

This document was created using best practices in document accessibility. Should you need assistance reading or understanding this document, call 902-543-8181 or email info@modl.ca.

Special Municipal Council Meeting Agenda

Monday, October 27, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

MODL Council Chambers – 10 Allée Champlain Drive, Cookville

1. Call to Order
- 1.1 Mi'kma'ki Territorial Acknowledgement
2. Changes/Approval of Agenda (as circulated)
- 3 Staff Reports
- 3.1 Planning & Development
- 3.1.1 Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning – What We Heard Report 1-180
4. Public Input (15 Minutes)
5. In Camera - Nil
6. Adjournment



Special Council
Item # 3.1.1
Date: October 27, 2025
Authorization: T. MacEwan

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

MUNICIPAL-WIDE LAND USE PLANNING PROJECT



Planning & Development Services
October 27, 2025

Presentation Overview

- Background
- Purpose & Objectives
- How will the WWHR be used?
- Project Timeline
- How We Engaged
- What We Heard
- Key Takeaways
- Next Steps



Background

- Past public engagement took place in 2020 at the start of “MODL 2040”
- The project is now referred to as: **The Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning Project**
- Draft #1 planning documents were released in March 2025
- Council directed staff to conduct additional public engagement to help inform Draft #2 of the MPS and LUB

Purpose & Objectives

- To develop a Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB) that will apply to all unzoned lands in MODL
- This is a provincial requirement where the Statements of Provincial Interest must be addressed. These include:
 - Drinking Water
 - Flood Risk
 - Agricultural Land
 - Infrastructure
 - Housing
- To help shape future growth and address environmental protection, economic development, heritage preservation, infrastructure planning, etc.

How will the WWHR be used?

- This What We Heard Report (WWHR) summarizes all of the feedback and input that was received from residents during this phase of public engagement.
- Council will provide direction to staff for preparing Draft #2 of the MPS and LUB influenced by the findings included in this report.



**This phase of
public
engagement:
March - August
2025**

Project Timeline



HOW WE ENGAGED



Public Engagement Objectives

This phase of public engagement aimed to do the following:

- To ensure that residents are informed about the provincial requirement for land use planning
- To determine which topics included in Draft #1 raised concerns for residents
- To understand community values



Engagement Snapshot

Engage MODL webpage

10 weeks of Radio Ads

65 Social Media posts

10 Newspaper ads

3 postcards sent to 11,700 households



22 Total Public Engagement Events

7 Thursday Drop-In Sessions

12 Open Houses

2 Online Sessions

4 Stakeholder engagements



South Shore Expo

New Germany Community Cafe Drop-In

4 Farm Visits

855 Total In-person Open House & Drop-in Attendees



6 Information Boards

237 Sticky Note Comments

13 Feedback Frames (2228 Responses)

1 Survey (359 Responses)



1,123 views of the pre recorded online session

12,200 Engage Website Visitors

1,608 Newsletter Subscribers

Summary of Engagement Events

Community Open House Events

COMMUNITY & DISTRICT	LOCATION	DATE	# of participants
New Germany (District 5)	New Germany Legion	April 14, 2025	250
Newcombville (District 4)	Tri-District Fire Hall	April 24, 2025	97
Parkdale Maplewood (District 6)	Parkdale Maplewood Community Hall	May 5, 2025	17
Northfield (District 7)	Northfield Fire Hall	May 7, 2025	55
Hebbville (District 3)	Hebbville Fire Hall	May 21, 2025	29
New Germany (District 5)	New Germany Legion	May 26, 2025	20
Petite Riviere (District 1)	Petite Riviere Fire Hall	June 4, 2025	47

COMMUNITY & DISTRICT	LOCATION	DATE	# of participants
Lunenburg (District 10)	Lunenburg and District Fire Hall	June 9, 2025	31
Big Tancook Island (District 10)	Big Tancook Island Community Centre	June 11, 2025	40
Blockhouse (District 8)	Blockhouse Fire Hall	June 12, 2025	47
Conquerall Bank (District 2)	Conquerall Bank Fire Hall	June 16, 2025	19
Riverport (District 9)	Riverport Community Centre	June 23, 2025	56

Municipal Office Drop-In Events

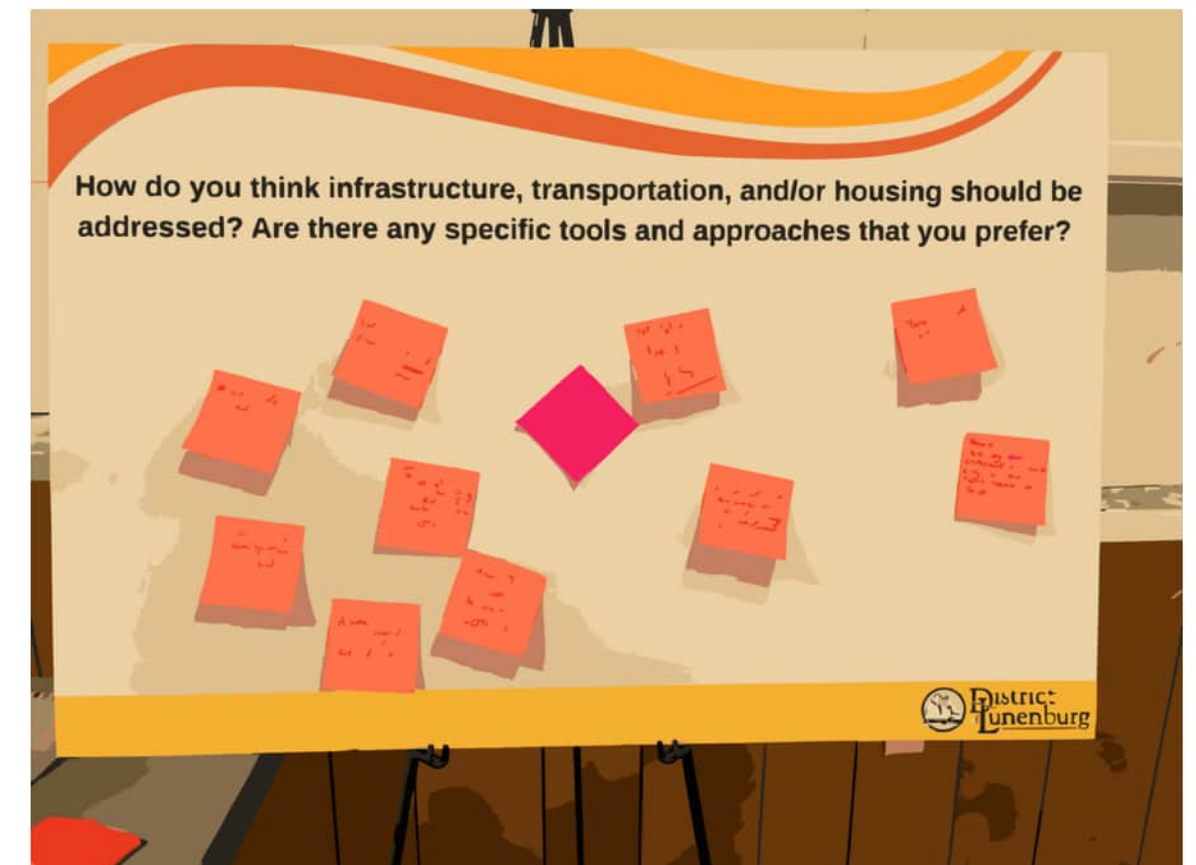
LOCATION	DATE	# of participants
Municipal Office	April 3, 2025	8
Municipal Office	April 10, 2025	45
Municipal Office	April 24, 2025	35
Municipal Office	May 1, 2025	4
Municipal Office	May 8, 2025	17
Virtual/Online	May 14, 2025	n/a
Virtual/Online	May 14, 2025	n/a
Municipal Office	May 22, 2025	18
Municipal Office	May 29, 2025	20
OVERAL TOTAL		855

Analysis Approach

- A **thematic coding approach** was applied to the qualitative feedback
- It involved assigning codes to the text that represented certain topics, ideas, or issues
- Codes were organized and grouped into categories that reflect reoccurring themes across the data
- Counting the frequency of codes helped to inform the process
- Groups of codes were interpreted to identity major themes and sub-themes from all the input

Data Limitations

- Participation was self-selected
- The same feedback could have been shared multiple times by one person
- Potential challenges for some equity-denied groups to participate
- Absence of Indigenous perspectives and input
- Additional engagement methods (ie. feedback frames, info boards) were added after some engagement sessions already took place



WHAT WE HEARD



Major Themes



What We Heard
About Planning



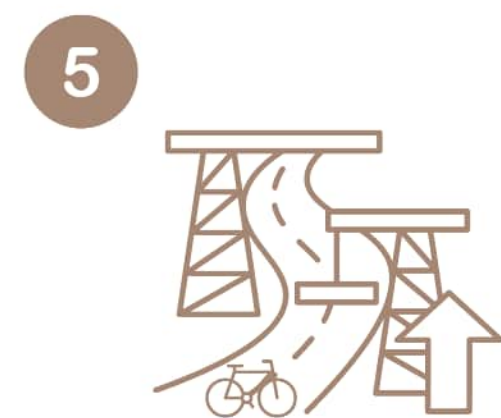
Agriculture



Environment &
Climate Change



Housing



Transportation &
Infrastructure



Economic
Development



Public
Spaces &
Culture



Zoning &
Planning
Process



Public
Engagement
Process

1

What We Heard About Planning



1 What We Heard About Planning

- Strong opposition and resistance to the proposed regulations of Draft #1
 - many saying it is a form of government overreach, and a threat to property rights and personal freedoms
- A need for planning to fit the rural context of MODL
- For implementation to be transparent, sensitive, flexible, and with community input
- Sense of skepticism about the planning process
- We heard that residents value: land autonomy, self sufficiency, and personal freedom

1 What We Heard About Planning

Differing Views



2

Agriculture



2 Agriculture

What We Heard from Residents

- Strong opposition to the proposed livestock regulations with related concerns about food security and the rising costs of living
- Many viewed the regulations as government overreach
- A few in support of regulations that address land use conflicts related to livestock
- Residents want support for farm rights, self-sufficiency, rural lifestyles, and existing agriculture operations
- A call for flexibility for farmers

2 Agriculture

What We Heard from Residents

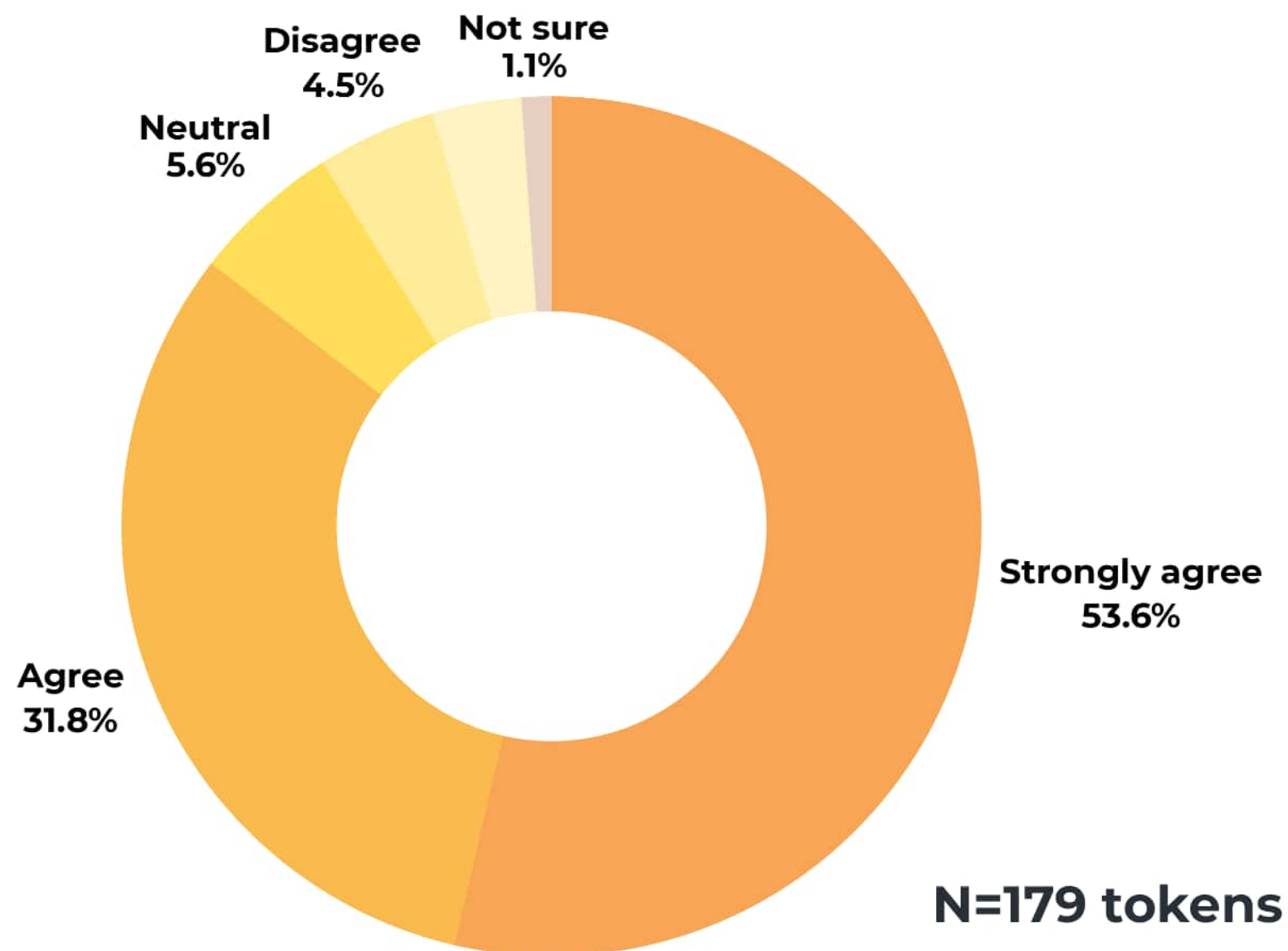
- For sustainable agriculture practices to be encouraged (i.e. homesteading, small-scale agriculture, etc.)
- General support for protecting farmland from development - while maintaining flexibility and avoiding over regulation



2 Agriculture

What We Heard from Residents

Agricultural land should be protected even if it means limiting the number of new lots that can be created, and restricting how the land can be used in the future.



