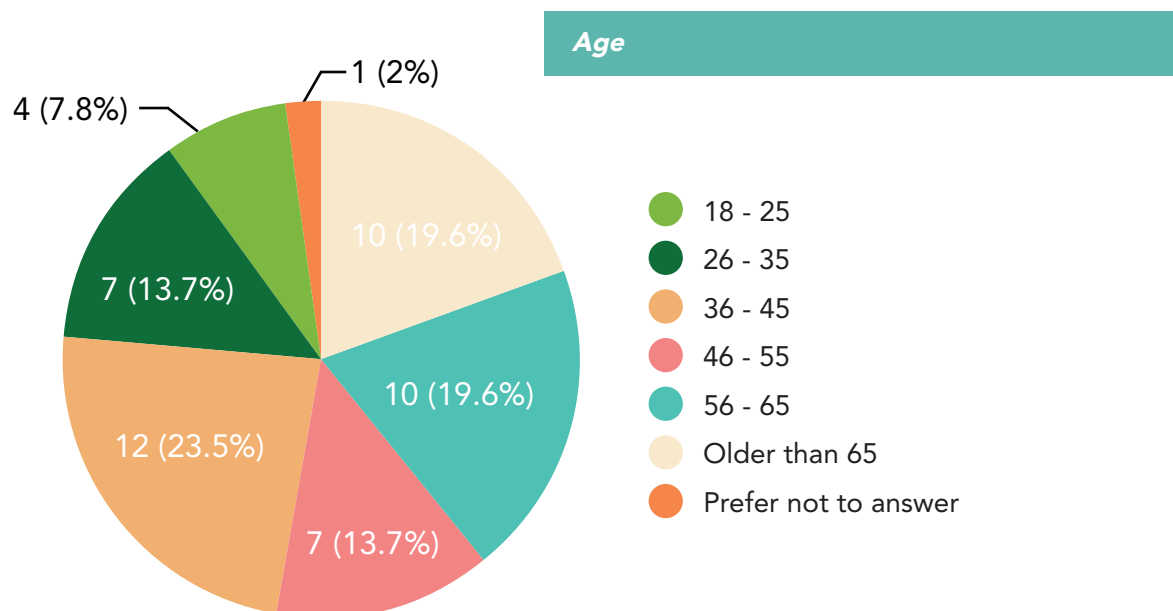
The online survey was conducted through a Google Form that was open for a span of two weeks. This survey asked specific questions surrounding housing choice and diversity which was then used to refine the design and layout of the Westview Lands lot, and helped determine the types of housing needed in the town. The survey consisted of ten questions on housing diversity for the Westview Lands lot, and a section to collect demographic information.

DEMOGRAPHICS

To obtain a well-rounded understanding of who we may be creating housing diversity for, we collected demographics of the participants.

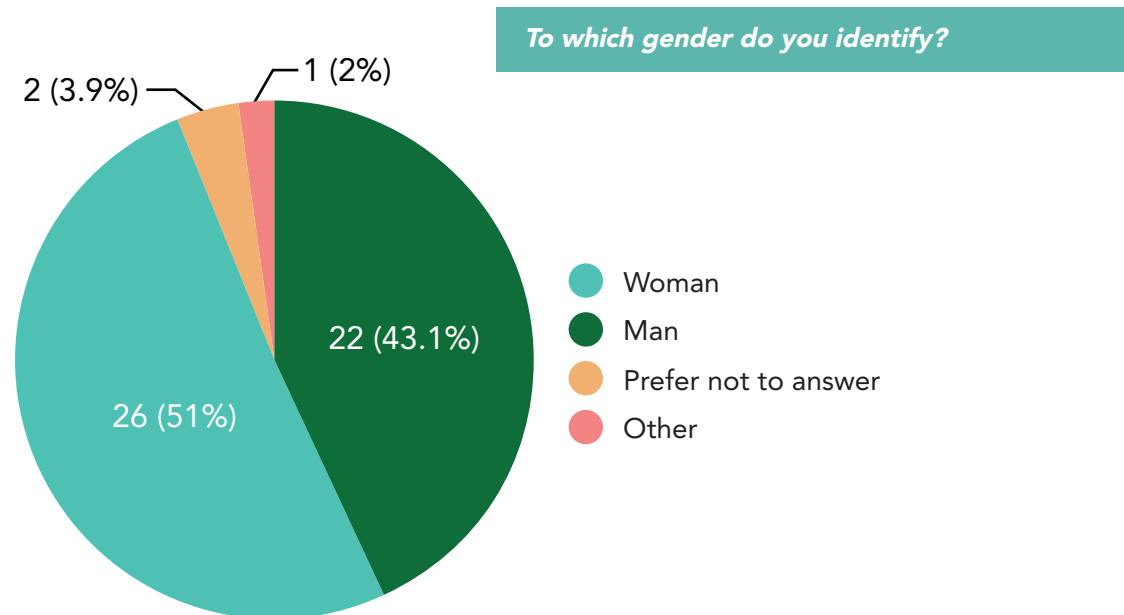
Age

The population base for the survey were older individuals with more than half of the participants being older than 36 years of age.



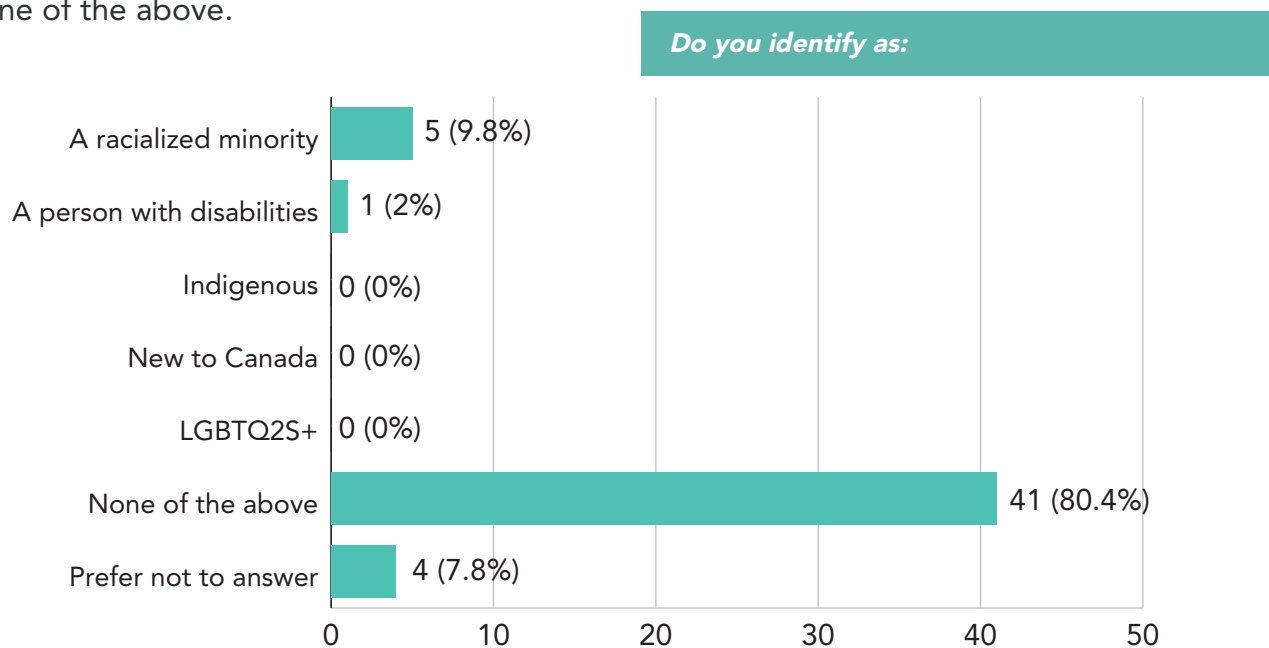
Gender Identity

Participants had the choice to pick man, woman, other with short answer, or prefer not to answer. The survey pool had generally an even split between man and woman, with two people preferring not to answer.