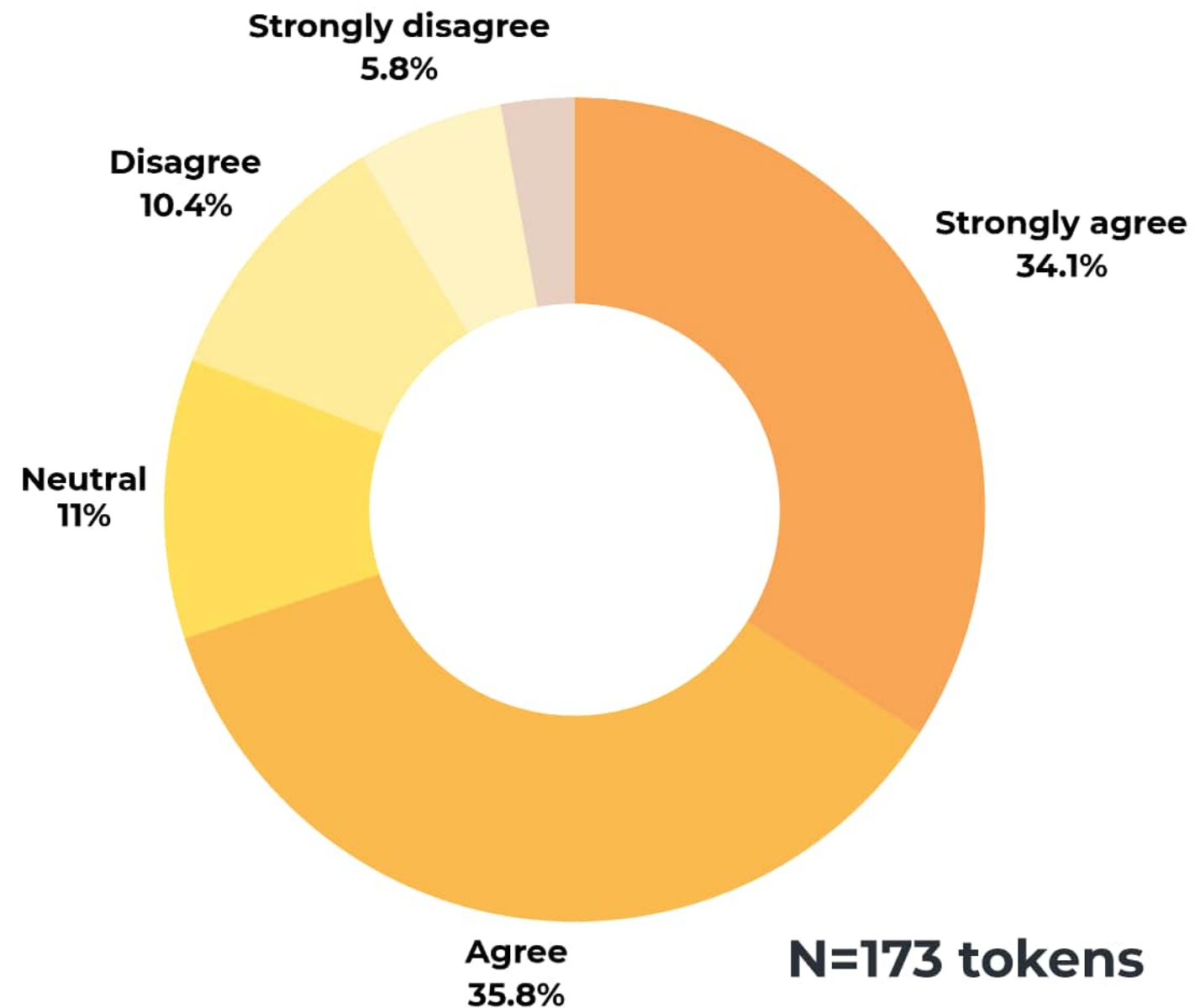
“Farmland is more precious than gold.”

“Preserve farmland. Urbanization not to squeeze out farms” and “protect farms from development to support local food.”

2 Agriculture

What We Heard from Residents

The number of livestock allowed per lot shouldn't be limited in rural areas, but it should be limited in higher density residential areas like subdivisions.



"I do not agree with the proposed land use regulations. In this economy it is important for families to provide using animals without these limitations."

"...I absolutely agree that reasonable regulations for farm animals, including minimum lot sizes and setbacks need to be in place."

2 Agriculture

What We Heard from Stakeholders (10 participants)

The session included a diverse group of farmers and small-scale producers from MODL.

- Concerns about the loss of productive agricultural land to development
 - particularly drumlins, and active farm land
- Increased pressures from development
- Growing frictions and land use conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses
 - New residents being less tolerant to farming activities
- Regulating agricultural lands
 - One-size-fits-all approach to zoning viewed as harmful
 - General support for an agricultural zone

2 Agriculture

What We Heard from Stakeholders

- Mixed views on setbacks for agricultural uses - some supported buffering sensitive lands from livestock related uses, others cautioned against penalizing farmers
- Support for setbacks for new residential uses
- Need for increased support for farmers, removing unnecessary barriers, and encouraging local food economy



3

Environment & Climate Change



3 Environment & Climate Change

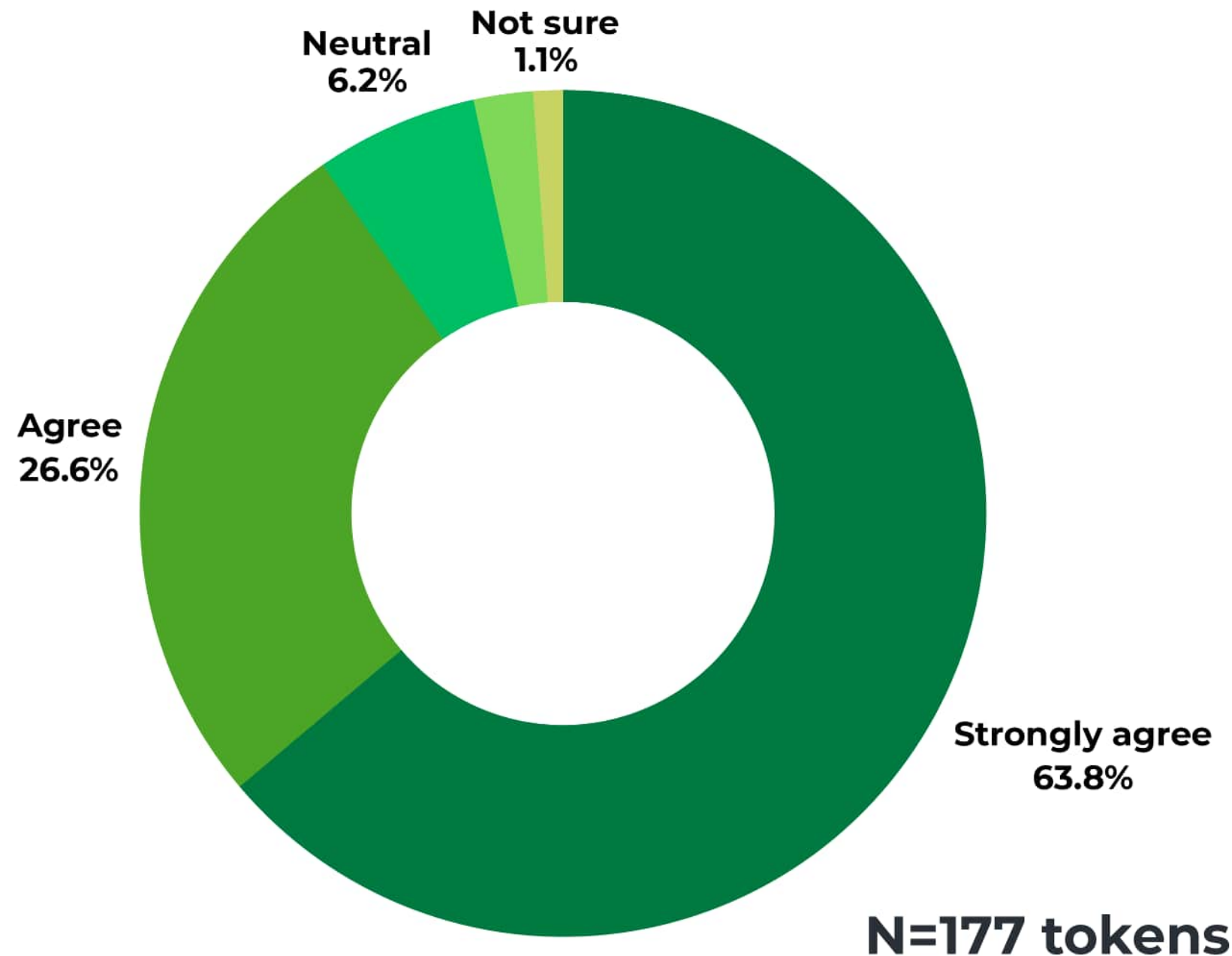
What We Heard from Residents

- Protecting the natural environment and maintaining ecological health
 - Forests, watersheds, wetlands, habitats of endangered species, coastlines, etc.
- Many emphasized the need to protect water resources from development and industrial activities
 - Concerns around increased density on lakes, loss of vegetation, and impacts on drinking water sources
- Some question climate change, while others call for urgent climate action

3 Environment & Climate Change

What We Heard from Residents

It is important to apply rules to limit development around lakes, rivers, and wetlands.



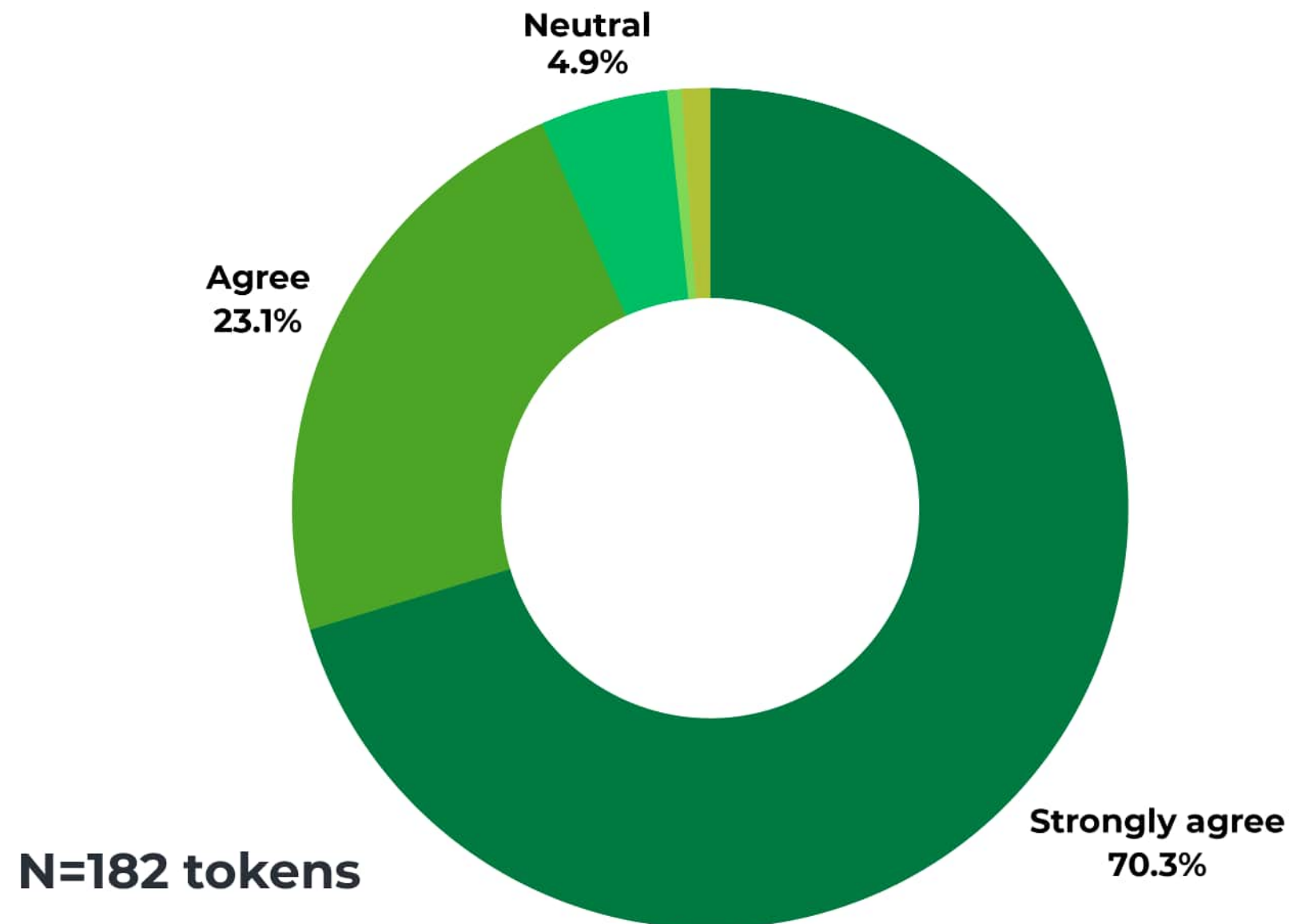
“Natural habitats and lakes should be preserved and not destroyed by population growth.”

“Yes, I agree with this but not to the extreme[...].”

3 Environment & Climate Change

What We Heard from Residents

Development around the lakes that supply drinking water to the nearby towns should be restricted.



“Stop building right up to the lake. We need stronger setbacks to protect our water.”

“Need to be informed about natural water purification to know what is necessary to restrict”

3 Environment & Climate Change

What We Heard from Stakeholders (10 participants)

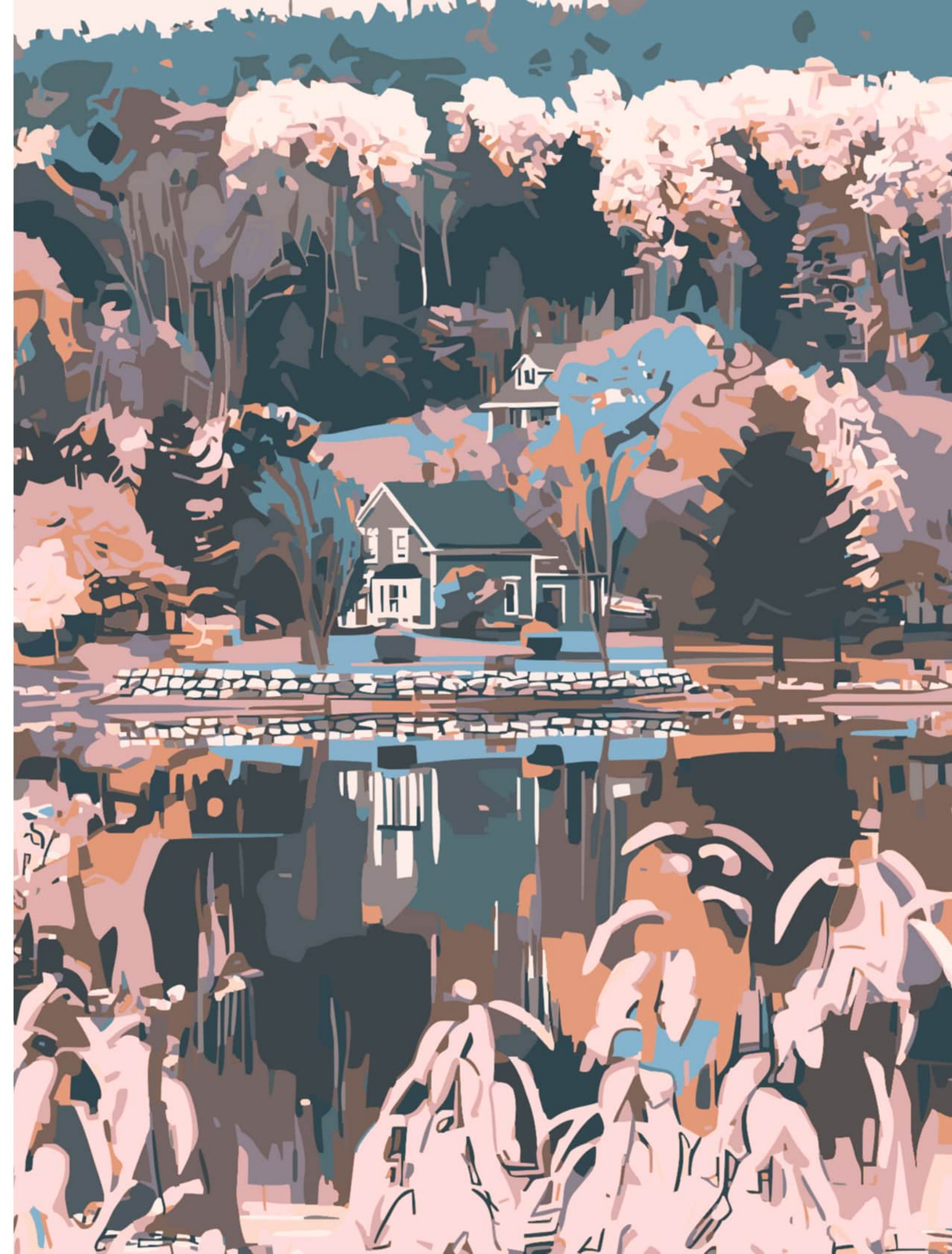
- Need for stronger regulations and science-based setbacks
 - 100% of attendees supported: maintaining natural shorelines, restricting development around drinking water lakes, and having mandatory setbacks for all watercourses
- Support for Conservation Zone, specifically for watersheds and drinking water supplies
- Inflating property values of sensitive lands due to lack of land use regulation
- Need for greater municipal leadership

“There is no way to protect against industry if we don’t have regulations or policies in place.”

Zoning can be “one of the best mechanisms, as long as it comes with communication and education.”

4

Housing



4 Housing

What We Heard from Residents

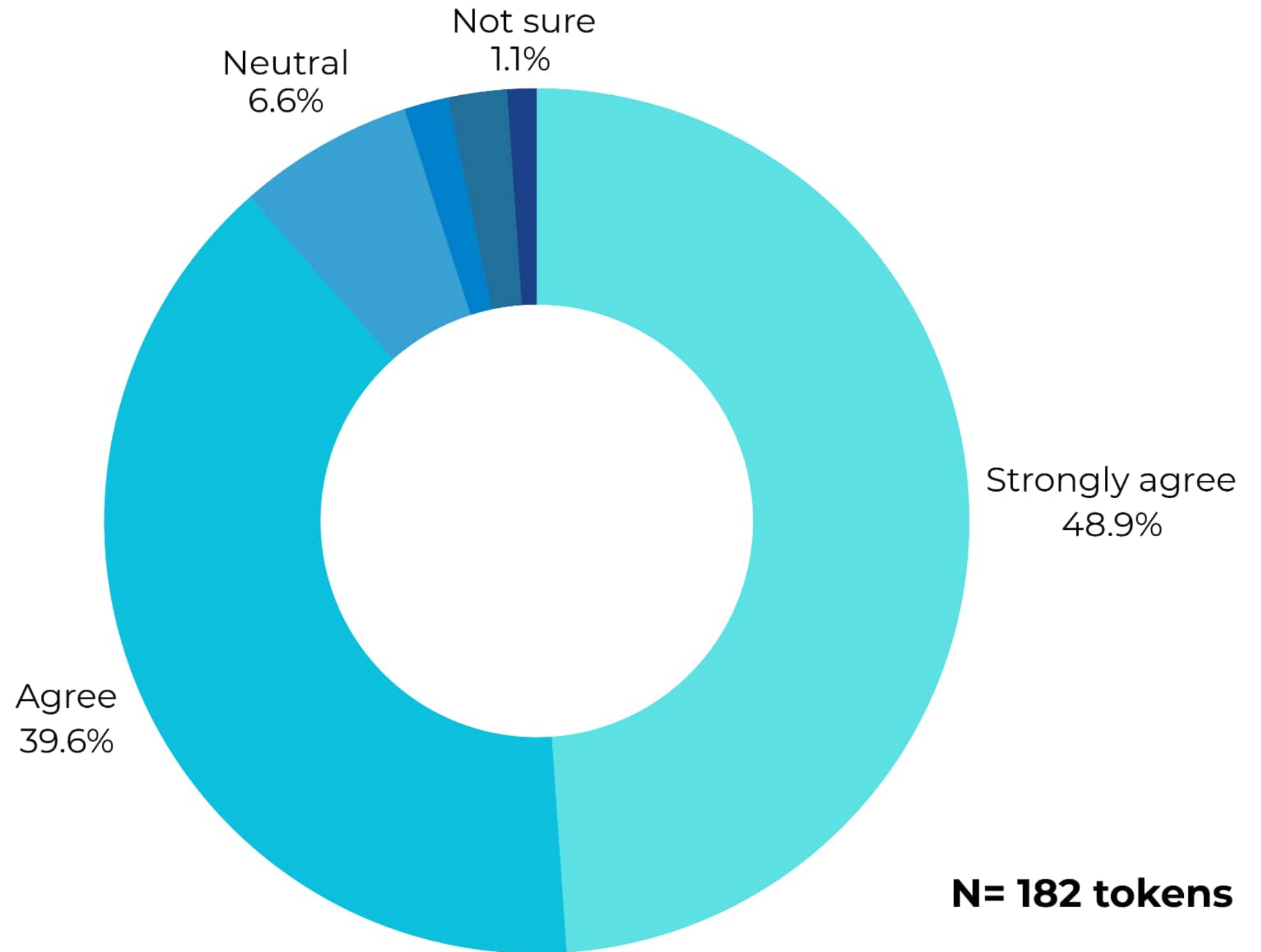
- Need for affordable, diverse, and accessible housing in MODL
 - Call for flexible regulations
 - More housing options (housing co-ops, tiny homes, cluster housing, off-grid living, mixed income housing)
- Support for full-time RV living, with some being cautious about septic/garbage
- Support for having specific campground & RV park regulations
- Some concerns over short-term rentals and land use conflicts/changing rural character

4 Housing

What We Heard from Residents

There should be specific regulations for campgrounds and RV parks to minimize the impacts on things such as neighbouring properties and the environment.