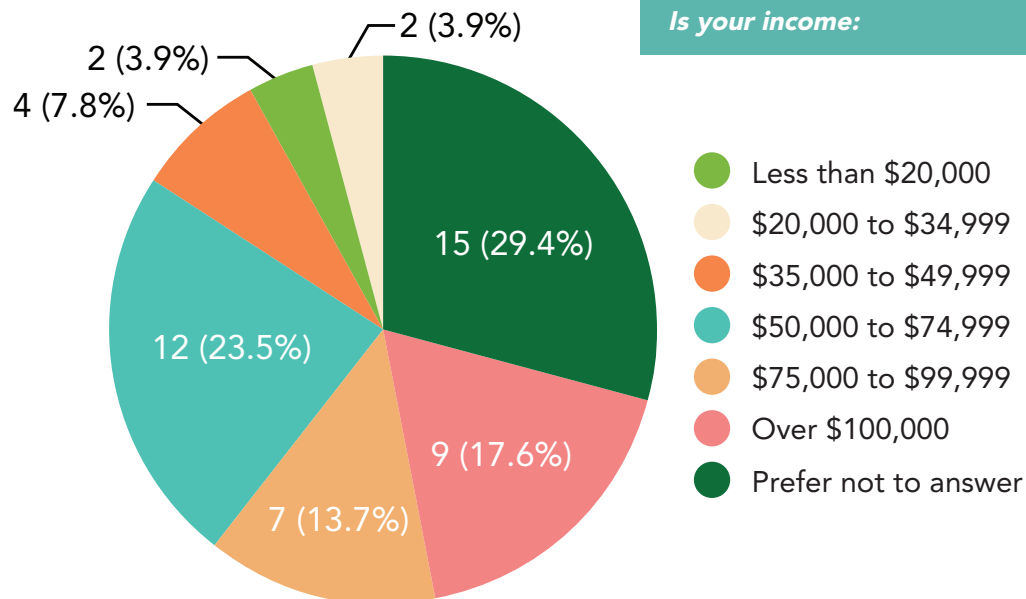
Identity

There were 5 participants who identified as a racialized minority with 1 participant who identified as a person with disabilities. Majority of participants answered that they were none of the above.



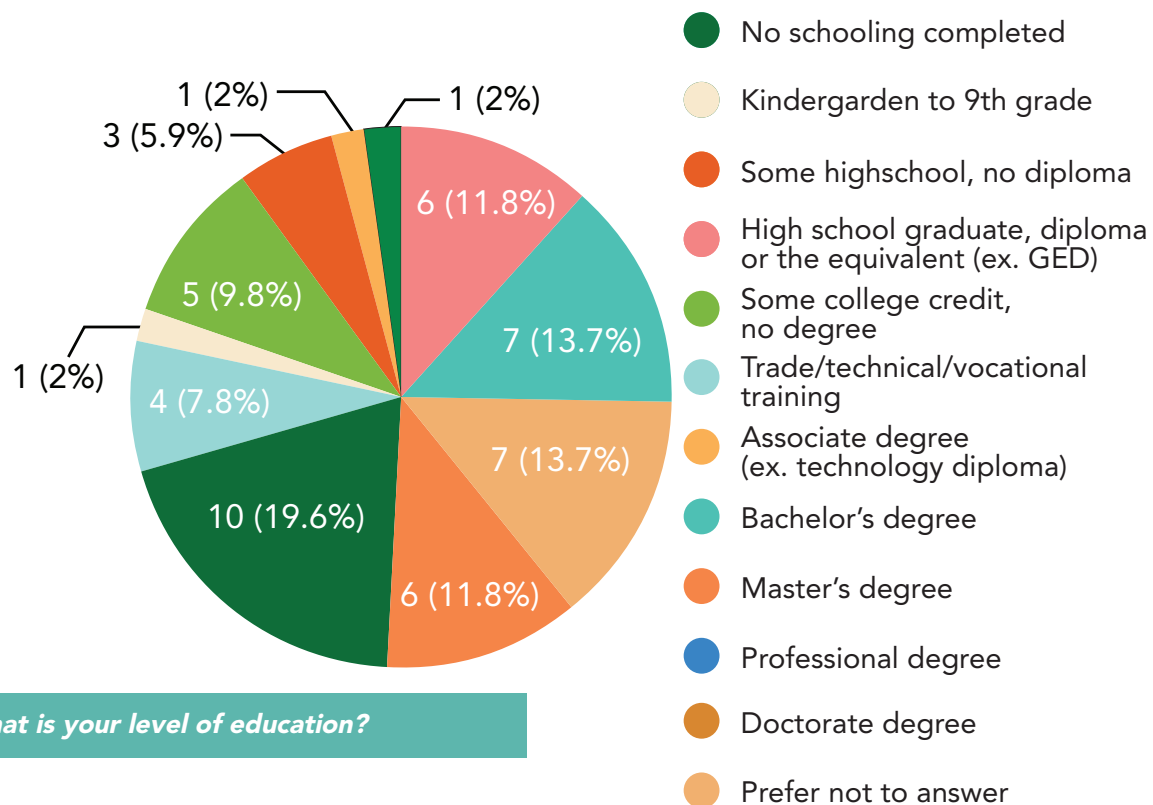
Income

Over half of the participants make an income of more than \$50,000; although 29.4% of participants chose not to answer.



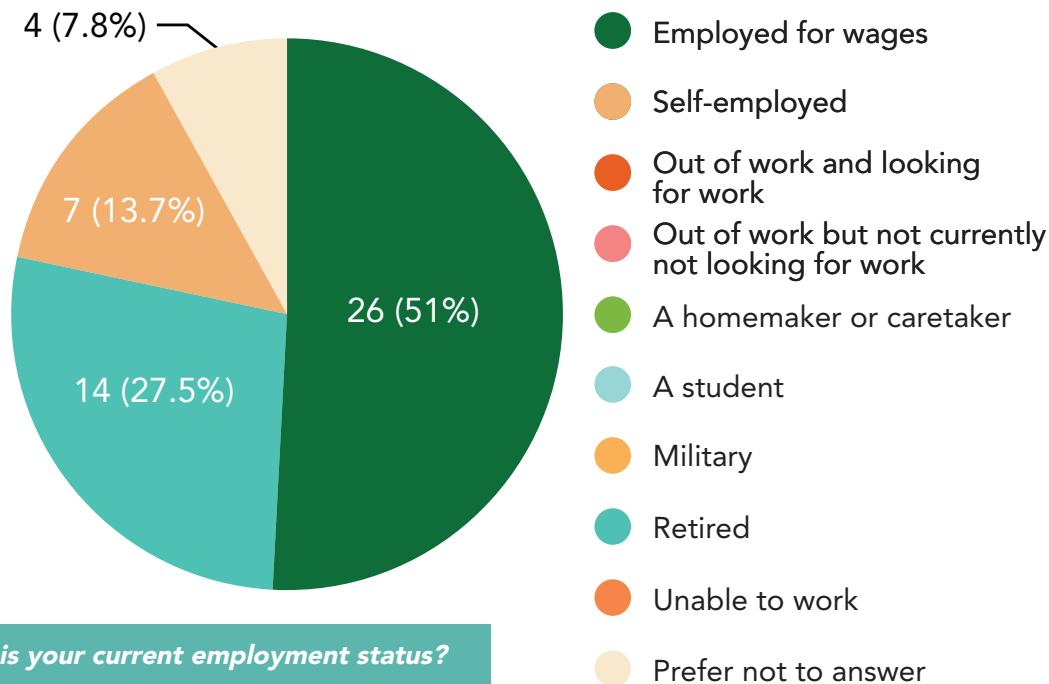
Education

The level of education is very spread out amongst the participants; although most participants have received some type of education.