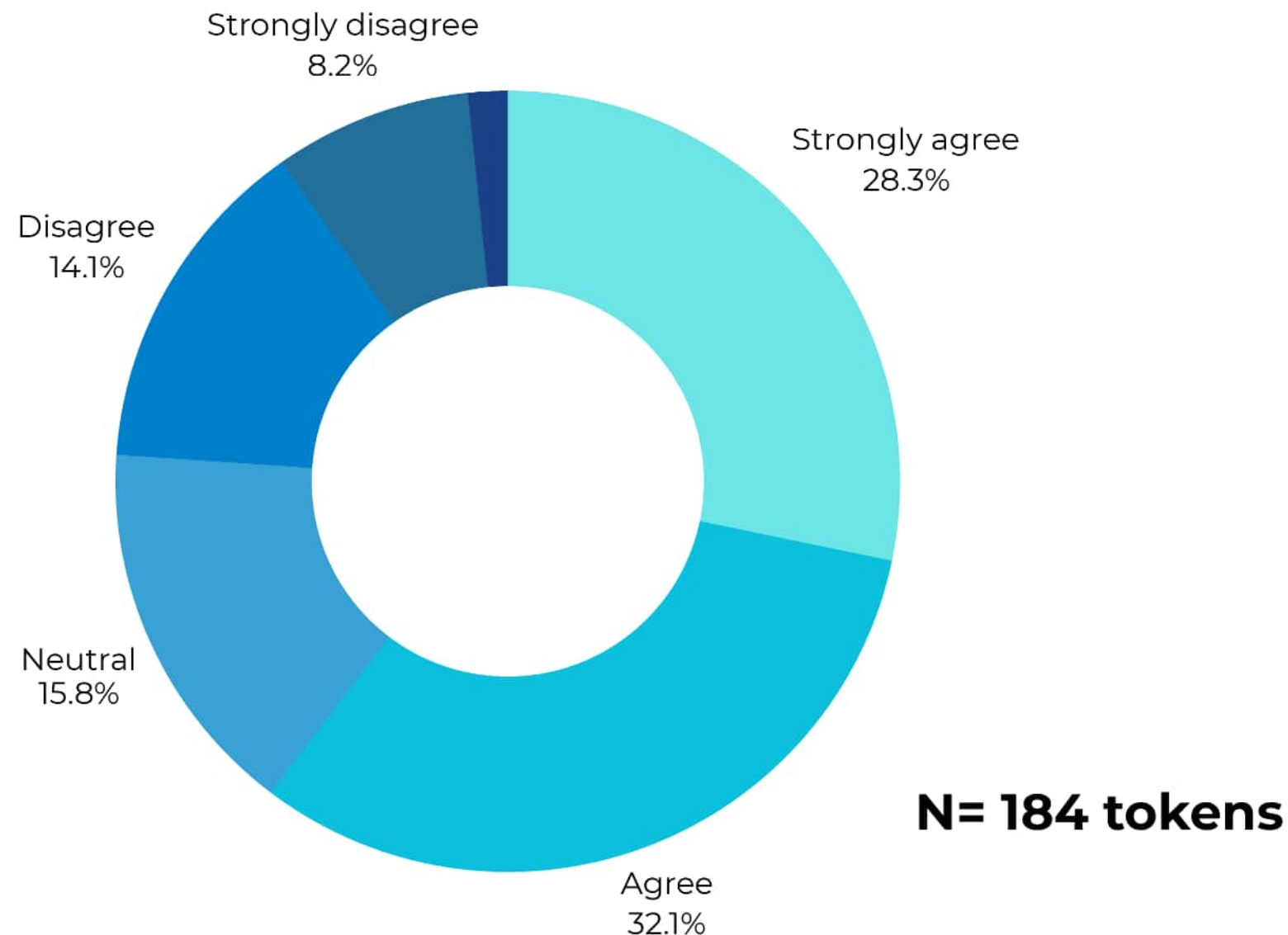
“Campgrounds and RV parks are a must but not to negatively impact community residents”.



4 Housing

What We Heard from Residents

People should be allowed to live in a recreational vehicle year-round, as long as there is an appropriate system for disposing of sewage.



“Absolutely not. Especially where there are many such vehicles on one property with no environmental controls”.

“For most young people traditional housing and renting is not affordable!”

4 Housing

What We Heard from Stakeholders (4 participants)

- Surplus land policies, stronger partnerships with non-profits, and clear development guidance.
- Urgent need for attainable housing, diverse housing options, better guidance for development, and improved municipal advocacy.
- Strong support for diverse housing options, including transitional housing, secondary suites, and designs based on universal accessibility.

4 Housing

What We Heard from Stakeholders (4 participants)

- Negative stigma around affordable options such as RVs and tiny homes.
- Municipal policy must be paired with practical tools - donating or facilitating transfer of surplus land for housing as a strong municipal role.

5

Transportation & Infrastructure



5 Transportation & Infrastructure

What We Heard from Residents

Transportation

- Improved rural, affordable, and accessible transportation options in MODL
 - i.e. expanded rural bus services
- A need for more pedestrian and active transportation infrastructure to improve connections between communities
 - i.e. bike lanes/sidewalks

5

Transportation & Infrastructure

What We Heard from Residents

Infrastructure

- Calls for intentional and strategic infrastructure planning
 - To ensure that amenities and services keep pace with new development
 - Expansion of municipally serviced areas
 - Improved stormwater management to prevent flooding
- Some concern around the pace and scale of development - putting strain on existing infrastructure and groundwater supplies
- Many emphasized the need for balanced growth that aligns with available services and fair distribution of development costs

6

Economic Development



6

Economic Development

What We Heard from Residents

- Overall strong support for small, locally owned businesses
 - Agriculturally related businesses and farm stands
- Many oppose the regulation of home-based businesses
 - Mixed views through Feedback Frames with many preferring a case-by-case approach to manage land use conflicts and avoid over-regulation
 - The type of business plays a role
- Concerns on over-regulation, particularly regarding zoning and potential impacts on existing businesses



Economic Development

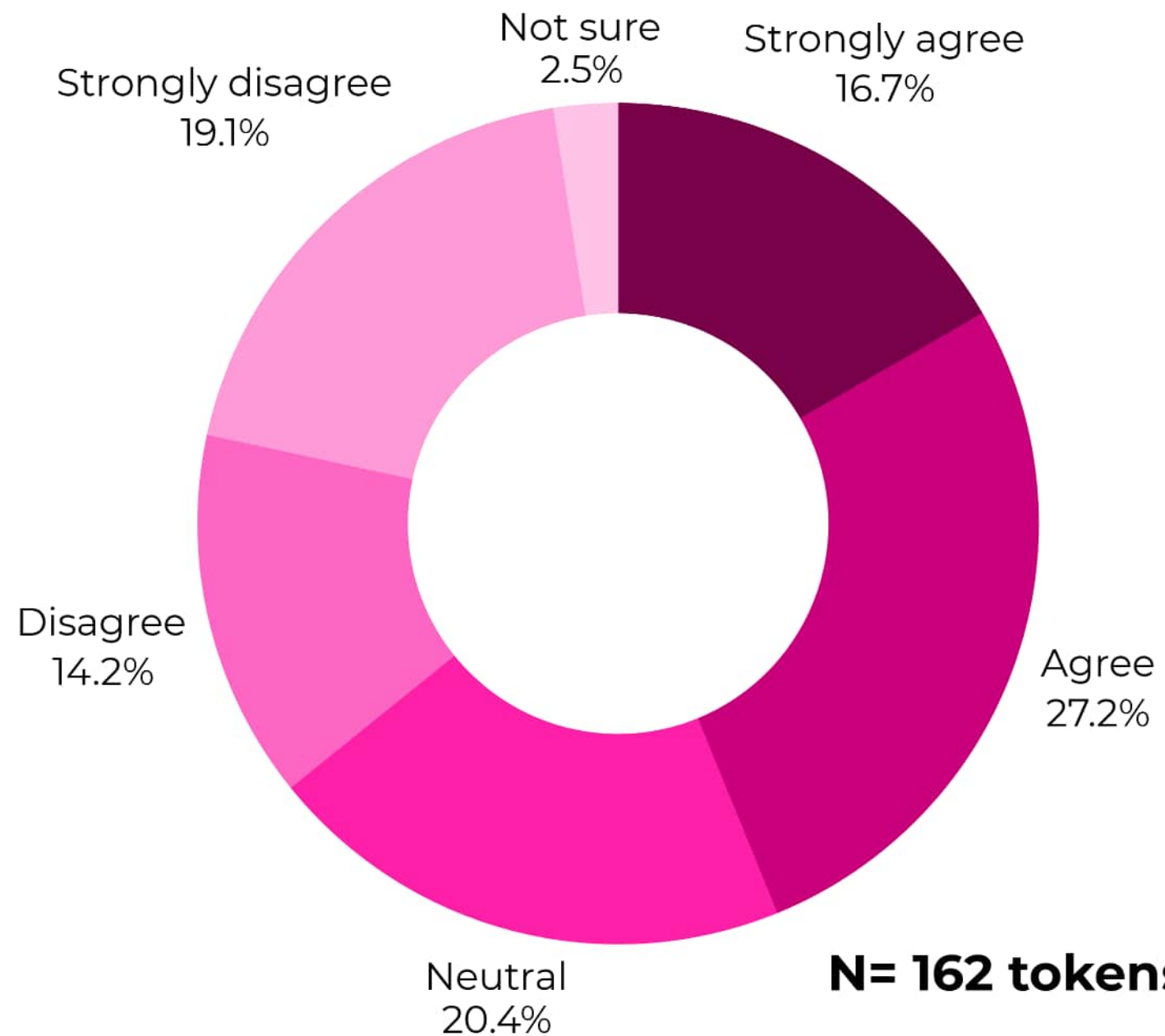
What We Heard from Residents

- Concerns about environmental and community impacts from large corporations, mineral extraction operations, and RV parks & campgrounds
- Tourism seen as an opportunity to support local art and green infrastructure
- Some concerns over short-term rentals and their impact on housing

6 Economic Development

What We Heard from Residents

Home-based businesses should be regulated in some residential zones to protect neighborhood character and limit impacts on nearby residents.



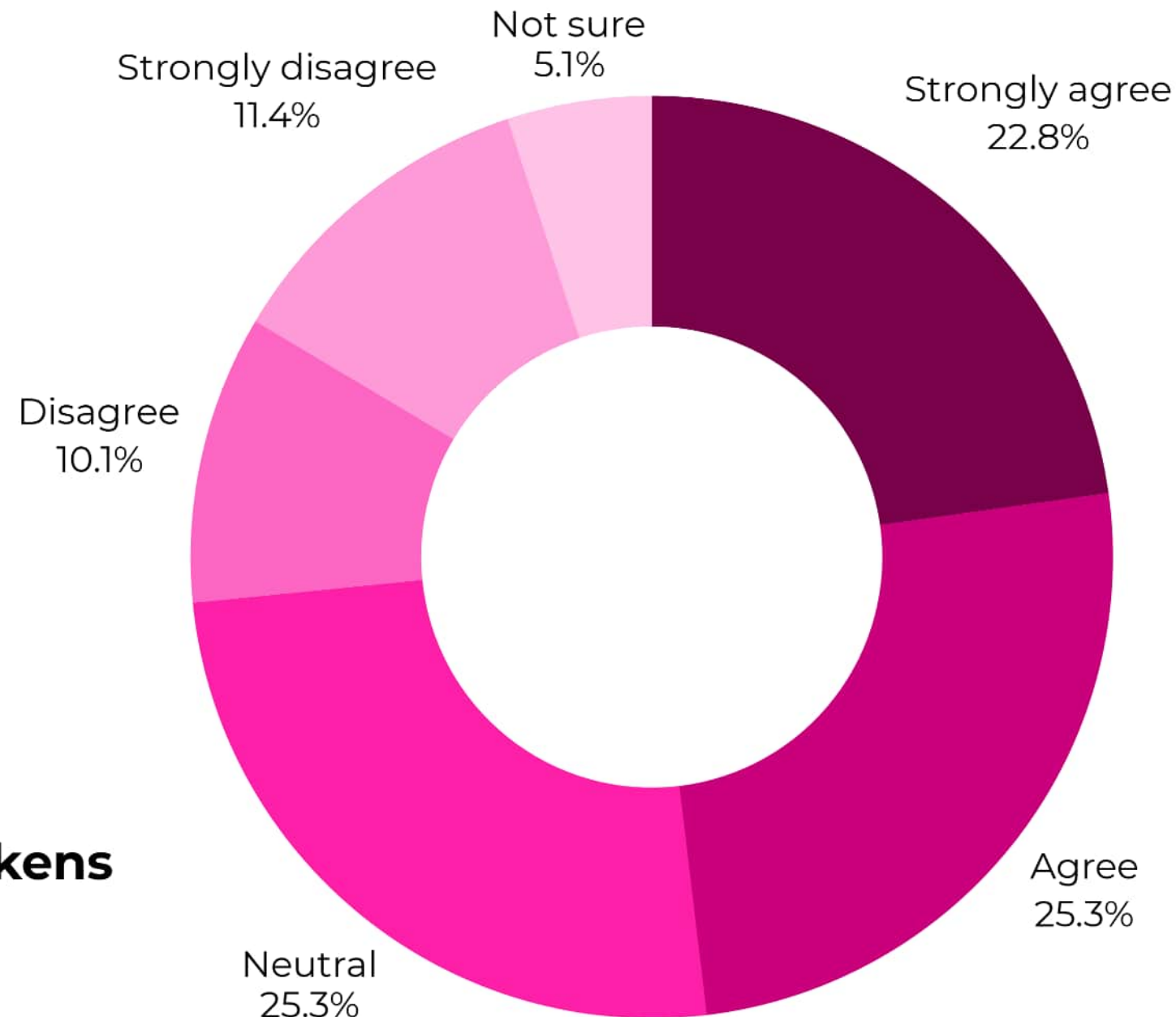
“Home based businesses should be regulated to ensure adequate parking that doesn't [interfere] on residents in area or impede traffic laws. I.e. parking on intersections blocking visibility of driveways.”