Employment Status

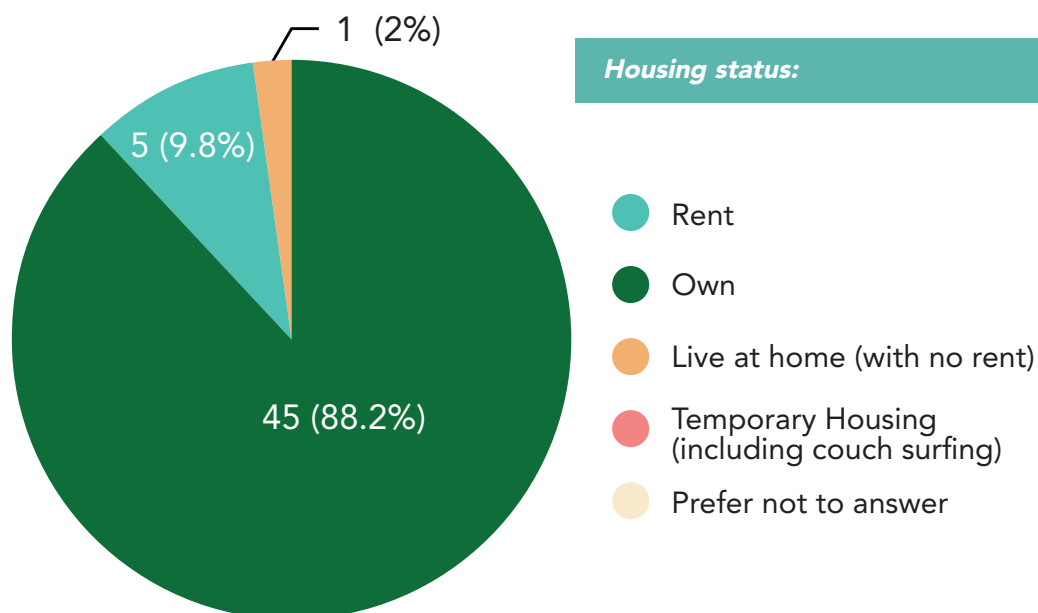
Half of the participants are employed for wages, with a large proportion of participants being retired which is reasonable for the age range of the participants.



What is your current employment status?

Housing Status

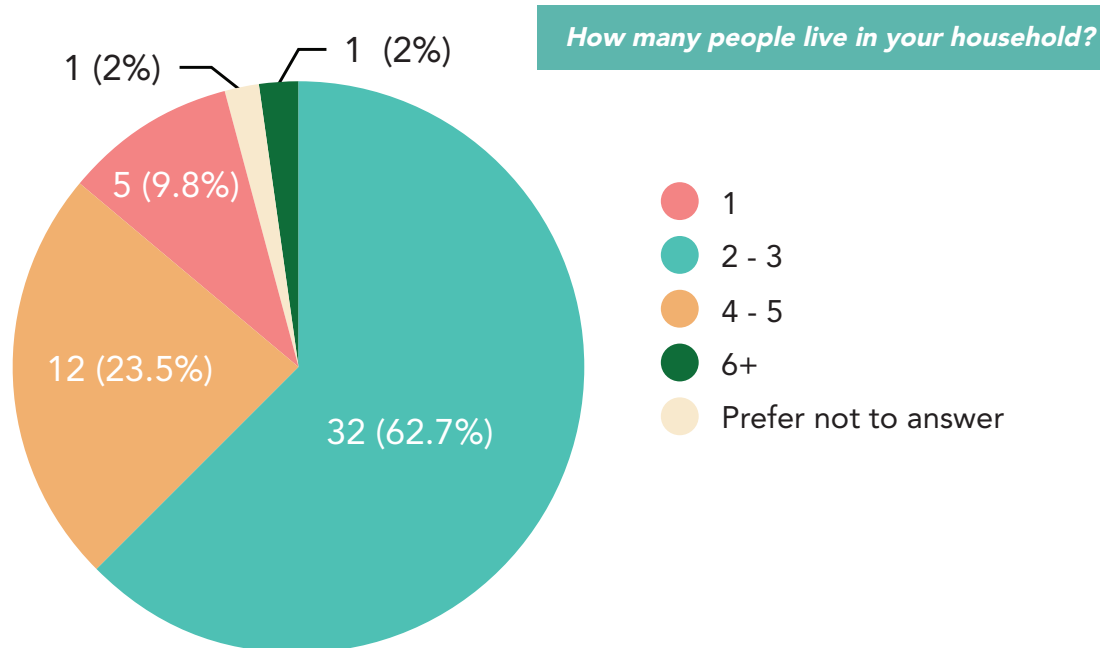
Out of 51 participants, 45 participants own their home, with 5 participants renting, showing a disproportionate amount of people who own in Bow Island and indicates a potential lack of diverse housing options for rental.



Housing status:

Household Number

Majority of participants live with only 2-3 people in their household, yet many of the homes in Bow Island are single-detached, showing the need for housing choice. For households that only have 2-3 people, there is a range of housing types that people could choose from to better fit their needs. These could be grandparents who may want to downsize from their single detached home because they do not have the energy to do a lot of maintenance or young couples who want to rent so they could test out living on their own.



HOUSING QUESTIONS

The housing questions provided in the survey sought to obtain information around the types of housing that survey participants would like to see in their town. Additionally, survey questions were designed to obtain insights regarding whether residents believed there are currently the types of amenities that are needed to support housing choice and diversity.

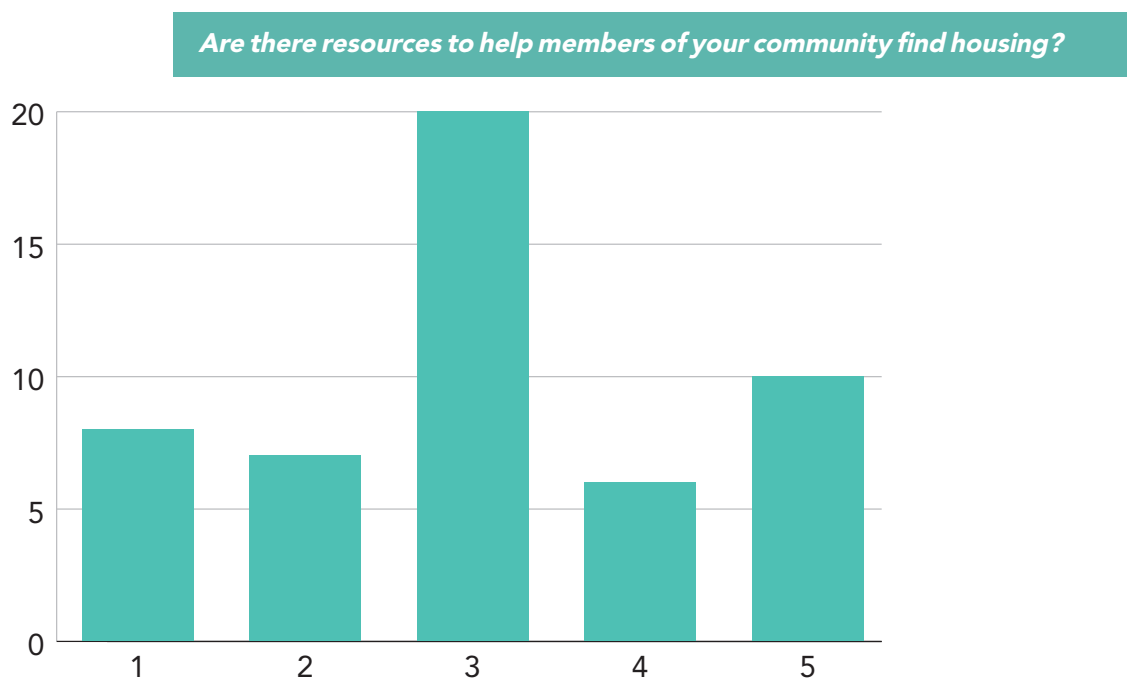
On a Scale of 1 to 5...