“Home-based businesses are a backbone. Our businesses out of homes are what support our economies. Tread lightly!!!”

6

Economic Development What We Heard from Residents

The municipality should limit new commercial uses on private roads.



N= 158 tokens

“It depends on commercial uses; it might be decided with community for each case; automobile [dealership] may be more difficult to accept than an art gallery.”

“There should be no additional limits. This is a private road.”

7

Public Spaces & Culture



7 Public Spaces & Culture

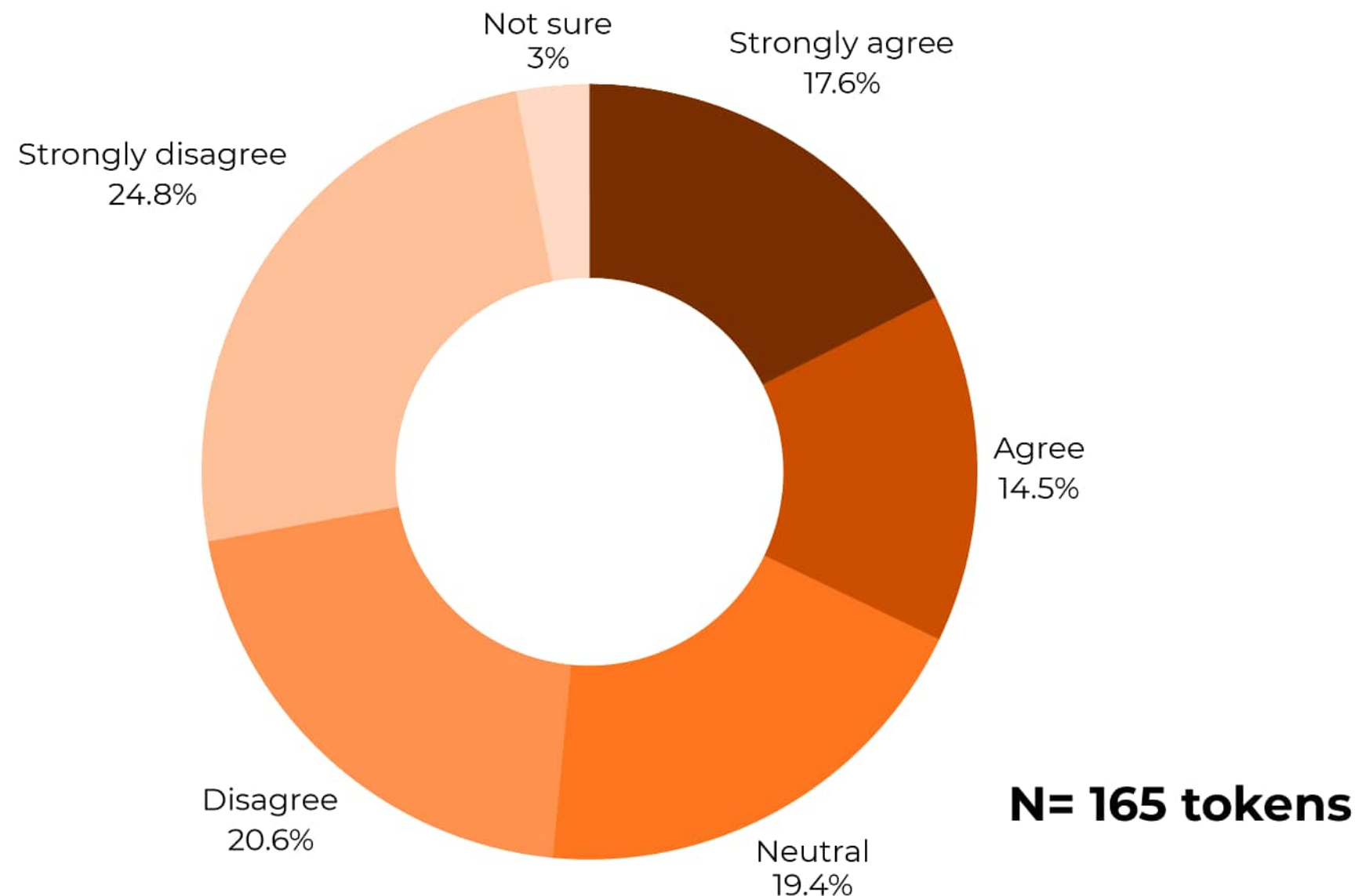
What We Heard from Residents

- Strong emphasis on protecting public spaces and natural assets from overdevelopment or privatization
- Desire for more community hubs, including community gardens and investment in existing parks
- General support for parkland dedication in new developments
 - Feedback Frames showed mixed views on increasing subdivision fees
- Limited interest in changing municipal property or place names to address historical injustices.

7 Public Spaces & Culture

What We Heard from Residents

We should look at municipal properties or location names that may be outdated or harmful in order to implement reconciliation and address historical injustices.



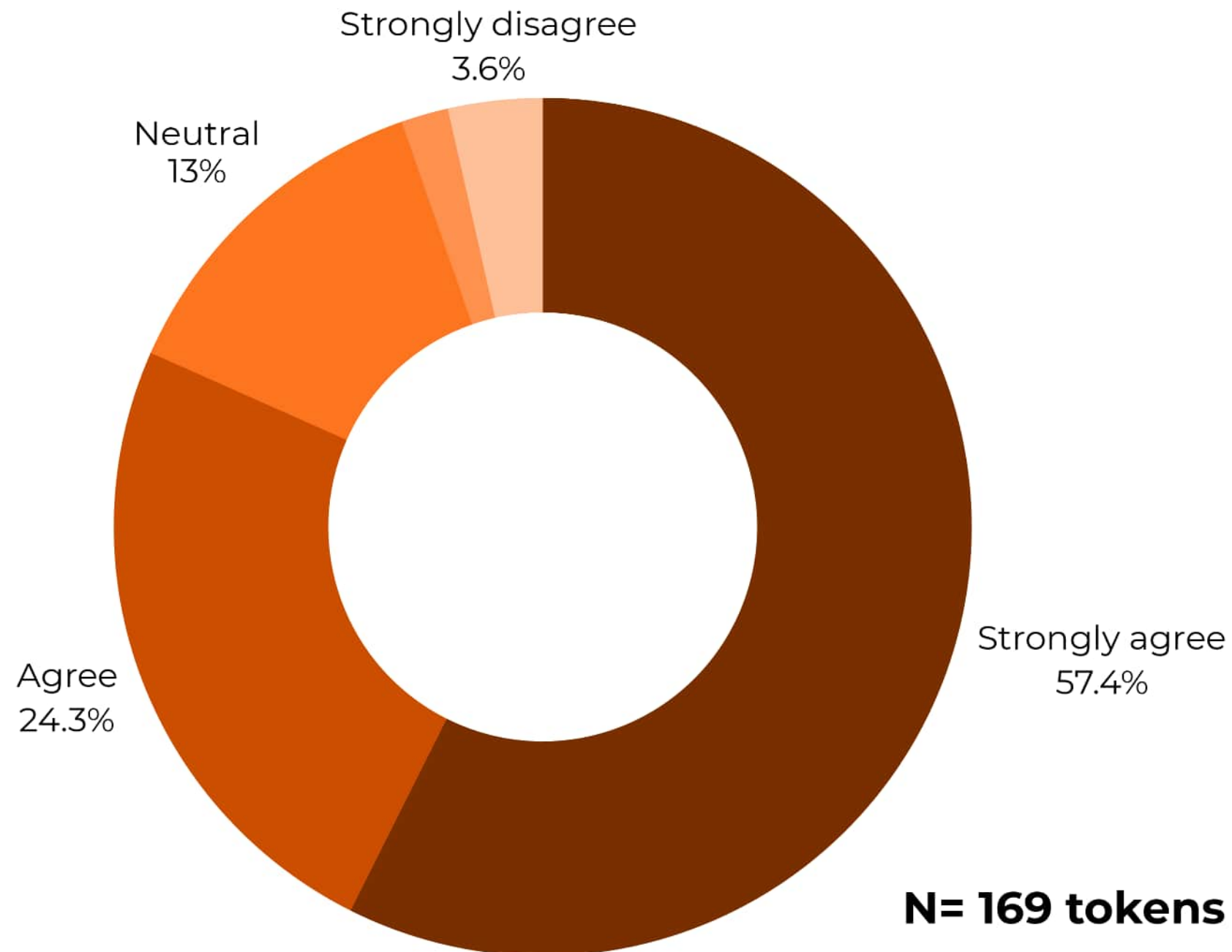
“Changing names doesn't change history - don't cancel it out, use it as an opportunity for education and growth”.

“Yes if the name is offensive we should look for a new suitable name”.

7 Public Spaces & Culture

What We Heard from Residents

There is a need to ensure adequate parkland is provided in new developments.



“Parkland should be a part of life, available to everyone”

8

Zoning & Planning Process



8 Zoning & Planning Process

What We Heard from Residents

Mixed views on planning

- Some resistance to change and desire to maintain land autonomy
- Others supported planning to address land use conflicts, protect the environment and agriculture, and provide predictability

Zoning approach

- Calls for simple, flexible, and community-specific regulations rather than a one-size-fits-all model
- Some feedback noted too many zones, unclear zone boundaries, and issues with the proposed permitted uses

8 Zoning & Planning Process

What We Heard from Residents

Enforcement and clarity

- Concerns about how regulations and enforcement will work
- Highlighting need for clearer communication and understanding of how new rules affect existing uses

Common theme

- Need for balance to preserve rural character while allowing reasonable growth

9

Public Engagement Process



9

Public Engagement Process

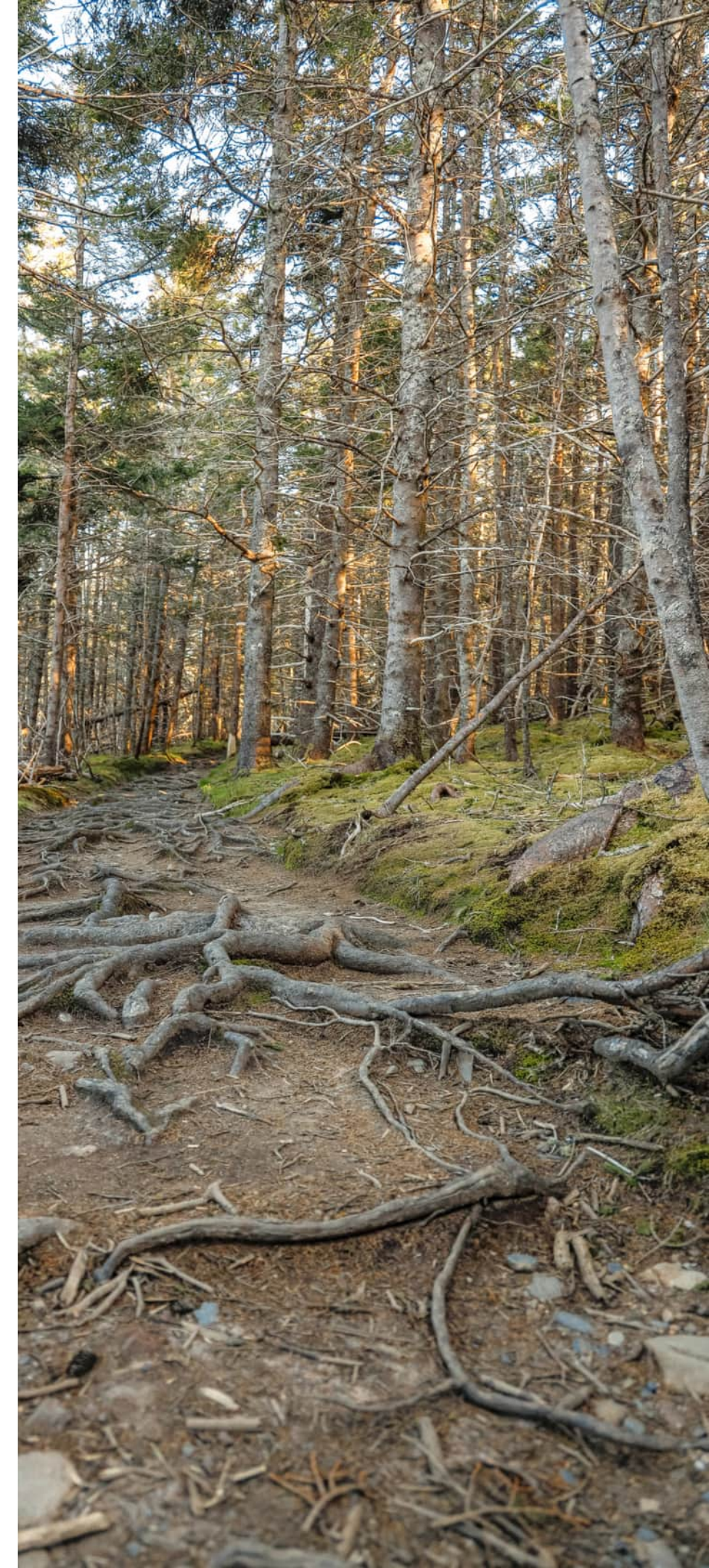
What We Heard from Residents

- Mixed views on the draft documents and engagement process
 - Calls for clearer communication and concern that the draft release felt abrupt
- Shifting perceptions
 - Early frustration about limited engagement VS. recognition of efforts
- Plain-language and accessibility concerns
- Residents stressed the need for inclusive, ongoing engagement to ensure all voices (not just the most vocal) are reflected in future drafts