The first set of five questions were answered on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 representing fair, and 5 representing excellent.

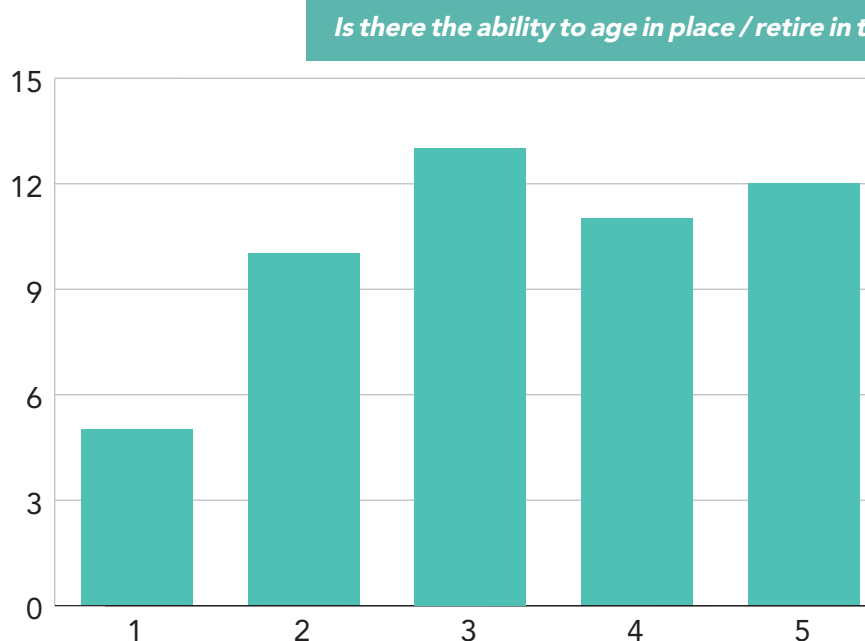
Majority of participants responded that there are enough bedrooms for their family, with 64.7% of participants responding with "excellent." Although there are only a few participants who disagreed with the question, it is still important that all residents finding housing with sufficient bedroom accommodations.



When answering if there were resources to help members of the community find housing, the responses were quite spread out, with the majority of participants responding with "3", in the middle. While these resources may be adequate, they can be improved on.



Opinions and thoughts on the ability to age in place and retire in the community varied. A portion of participants responded closer to the “excellent” end when asked if there is the ability to age in place or retire in the community; however, there is also a large portion that responded on the mid to lower range, showing there may be improvements to be made so that residents can comfortably age in place. This could mean improving housing diversity for older residents and creating a more accessible public realm.

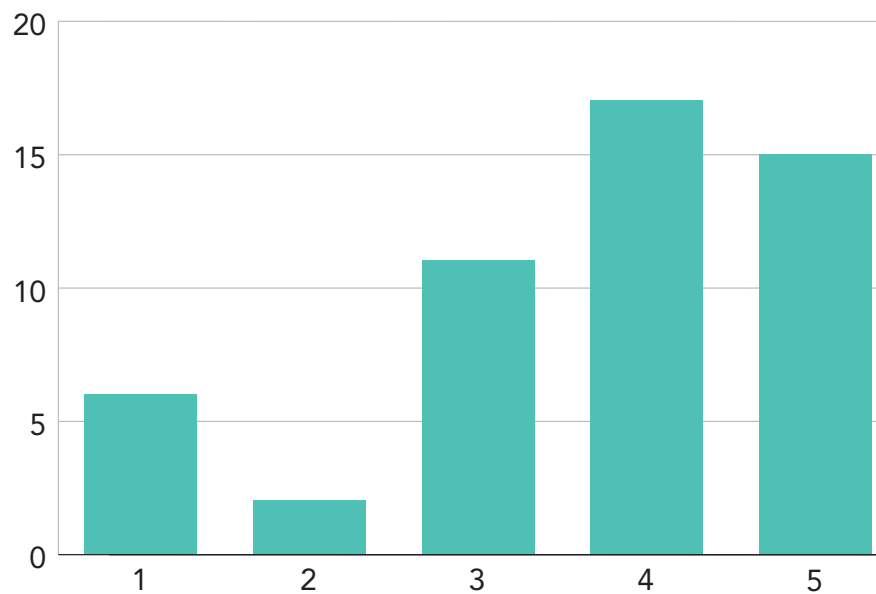


The majority of participants responded closer to the “fair” end when asked if there are housing choices for people with disabilities, showing a lack of housing diversity, but also the need for the care facility that the Town of Bow Island is currently working on providing in the community.



A large majority of the participants responded with 4 or 5, showing that there is strong access to amenities and services where they live. However, there is still a proportion of participants that responded in the mid to lower range so there is always room for improvement. By promoting accessibility to amenities and services, the Town can encourage walkability and active transportation. When there are more people on the street, the community feels safer and more lively.

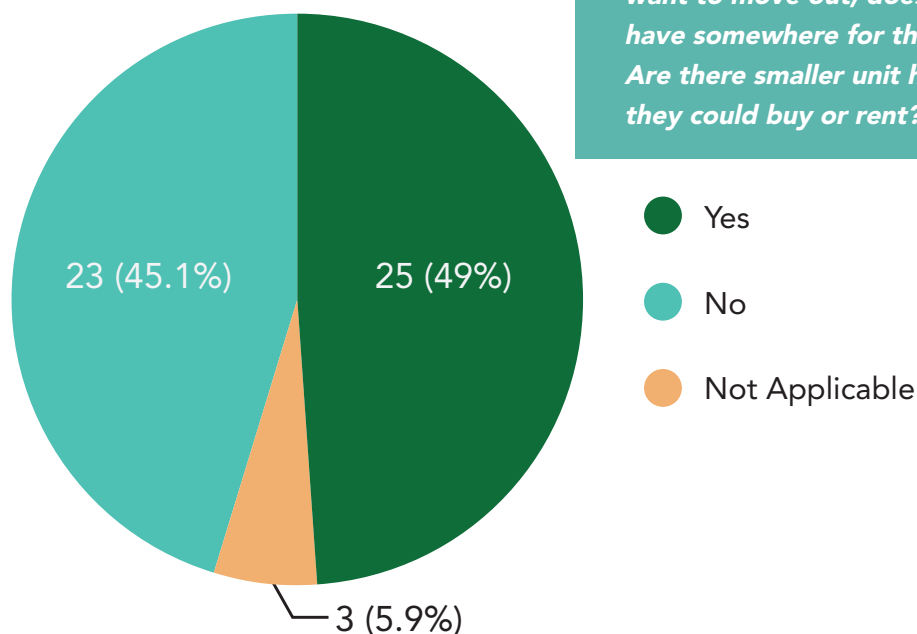
Can you access amenities and services within a walking distance?