Additional Topics & Feedback

Feedback on topics that are outside the scope of this project:

- Road maintenance and safety
- Unsightly properties
- Garbage collection
- Exploratory mining
- Unsustainable forestry
- Need for more abattoirs (meat processing facilities)
- Seasonal service gaps
- Trail maintenance
- The Building Code
- The Subdivision By-law
- Cellular service
- Internet connectivity
- Electric utility reliability
- Youth and elderly supports
- Improved healthcare
- Rising cost of living
- Facilities for visitors
- Presence of ticks
- Barking dogs



Key Takeaways

- **Evolving perceptions:** Initial fear of change and opposition gave way to greater understanding and cautious support through ongoing engagement.
- **Clear communication:** Residents want plain language, transparency, and inclusive outreach to all communities.
- **Balanced, flexible growth:** Desire for development that protects rural character and the environment while allowing reasonable flexibility.



Key Takeaways cont.

- **Housing, home-based businesses & agriculture priorities:** Strong calls for more housing options, support for local home-based businesses, and a permissive agricultural approach with no animal-count limits.
- **Infrastructure & engagement:** Continued focus on fair servicing, environmental protection, and meaningful public participation.



Next Steps

- **Directional Council workshops: November 2025 - January 2026**
- **Writing of Draft #2: Winter 2026**
- **Draft # 2 release: Winter 2026**
- **Public engagement on Draft #2: Spring 2026**





Questions?

<https://engage.modl.ca/modl2040>



MUNICIPAL-WIDE LAND
USE PLANNING PROJECT

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge that we live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This land is covered by the Peace and Friendship Treaties. We also recognize that planning in Canada has historically been used as a colonial tool, shaping land and communities in ways that disregarded Indigenous rights and knowledge. In carrying out our work, we commit to reflecting on this history and to practicing planning with humility, respect, and a dedication to more just and sustainable futures.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Executive Summary	4
01	Introduction	5
	Background	6
	Purpose & Objectives	6
	Project Scope: Past and Future	6
	How will this report be used?	8
	Project Timeline	8
02	How We Engaged	9
	Engagement Snapshot	10
	Engagement Purpose and Objectives	11
	Engagement Activities	12
	Participation by the Numbers	15
	Analysis Approach	19
	How to Read this Document	19
03	What We Heard	20
	What We Heard About Planning	23
	Agriculture	25
	Environment and Climate Change	37
	Housing	45
	Transportation and Infrastructure	52
	Economic Development	57
	Public Spaces and Culture	63
	Zoning and Planning Process	69
	Public Engagement process	75
	Key Takeaways	78
	Additional Topics and Feedback	85
04	15-Year Vision for MODL	86
05	Spotlight on Tancook	88
06	Data Limitations	90
07	Next Steps	92
	Appendix	95

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (MODL) is working on establishing municipal-wide land use planning to align with provincial requirements. In March 2025, Draft #1 of a Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB) were released to the public. Since the initial public engagement for this project occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, Draft #1 caught many community members by surprise.

The release of the planning documents sparked criticism about the transparency of the planning process and the content in Draft #1. Council directed planning staff to conduct more engagement with the public to help better inform Draft #2 of the MPS and LUB. This report summarizes the public feedback was heard throughout this phase of engagement, which occurred from March 2025 to August 2025.

The engagement approach adopted for this phase of engagement used multiple methods to connect with as many residents as possible. We set out to inform residents about the project, understand concerns about Draft #1, and learn more about what MODL residents envision for the future of their community. Information was shared about the project through the Municipality's engagement website, postcards, social media, and radio and print ads. We heard from residents at Open House events, through the Public Input Survey, Facebook, as well as over the phone, emails,

and other forms of written correspondence.

Residents shared their insights on a number of issues. Residents were passionate about sustainable living and their right to maintain a rural livelihood that offers a sense of freedom and independence. Land use planning was often viewed as a direct threat to this way of life.

Agriculture was a major topic of discussion across all engagement methods, with many residents upset by the proposed regulations on backyard agriculture and livestock operations contained in Draft #1.

Despite some mixed views on climate change, many residents noted the importance of protecting MODL's natural environment, especially waterbodies as being a valuable source for drinking water, public water access, natural beauty, and enjoyment.

Housing was another topic that we heard a lot about. Residents spoke about the need for diverse housing options, including recreational vehicles, tiny homes, and more. It was clear that many residents are concerned about the lack of affordable housing and housing availability in MODL.

The ideas presented through all the engagement methods were organized into the key themes that you will read about in the body of this report. An overview of our findings can be found towards the end of the report, in the section titled Key Takeaways.



01 Introduction

BACKGROUND

In 2018, the Province of Nova Scotia mandated that all municipalities must develop and adopt comprehensive planning regulations that apply to all lands within their jurisdictions. In response, MODL launched the “MODL2040” project in 2020 to create municipal-wide planning regulations through the creation of a Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law. While “MODL 2040” is now referred to as the Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning Project, the intent of the initial project continues with the development of land use regulations and zoning that applies to the entire municipality.

Some land use planning already exists in MODL with seven secondary plan areas that have unique Secondary Planning Strategies and Land Use By-laws. These include the communities of Blockhouse, Village of Hebbville, Hemford Forest, Oakland, Osprey Village, Riverport and District, and Princes Inlet and Area. There are also Coastal Protection regulations that apply to properties along the coast, Cluster Development regulations, and a Subdivision By-law.

Purpose and Objectives

The Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning Project will develop a Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB) that will apply to all unzoned lands in MODL. These documents will help shape future growth over the coming decades and serve as a tool to address environmental protection, economic development, heritage preservation, infrastructure planning, and other key community priorities.

As part of the provincial requirement for land use planning, outlined in the Municipal Government Act, the planning documents must also address the five Statements of Provincial Interest which include Drinking Water, Flood Risk, Agricultural Land, Infrastructure, and Housing.

Project Scope: Past & Future

Initial public engagement was conducted as part of “MODL2040” in 2020. This engagement focused on identifying community goals, understanding challenges, and establishing a long-term vision for MODL over the next 20 years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, engagement was primarily hosted remotely with an online survey and virtual events.

The major themes that emerged during this round of engagement included environmental protection and preparing for climate change, addressing housing needs and affordability, and improving public infrastructure.

Statement of Provincial Interest Goals

Drinking water	To protect the quality of drinking water within municipal water supply watersheds
Flood Risk Areas	To protect public safety and property and to reduce the requirement for flood control works and damage restoration in floodplains
Agricultural Land	To protect agricultural land for the development of a viable and sustainable agriculture and food industry
Infrastructure	To make efficient use of municipal water supply and municipal wastewater
Housing	To provide housing opportunities to meet the needs of all Nova Scotians

A first draft of the planning documents, referred to in this report as Draft #1, was released in March 2025. These planning documents included a Municipal Planning Strategy and Land use By-law, which incorporated the input gathered during the initial round of public engagement and extensive background research.

Following the release of these documents, there was a sparked sense of concern with many residents expressing frustration over the proposed regulations and process. As a result, Planning staff were directed by Council to prepare less restrictive documents that are closer in line to the mandatory minimum planning requirements, following additional public engagement to help better inform the second drafts.

Although the second phase of public engagement is now complete, additional engagement will continue, and future drafts will be created until the needs and values of residents are adequately reflected, and Council is satisfied with the final documents.

How will this report be used?

This report summarizes what we heard from the public engagement activities that took place between March 2025 and August 2025 regarding the Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning Project. This report will be presented to Council and will help guide the development of future drafts. Council will provide direction to staff about how to incorporate and prioritize the findings from this engagement summary into the writing of Draft #2 of the municipal planning documents.

Project Timeline:





02 How We Engaged

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT



21 Total Public Engagement Events
7 Thursday Drop-In Sessions
12 Open Houses
2 Online Sessions



708 Community Open House Attendees
147 Drop In Attendees
855 Total In-person Attendees



44.5 Hours of public engagement
3 postcards sent to **11,700** households
1,123 views of the pre recorded online session



1 Survey
5 Open Ended Questions
359 Survey Responses



4 Stakeholder Sessions



6 Information Boards
237 Stick Note Comments



13 Feedback Frames
2228 Feedback Frames Responses



12,200 Engage Website Visitors
1,608 Newsletter Subscribers
65 Facebook Posts



Engagement Purpose & Objectives

This period of public engagement sought to understand the priorities and concerns of MODL residents related to land use planning. More specifically, the planning team set out to achieve the following objectives:

- Ensure community members are informed of the provincial planning requirements
- Identify the land use topics from Draft #1 that are of most concern to residents
- Obtain specific input on these topics
- Understand the community values that are important to the MODL landscape now and into the future



Engagement Activities

After the draft documents were released to the public and Council in March 2025, staff undertook a series of public engagement activities.

Project Webpage

A project page on Engage MODL was created at the beginning of the project in 2020. Once the Draft #1 documents were released, they were posted on this webpage along with other project resources. The webpage had a total of 12,200 visitors as of September 3, 2025. The webpage featured a 14-minute video about the project, that had 1,123 views by September 3, 2025. The webpage also had a 'Questions' feature where residents could ask questions directly to staff.

Public Input Survey

The Public Input Survey was available on the project webpage for about three months until July 11.

The survey consisted of 5 open-ended questions about municipal land use planning and residents' vision for the future of their community. Paper copies of the survey were available at the Municipal Office as well as at the open houses. The survey received 359 responses in total.

New Germany Community Cafe Drop-in

Planning staff attended the Community Café in New Germany on April 3, 2025, to address resident questions and concerns, and to provide information about the status of the project.

South Shore Expedition

Planners and Councillors attended the South Shore Expo on April 11, 12, and 13 to speak to residents about municipal-wide land use planning.

Community Open Houses & Thursday Drop-ins

Nineteen open house events were held from early April to the end of June 2025. Twelve of the open houses were hosted in communities across MODL, with at least one in every district. Seven took place at the Municipal Office on Thursday afternoons. A total of 855 residents attended the open houses.



The open houses were promoted through:

- 10 print ads in the South Shore Bulletin
- 3 postcards mailed to all 11,700 households in MODL
- 10 weeks of radio ads
- Facebook posts
- Engage MODL posts

On May 27, 2025, staff hung up posters about upcoming open houses and dropped off copies of the draft Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law to the following locations:

- LaHave Bakery
- The Ploughman's Lunch
- The bulletin board near Crescent Beach
- Petite Riviere General Store
- Rose Bay General Store
- Four Points Vintage Market
- Boulangerie La Vendeenne

The format of the community open houses evolved over time. The first community open house in New Germany brought out 250 residents, where a traditional town hall style was used with a presentation and Q&A period.

As the open houses continued, the meetings shifted to a drop-in style. Smaller attendance numbers allowed for a conversational set up and more dialogue. Staff put out a table of handouts and placed 6 information boards around the room with background information about the project.

Residents could drop in at any time during the scheduled hours to speak with planners, Councillors, and other residents about their questions or concerns. Residents could share their ideas on different topics by placing comments on the information boards with sticky notes. 237 sticky note comments were recorded from all the open houses.

Starting on May 26, a new component to the open houses was introduced: feedback frames.

Staff placed 13 feedback frames around the room, each with a statement that attendees could comment on. This method helped gather more measurable data. 2228 tokens were placed in the feedback frames throughout the entire engagement period.



Since the feedback frames were added later, they were not part of the following open houses:

- New Germany - April 14
- Newcombille - April 24
- Parkdale Maplewood - May 5
- Northfield - May 7
- Hebbville - May 21

Virtual Open Houses

Staff led 2 virtual open houses on Microsoft Teams on May 14, 2025, with one in the morning and one in the evening. Like the drop-in open houses, the format of these was a short presentation followed by a Q&A with planners, the Mayor, and attending Councillors.

Stakeholder Workshops

In late June and July 2025, the planning team hosted 4 stakeholder workshops at the Municipal Office with different subject matter experts in MODL. Workshops typically took on a roundtable format where stakeholders were asked a series of questions specific to the focus of the workshop.

- Agriculture Workshop – June 25
- Housing Workshop – July 16
- Developer Workshop – July 16
- Environment Workshop – July 23

Farm Visits

On July 24, 2025, planning staff visited four different farms to learn about the diversity of agricultural activities in MODL.

Planning Inbox, Phone Line, and Other Written Submissions

Staff received comments and questions from the public about land use planning via the Planning email (planning@modl.ca) and the Planning phone line: 902-530-2802.

Some residents dropped off written comments to the Municipal Office. These written submissions can be found in the Appendix of this document.

Social Media

A total of 911 Facebook comments were received (839 prior to May 29 and 72 after May 29). Comments and conversation on Facebook was significantly higher earlier on.

22

Events

855

in-person
participants

Participation by the Numbers

LOCATION	DATE	TIME	#
Municipal Office	April 3, 2025	3 pm - 5 pm	8
Municipal Office	April 10, 2025	3 pm - 5 pm	45
Municipal Office	April 24, 2025	3 pm - 5 pm	35
Municipal Office	May 1, 2025	3 pm - 5 pm	4
Municipal Office	May 8, 2025	3 pm - 5 pm	17
Virtual/Online	May 14, 2025	10 am - 12 pm	n/a
Virtual/Online	May 14, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	n/a
Municipal Office	May 22, 2025	3 pm - 5 pm	18
Municipal Office	May 29, 2025	3 pm - 5 pm	20
TOTAL			147

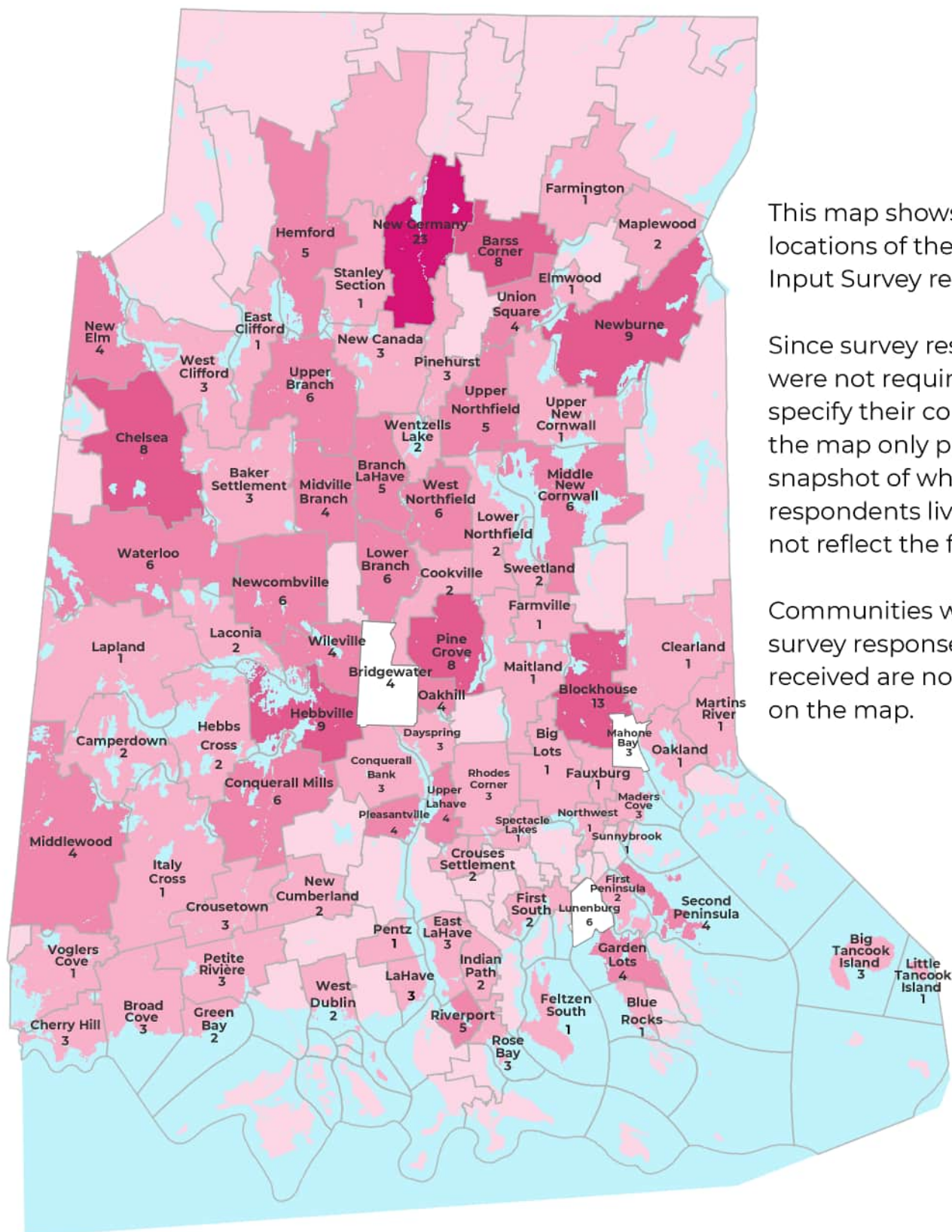
Summary of Community Open House Events

COMMUNITY & DISTRICT	LOCATION	DATE	TIME	#
New Germany (District 5)	New Germany Legion	April 14, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	250
Newcombville (District 4)	Tri-District Fire Hall	April 24, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	97
Parkdale Maplewood (District 6)	Parkdale Maplewood Community Hall	May 5, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	17
Northfield (District 7)	Northfield Fire Hall	May 7, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	55
Hebbville (District 3)	Hebbville Fire Hall	May 21, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	29
New Germany (District 5)	New Germany Legion	May 26, 2025	2 pm - 7 pm	20
Petite Riviere (District 1)	Petite Riviere Fire Hall	June 4, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	47
Lunenburg (District 10)	Lunenburg and District Fire Hall	June 9, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	31
Big Tancook Island (District 10)	Big Tancook Island Community Centre	June 11, 2025	11:30 am - 1 pm	40

Summary of Community Open House Events cont.

COMMUNITY & DISTRICT	LOCATION	DATE	TIME	#
Blockhouse (District 8)	Blockhouse Fire Hall	June 12, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	47
Conquerall Bank (District 2)	Conquerall Bank Fire Hall	June 16, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	19
Riverport (District 9)	Riverport Community Centre	June 23, 2025	6 pm - 8 pm	56
TOTAL				708

Public Input Survey Results by Community



This map shows the locations of the Public Input Survey responses.

Since survey respondents were not required to specify their community, the map only provides a snapshot of where respondents live and does not reflect the full dataset.

Communities where zero survey responses were received are not indicated on the map.

Analysis Approach

A qualitative thematic coding approach was applied to the majority of feedback submitted by residents during the public engagement period. The feedback that was compiled and analyzed included responses to the Public Input Survey, physical comments from the community open houses, emails, letters, and annotated hard copies of the draft planning documents. The analysis involved assigning codes to the text that represented certain topics, ideas, or issues.

These codes were then organized and grouped into categories that reflect reoccurring themes across the data. Counting the frequency of codes was also used to help inform the process. The individual codes and groups of codes, were then examined and interpreted to identify major themes and sub-themes from all the input that inform the findings of this report.

How to Read this Document

This What We Heard Report combines and summarizes the feedback received from both the public and stakeholder groups throughout this phase of public engagement. Part 3 of this report, titled What We Heard, presents the findings from each engagement activity, organized by theme.

03 What We Heard



Major Themes

This section outlines what we heard from both residents and stakeholders, organized by theme. These themes were identified following the review and analysis of all feedback. They are not presented in a particular order. It is also important to acknowledge that the themes and sub-themes detailed in this section are interrelated. Planning is multi-faceted, and as a result, many of the issues discussed do not just relate to one theme, but several.

The main themes that appeared during the first phase of engagement were:

1



What We Heard
About Planning

2



Agriculture

3



Environment &
Climate Change

4



Housing

5



Transportation &
Infrastructure

6



Economic Development

7



Public Spaces &
Culture

8



Zoning &
Planning
Process

9



Public
Engagement
Process

What We Heard About Planning



WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT PLANNING

Across all engagement methods, many residents expressed strong opposition to the proposed land use regulations, viewing them as an example of government overreach.

A dominant concern was that the regulations threatened personal freedoms and property rights, particularly for those living in rural areas who value autonomy. Many felt that paying property taxes should entitle them to use their land as they see fit, especially for self-sufficiency activities like growing food and operating home-based businesses. The sentiment was that rural communities should not be subject to urban-style planning and that the Draft #1 planning documents failed to respect the rural way of life in MODL.

“Government overreach. Rural municipalities have no business dictating residential land use.”

“Anyone who lives in a rural community lives there for these very values. Privacy, space, land to grow and raise your own food. You’re stripping rural communities of any appeal whatsoever.”

Some wanted no regulations despite the provincial requirement, while others said only the bare minimum should be implemented. These views were often tied to concerns about losing MODL’s rural character and identity, as well as skepticism about the transparency of the planning process.

Despite the widespread opposition to Draft #1, some residents supported the concept of land use planning. Through the Public Input Survey, open house comments, feedback frames, and social media, we heard concerns about the changing municipality and related land use conflicts.

Some emphasized the need for thoughtful and strategic development to adapt to the population growth that MODL has experienced without sacrificing unique rural charm. Some also advocated for planning that supports local small businesses, agriculture, and environmentally responsible development, while maintaining MODL's South Shore identity. This is exemplified by the following quotes from MODL residents:

"In 15 years from now I don't expect to still be alive but Lunenburg County should remain a beautiful place to live, work and play. Development of a good land use strategy will lay out the framework for this to happen".

"I have no objection to residential growth occurring in the area, as long as it is done in a respectful and sensitive way that protects the rural landscape and environment. Growth and economic development should be targeted for the historic hamlets and crossroad settlements where services have been traditionally provided. Doing so would help revitalize these areas."

Overall, perspectives on planning in MODL are polarized. Many fear that new regulations threaten their lifestyle and freedoms, while some see value in balanced planning that guides sustainable growth. This tension is well captured by the following quote: "Our community is great just the way it is but I know things change and you have to be able to adapt". There is a clear call for any planning approach to respect the rural context and be implemented with transparency, sensitivity, flexibility, and community input.



Agriculture

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture was identified as a major theme throughout the engagement period. This section provides a summary of the feedback received through each engagement method on agriculture, particularly relating to livestock and farmland, as well as some other natural resource industry related feedback. Feedback from agricultural stakeholders is also included in this section.



Public Input Survey and Other Comments

A significant number of survey responses raised concerns about the proposed livestock regulations. Many residents emphasized the importance of being able to raise livestock on their property and the importance of food self-sufficiency, especially considering the current economic conditions. The topic of chickens and roosters was frequently mentioned, with strong opposition to having regulations for these animals.

Some residents said, "I do not agree with the proposed land use regulations. In this economy it is important for families to provide using animals without these limitations."

"We are struggling in an expensive world. Why limit agriculture. Some of us need to provide food for ourselves. Some of us choose healthier home-grown food".

Many residents expressed that the proposed livestock regulations were overly restrictive, threatening their ability to farm, homestead, and maintain food security. Many felt that the regulations are particularly restrictive for those with smaller parcels of land. "The ratio of the number of animals to land area is more restrictive than I think advisable if we are to live up the hope of being more locally food sustainable." While most agriculture related responses opposed regulations that limit livestock, some other residents expressed support for some form of regulation, mentioning concerns about animal welfare and the irresponsible keeping of livestock on small properties, livestock fencing, and nuisances such as odor and noise coming from neighbouring properties.

"I appreciate having regulations, land use and zoning. I think it is needed for animals so that some are not living in too small a space that is not suitable for them. I also believe people need to ensure they keep their animals on their own properties."

"I believe that there should be land use regulations across the municipality. We need to ensure we have a plan and vision for how our communities should grow and develop and have appropriate land use regulations to support the plan and vision. I absolutely agree that reasonable regulations for farm animals, including minimum lot sizes and setbacks need to be in place."