Diversity of Unit Size

We asked participants if there are smaller unit homes that they could buy or rent. They were given the choice to choose “yes”, “no”, or “not applicable”. We framed the question in a way to show that different people have different needs. We provided context to the question, explaining that when parents are looking to retire, they may need to downsize from their single detached home. Similarly, when children grow up and become young adults who want to live on their own, they will not be able to afford a single detached home.

Giving a variety of housing options means being able to house a variety of people with different needs. Participants answered nearly evenly between “yes” and “no”, with 45.1% of participants answering that there are smaller units residents could rent or buy, and 49% of participants answering there are not.



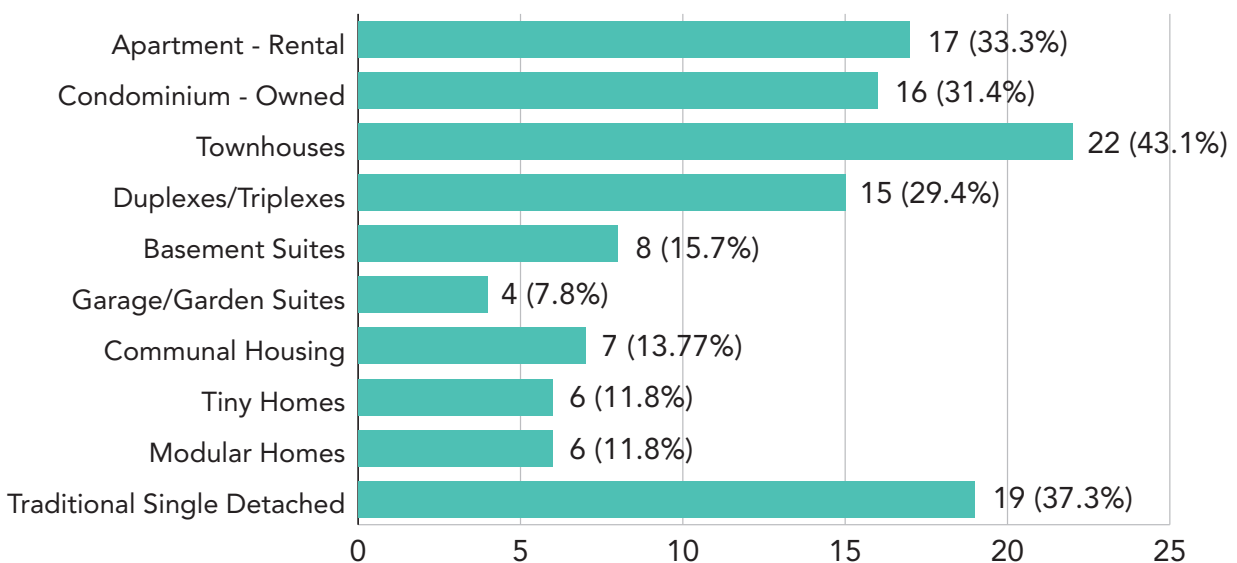
Housing Typology

We asked participants what housing they think is needed in their town. Again phrasing it in a way that humanizes housing choice, while relating it back to smaller units that could be used by relatives and friends. In this question, participants can choose multiple answers where photos were attached to show different housing typologies, which included:

- » Apartment - Rental;
- » Condominium - Owned;
- » Townhouses;
- » Duplexes/Triplexes;
- » Basement Suites;
- » Garage/Garden Suites;
- » Communal Housing;
- » Tiny Homes;
- » Modular Homes; and
- » Traditional Single Detached.

Participants believed townhouses were the most needed in their town with 22 responses. While participants responded with “traditional single detached houses” being second most needed, “rental apartments” and “owned condominiums” were third and fourth most needed with 17 and 16 responses, respectively. The chart below shows that participants from Bow Island do see a need for housing diversity and are open to having it in their town.

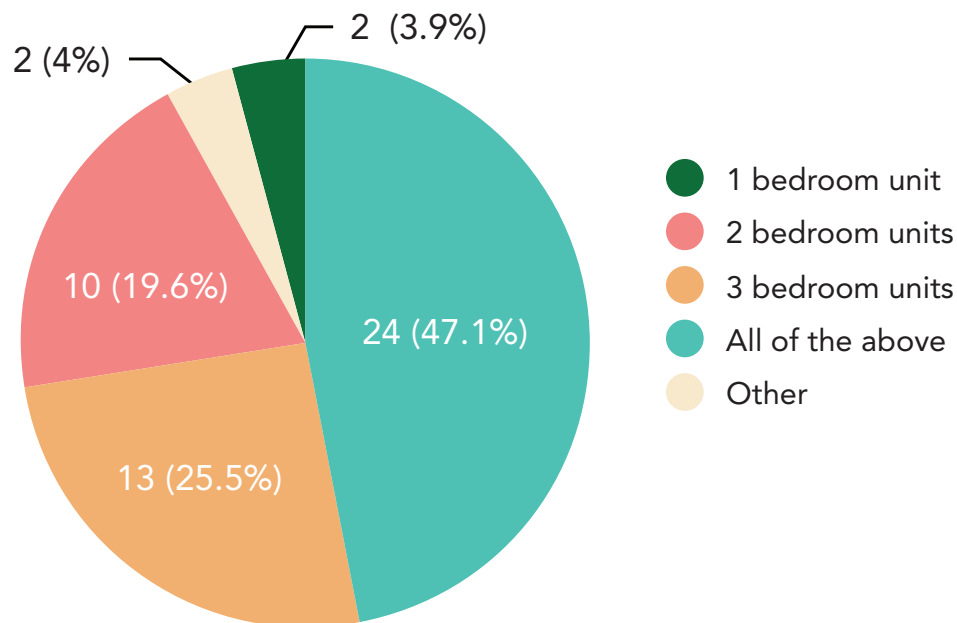
What housing do you think is needed in your town, especially for relatives or friends that could use smaller unit homes?



Variation of Bedroom Units

In the previous question where participants were asked if there were enough bedrooms for their family on a scale of 1 (fair) to 5 (excellent), many participants stated that there were enough bedrooms; however, when they were asked how many bedrooms units were needed for their town, themselves, their family, and the people they know, 47.1% of participants answered all the above which included 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, and 3 bedroom units. "2 bedroom units" were answered second most with 25.5% of the responses and "3 bedroom units" were answered third most with 19.6% of responses, demonstrating that there is a need for a variety of the number of units in housing types.

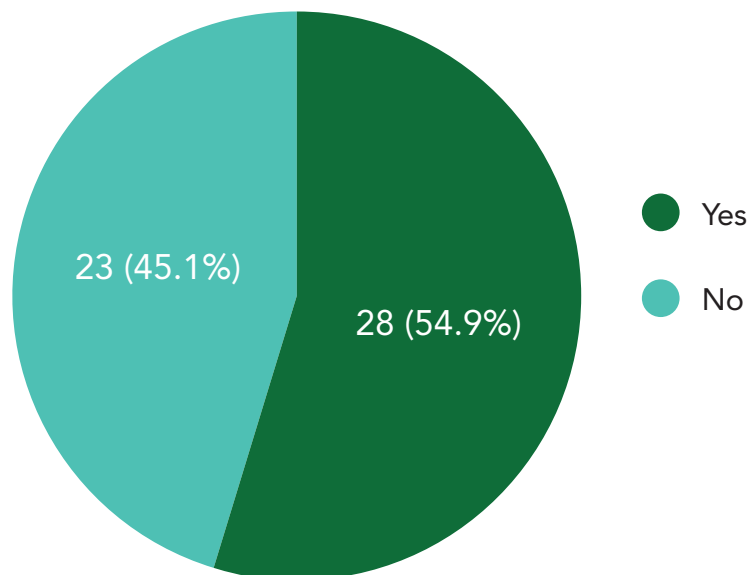
How many bedroom units do you think are needed in the town, for yourself, your family, or people you know?



Potential for Mixed Use Development

Participants were asked if they are open to considering mixed use development. We explained that mixed use development is a development that has commercial and residential development in one building. We then provided an example photo of a local café on the main floor of a building with residential apartment suites on the top floors. Mixed use development is beneficial to any community because it promotes efficient use of land and infrastructure, encourages pedestrian and bicycle travel, increases economic investment, and may increase affordable housing opportunities.

Mixed Use Development is a development that has commercial and residential development in one building. Is this something you are open to considering?



An example of mixed use development would be having a local café or bakery on the main floor of a building and having residential apartment suites on the top floors, like in the image shown here (Lower Gwynedd, 2019).

How Can Bow Island Be More Attractive?

The Town of Bow Island wanted to obtain ideas on how they can be more attractive as a community to live and work in. Participants were able to answer in the form of short answer responses, as shown in the appendix. However, we consolidated the short answers into four themes.

Housing

Many of the participants believed that creating more housing, particularly housing diversity would benefit the attractiveness of the Town. Many of the comments recommended having more:

- » Affordable rental housing;
- » New and attainable housing units;
- » Housing for all ages, particularly seniors and young families; and
- » More housing in general.

Recreation

Expanding and enhancing recreation was a large theme that participants identified. Increased recreation and amenities support housing diversity, by creating nodes of people and things to do, making a municipality more attractive and retaining its population. Participants provided ideas for recreation surrounding:

- » Creating more recreation for adults;
- » Building on walking trails and green spaces;
- » Investing in a vibrant downtown, attractive main street and commercial areas;
- » Advertising the amenities that the Town already has;
- » Hosting regular events to encourage a sense of community; and
- » Developing the infrastructure for various types of parks such as playgrounds, fitness parks, skate parks, et cetera.

Maintenance & Infrastructure

Maintenance and infrastructure was the largest theme that participants identified with nearly half the participants referring to comments related to this theme. These comments highlighted recommendations revolving around:

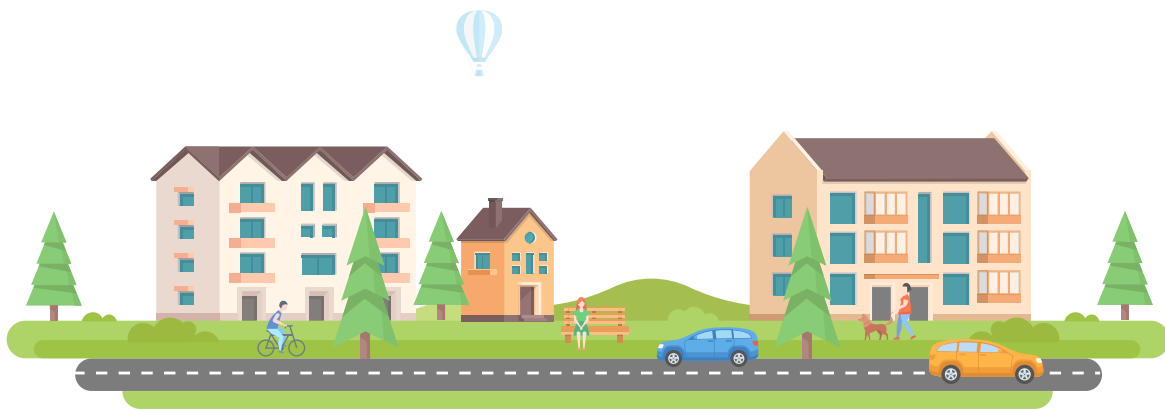
- » Providing incentives and or grants to renovate and use existing properties both commercial and residential;

- » Improving the streets, sidewalks, and infrastructure with better maintenance and connectivity;
- » Building additional infrastructure such as roads, street lights, and walking paths;
- » Addressing vacant properties and absent owners; and
- » General maintenance and cleanliness of the Town.

Affordability & Cost of Living

The last theme highlighted in this section was the high cost of living and affordability in the Town. Affordability and cost of living can substantially impact resident retention and attraction. Affordability can be intertwined with many different factors. Participants provided their comments around the following:

- » Lowering taxes and utilities;
- » Lowering cost of groceries and shopping more locally; and
- » Lowering property taxes relative to larger centers.



ENGAGEMENT EVENT

The engagement event was held at the Multiplex, a community hall in Bow Island which was a drop-in event between 6:00PM to 8:00PM on November 30, 2022. The event hosted 20 to 25 community members who were generally supportive and eager to learn about the work being done on the Westview Lands lot. The event provided snacks and water, information about the Rural Development Network, the Sustainable Housing Initiative, and the Enabling Housing Choice project, as well as three engagement activities.

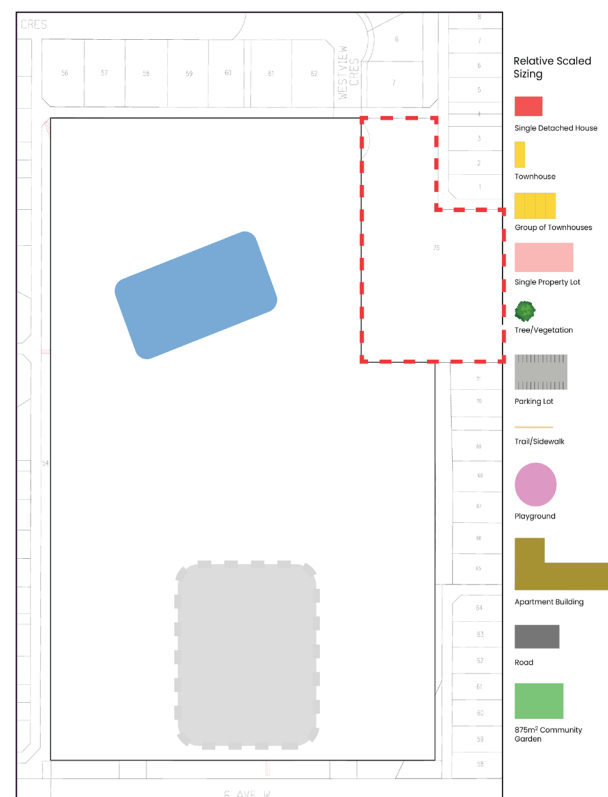
ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The three activities were Concept Ideation, Collecting the Opinions of the Concepts, and Housing Typology Education.

Concept Ideation

For this engagement activity, participants were able to come up with their own ideas on where to place amenities and features and how the development could look on the Westview Lands lot. Participants had sheets of the outline for the Westview Lands lot with its restrictions and a legend of varied, to-scale infrastructure. Pencils and pencil crayons were provided so that participants could make revisions to current concepts, or create an entirely new concept altogether.

Concept Ideation activity where community members could share their ideas.



Collecting Opinions on the Concepts

We had three concepts that were printed on large sheets of paper and placed on three separate tables for community members to wander to and analyze. Participants could add their opinions on each concept by writing on a sticky note and putting them on the respective concept. Our team members mingled with community members and explained the thought process behind each concept.



Community members engaging with the three land use concepts.

Housing Typology Education

A Housing Typology and Built Form poster board was set up with an easel in the front near a table with small stickers. Participants read about the different types of housing typology and built forms with the help of our team members explaining what they mean. Participants could add a sticker to any housing typology and built form example that they liked.



Housing Typology and Built Forms poster board.



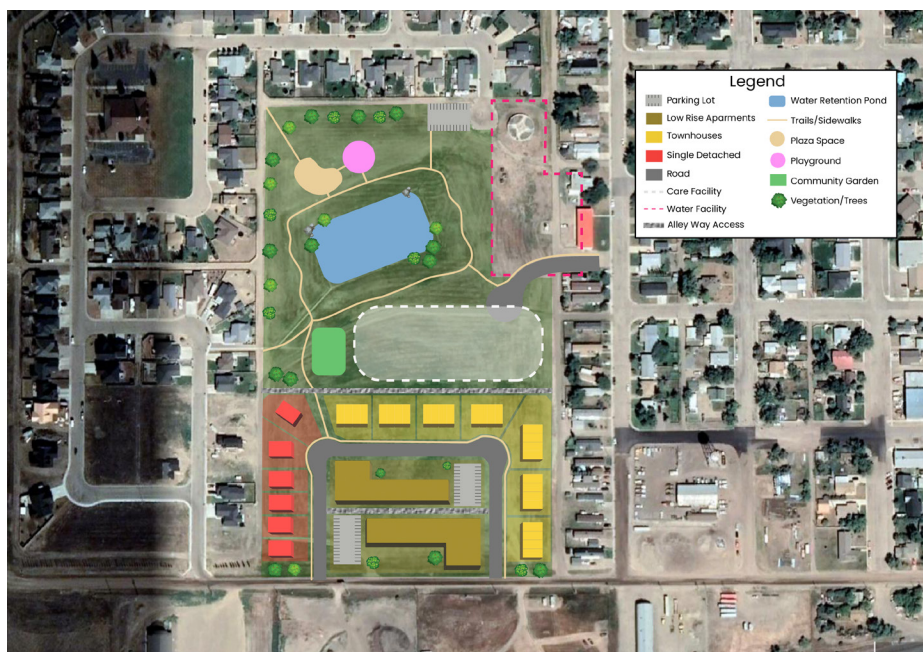
ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION

Despite not having participation for the Concept Ideation activity, a community member emailed a concept that they created after the engagement event. Their concept focused on concentrating development away from the single detached homes to the west. The community member's primary concern revolved around the impact that development would have on surrounding property values. The community member's concept included a plaza, playground, community garden and soccer field. The care facility was situated in the south of the development with housing diversity in the form of townhouses and low rise apartment buildings in the centre-east of the development with an additional road behind the mobile homes on the east.

Many community members enjoyed providing their opinions on the concepts with sticky notes and learning about different housing typologies and built forms. To collect opinions on the concepts, participants wrote their comments on yellow sticky notes to refer to Concept 1, pink sticky notes to refer to Concept 2, and blue sticky notes to refer to Concept 3.

The comments for Concept 1 were:

- » Seniors housing is important
- » Environmental concerns around former reservoir
- » Infrastructural capacity issues
- » Liked the centralized nature of facility and protection for residents
- » Liked alleyway access

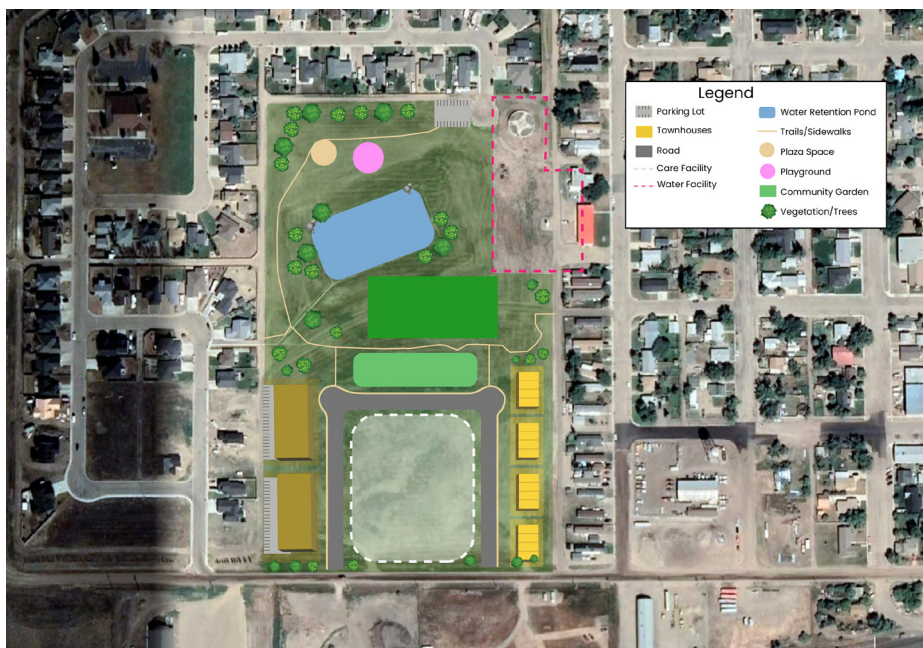


Concept 1 focuses on housing diversity and connectivity.

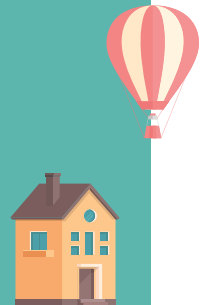


The comments for Concept 2 were:

- » Transition should be easier to swallow for neighbours
- » Too many single detached
- » North parking lot would impact quiet and increase traffic
- » Larger parking lot for all three concepts
- » Path to hospital
- » SLA and SL2+3 already provided in Town
- » Community garden pushed west of the care facility
- » Care facility should be located southwest of parcel

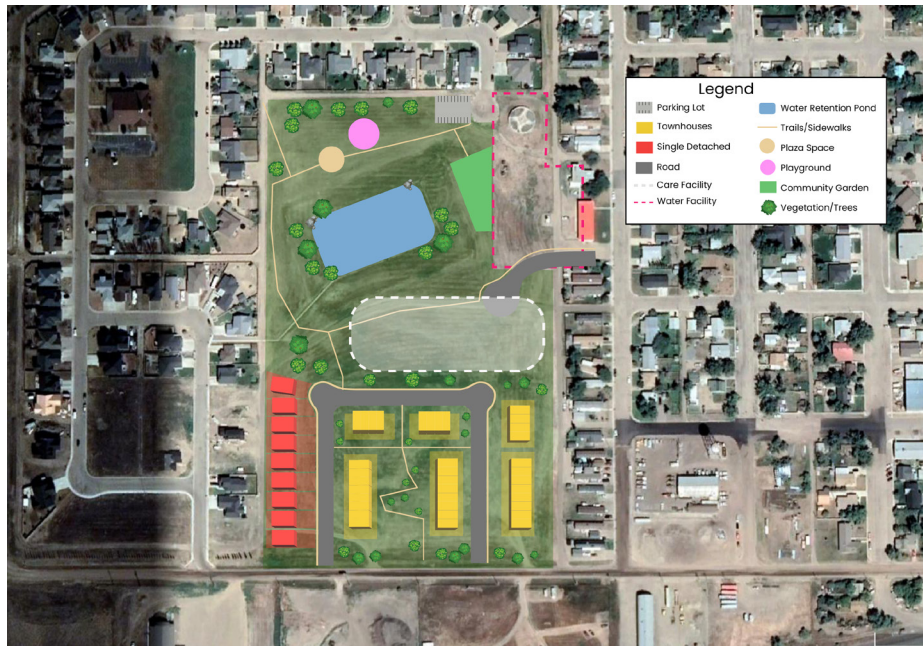


**Concept 2
provides more
open space and
walking trails.**



The comments for Concept 3 were:

- » Park benches along trails
- » Inverse townhouses with low rise apartment buildings



Concept 3 focuses on more green space activation and the recreation area



OUR CONVERSATIONS

More than the activities, the community members enjoyed conversing with our team members and the Town of Bow Island's Council. The community members had meaningful conversations with our team and let us know a lot about their opinions and concerns for the Westview Lands lot. These comments can be summarized under the following areas:

Recreation Area

- » One resident noted that the street (to the north-east) is a relatively quiet street where kids play outside. They raised concerns about increased traffic in that area if a parking lot is placed on the northeast portion of the parcel.
- » One resident stated they would like to see a larger parking lot in the northeast corner of the parcel.
- » One resident mentioned that they would like to see park benches along the pathways in the recreation area
- » A few residents expressed environmental concerns due to the former reservoir being filled in where the care facility is approximately located in Concept 1.
- » Most residents were very excited about the concepts and that their would be great benefits through the amenities (playground)
- » A few residents raised security concerns around the community garden and its maintenance.

Collecting Opinions on the Concepts

- » Several residents raised concerns about the shadow impact of a low-rise apartment on the single detached lots to the west. (In Concept 3)
- » A few residents noted that there are too many single detached lots in Concept 2
- » One resident raised concerns about snow removal in the alleyway to the west for each of the three concepts.
- » A couple residents ideated the "swapping" of the apartments and townhouses in Concept 3.
- » One resident expressed the importance of having garages in the townhouses.
- » One resident acknowledged the need for a community garden and playground, but that the Town should prioritize developing amenities based on immediate community need.
- » Several participants noted the importance of providing housing for workers in the community
- » The majority of participants preferred Concept 1 the most.

Care Facility

- » A couple residents raised concerns around dedicating money towards a care facility rather than the hospital.
- » One resident suggested relocating the care facility location to the land that is located immediately southwest of the Westview Lands lot.
- » Several residents raised concerns around what the overall development would look like.
- » A few residents noted the importance for the Town to consult with existing practitioners and nurses in the Town to make sure efforts/services are not being duplicated.



The Director of Housing, Asad Bhatti speaking with a community member.

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

ONLINE SURVEY

- » Majority of participants believed there are enough bedroom units for their families; however, still believed there should be a variety of bedroom units to accommodate different peoples' needs.
- » The general consensus did not believe there are housing choices for people with disabilities highlighting the need for universal design in housing.
- » Most participants believed townhouses are the most needed in their town, but generally participants were open to other housing options, particularly apartment buildings that can be rental or owned.
- » Opinions were even on mixed use development; half of the participants were open to it, the other half were not.
- » Participants found four themes to make Bow Island more attractive: increasing housing attainability and diversity, creating more opportunities for recreation, improving the maintenance and infrastructure, and lowering the cost of living and increasing affordability in the Town.



Promotional graphic
for online engagement
survey.



ENGAGEMENT EVENT

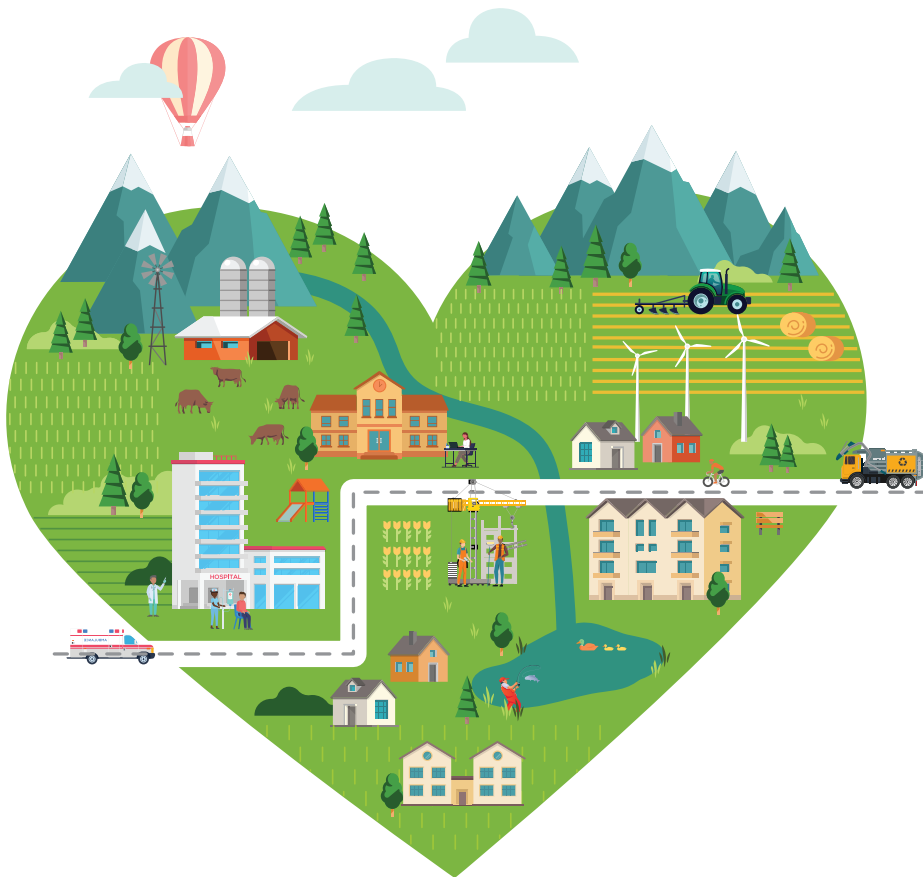
- » Several concerns were raised about the environmental considerations and analysis that is required before developing the Westview Lands lot.
- » Most participants responded positively to the recreation area and community garden, with a few concerns surrounding increased traffic and community garden security.
- » Most participants were not opposed to the care facility, but wanted to ensure the ongoing support of the hospital and that services are not being duplicated.
- » Most participants were open to embracing new housing forms such as townhouses and low-rise rental apartments.
- » Overall, most participants acknowledged the importance of providing housing for workers and new residents in the community.
- » In general, the majority of Bow Island residents responded positively to the concepts and were excited to see the development proceed. **Overall, the community members favored Concept 1 which promotes the most housing diversity and choice for residents.**



Engagement event.

NEXT STEPS

From everything that we heard, we will take into consideration, incorporate, and address concerns in our final recommendation for the land use concept. This will be supplemented by our preliminary research and analysis of the Westview Lands lot and will be informed by best practices in achieving housing diversity and garnering community support. By compiling all our research and engagement together, we can understand the needs of the community and provide the final recommendation for the Land Use Study.





ALBERTA
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FOUNDATION



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Website: <https://www.housingredefined.ca/enabling-housing-choice-project>