Overall, residents feel very strongly about maintaining farming rights and being able to continue growing food and raising livestock. While some residents specifically expressed concerns regarding animal welfare and support for limiting farm animals, the responses indicated that many residents do not want regulations on livestock and are against the proposed animal count approach.

Beyond the opinions regarding the livestock regulations, some residents also emphasized the importance of protecting agricultural land, expressing concerns over the amount of land being lost to development. Some residents said, "Preserve farmland. Urbanization not to squeeze out farms" and "protect farms from development to support local food." Responses also indicated a need to support local, sustainable, and agricultural practices of all scales (especially small-scale).

Many emphasized the importance of homesteading in maintaining a connection with the land and community, with one resident saying, "I want to see people participating in small scale agriculture on their own properties to feed and support themselves as well as share abundance with the community". Additional suggestions included tax breaks for farmers and a need for more abattoirs.



Other Natural Resource Industries

While the focus was on agriculture and the proposed livestock regulations, some survey responses related to other natural resource industries, in particular mining and forestry. While these activities are predominantly regulated by the province, it is important to still include this feedback.

Residents expressed concerns about the proposed regulations for forestry processing as being too restrictive for low-density areas, not reflecting MODL's rural environment. Many emphasized the need for natural resource industries such as farming, fishing, and forestry to be supported and protected as they contribute to the rural identity of MODL.

Concerns regarding mining and other resource extraction operations were raised regarding the potential for environmental and water contamination. Some residents are concerned about the loss of forests to development, and called for stronger standards around forestry practices, particularly clearcutting and spraying. For example, one resident said "Please stop cutting down the forest, digging up farmland and covering it with concrete and asphalt."

Another said "Protect areas of agriculture and forest land for the future need of food and energy security."

Despite the concerns raised, there was an overarching support for the forestry industry due to its role in the local economy when properly managed. For example, "Better standards over forest harvesting would be ok. I am surrounded by clear cuts. I want a property owner to be able to do what they think best for their land, but there are options to clear cutting that can still be profitable."

"Lack of access to space for traditional land usage like hunting and fishing, along with large swaths of productive land for forestry and farming being bought up by private interest."

Agriculture and Natural Resources Information Board

Residents expressed a range of concerns regarding agriculture and farmland on the Agriculture and Natural Resources Information Board. A recurring concern was the loss of agricultural land to development, with residents emphasizing the need to protect farmland from subdivision and to bring unused agricultural land back into production.

One resident said, "once land is "developed" and paved over, it is lost forever for local food sustenance."

Many highlighted the increasing pressure on farms, with residential developments encroaching on agricultural areas. They stressed the importance of ensuring that farms remain viable for future agricultural use when land is sold, as well as a need for regulations that protect farmland and limit the loss of arable land.

"Farmland! Protect it from development. The "open zoning" in document leaves it vulnerable."

"Addressing the subdivision of agricultural land - too much being lost to development (housing)."

Some suggestions for protecting agricultural land included establishing a greenbelt, limiting urban sprawl, limiting the subdivision of land for purely residential uses, and protecting high quality topsoil.

The concept of agricultural land trusts was also mentioned as a possible tool for preserving farmland.

In relation to livestock, many residents called for freedom and ownership rights, requesting for the removal of the animal unit approach contained in Draft #1.

"Zoning on animal ownership are too restrictive for a rural farming area!!! It ain't Chester."

While many were opposed to regulating livestock, a few acknowledged the challenges associated with odor and noise from livestock and expressed support for having residential setbacks from agricultural operations and limiting residential development in agricultural areas.

"Limiting residential growth in agricultural areas due to odor, etc. There should be a residential setback to address odor issues (i.e., chicken or pig farms)."



Environmental impacts were also raised, particularly regarding the effects of agriculture and natural resource industries such as mining and forestry on water and soil quality. Concerns were expressed about Christmas tree farming, specifically the clearing of forests and the over spraying of chemicals.

Many comments highlighted the importance of supporting small-scale farms and hobby farms, and encouraging sustainable and organic farming practices, along with showing respect for rural lifestyles.

As residents voiced opposition to overly restrictive rules and regulations for farmers, some stated a need for more community-level decision making and developing regulations that are more property specific.

Some examples of this type of feedback included:

“Take each individual property into consideration instead of one regulation for all.”

“Create hobby farm guidelines, protect small-scale farming.”

“Homegrown food support, support self-reliant families.”

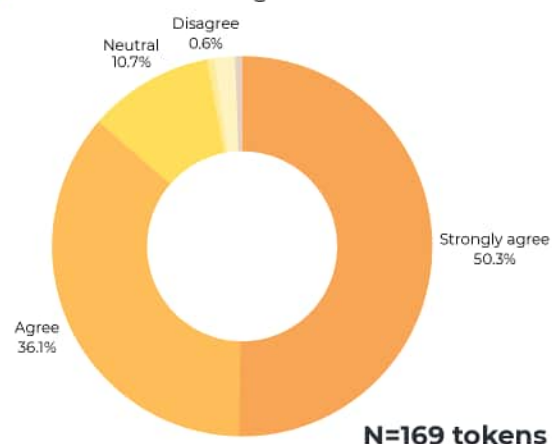


Feedback Frames

New developments, like subdivisions, should be set back from existing livestock barns and manure storage facilities.

Many comments supported the idea that new developments like subdivisions should be setback from farms. Respondents emphasized that existing farms should take precedence over complaints from new residential uses. Some residents stressed a need to ensure adequate space between agricultural uses and residential uses, suggesting that setbacks from existing agricultural uses could be helpful.

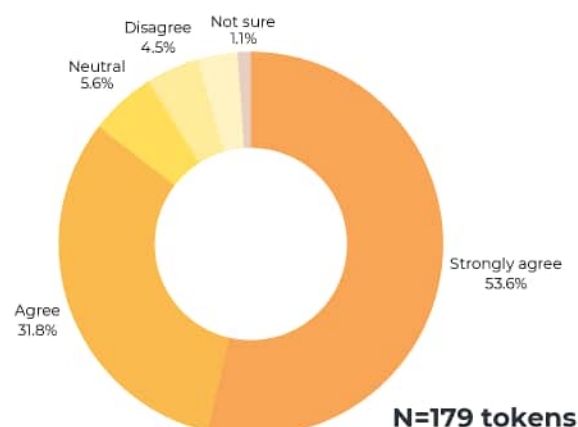
New developments, like subdivisions, should be set back from existing livestock barns and manure storage facilities.



Agricultural land should be protected even if it means limiting the number of new lots that can be created, and restricting how the land can be used in the future.

The comments showed a strong desire to protect agricultural land and promote food security. "Farmland is more precious than gold." Some noted that we should look for ways to develop new agricultural lands or renew lands that have fallen out of use. Some said that farmers should have the ability to sell their land for subdivision given the lack of people entering farming.

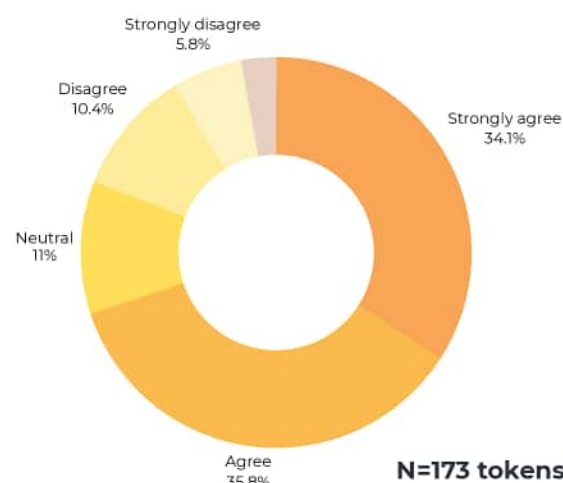
Agricultural land should be protected even if it means limiting the number of new lots that can be created, and restricting how the land can be used in the future.



The number of livestock allowed per lot shouldn't be limited in rural areas, but it should be limited in higher density residential areas like subdivisions.

Many comments expressed concern with the Draft #1 livestock regulations, stating that limits should not apply in rural areas. Residents highlighted the need to be able to raise/grow food. However, several also said that livestock should not roam free. Residents underscored that each case is different, and any limitations should not be one-size-fits-all. "There are variables to consider - density; management; type of animals; waste; groundwater, etc. Not one size fits all". Some said that limits in densely populated areas could make sense (e.g., 20 cows + 6 pigs on a 100'x200' lot feels excessive).

The number of livestock allowed per lot shouldn't be limited in rural areas, but it should be limited in higher density residential areas like subdivisions.



Social Media

Farming was one of the most passionately discussed issues, generating 88 agriculture-related comments. Early comments expressed deep concern that the proposed regulations would undermine small-scale and family farming. One resident warned, “**this plan will decimate small farming. I suppose that is the end goal. More value in taxes to chop up fields to sell to rich CFAs for retirement homes.**” Others echoed this frustration, arguing that the draft would “**kill hobby farmers and small family farms yet again**” and questioning, “**please explain how dictating what we are able to do on our farmland helps preserve it.**”

These comments reflected widespread fear that new rules would restrict the flexibility farmers need to remain viable, while accelerating the loss of farmland to development or non-agricultural uses.

Concerns about animal counts emerged as a flashpoint, with several residents challenging how such rules would protect farmland. One asked bluntly, “**so how is limiting the amount of animals I can have on my land protecting farmland?**” Another dismissed the concept entirely, writing, “**scrape anything about animal units.**”

These comments underscored strong resistance to perceived overreach in regulating livestock numbers.

As time went on, the number of agriculture-related comments declined but the focus remained on protecting farming practices. Residents emphasized the essential role of local agriculture, with one writing, “**If you don’t have farmers, you won’t have food. Protect them instead of restricting them.**” Others called on the municipality to recognize the importance of farming without adding burdens, urging, “**Hopefully the municipality realizes how important local farming is and they stop trying to restrict and put guidelines on everything with this plan.**” Some also raised practical questions about implementation, such as whether barns would be grandfathered under the new rules.

Protect farming’s future: ensure fair rules and recognize farmland as central to MODL

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

On June 25, 2025, the Agriculture Stakeholder Engagement Session brought together a diverse group of participants, including long established farmers and small-scale producers, who engaged in a wide-ranging discussion on agricultural priorities, development pressures, and the future of land use in the Municipality. This analysis integrates the rich qualitative insights from the roundtable with both quantitative and narrative responses from the Feedback Frames, offering a comprehensive reflection of individual lived experiences and the broader diversity of perspectives across the agricultural sector.

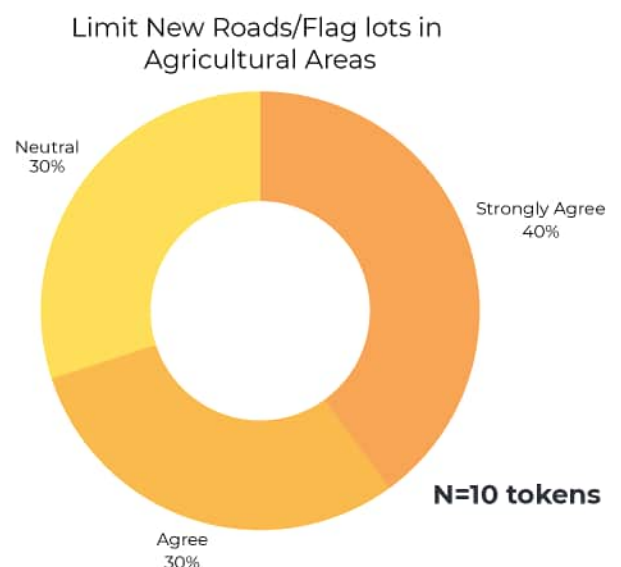
Farmland Protection & Soil Viability

Agriculture stakeholder event participants widely expressed concern over the irreversible loss of productive farmland due to development. There was consensus that the protection of agricultural soils, particularly drumlin soils and active farm areas, should be a cornerstone of land use planning. Several participants stressed that, **"Try not to build on good quality agriculture land in Lunenburg County as it is limited,"** pointing to the scarcity of viable farmland. Others emphasized that,

"Many properties in Nova Scotia are no longer useful for commercial agricultural use," highlighting the risk of losing the remaining productive soils.

Feedback Frame results supported this priority:

- 100% of respondents (strongly agree: 40%, agree: 60%) supported zoning lands with Class 3 soil or active farming for agriculture.
- All respondents (strongly agree: 50%, agree: 50%) supported protecting farmland even if it means limiting lot creation or land use flexibility.
- On restricting topsoil removal, 91% were in favour (strongly agree: 64%, agree: 27%), while 1 respondent (9%) was neutral, suggesting minimal uncertainty or opposition.



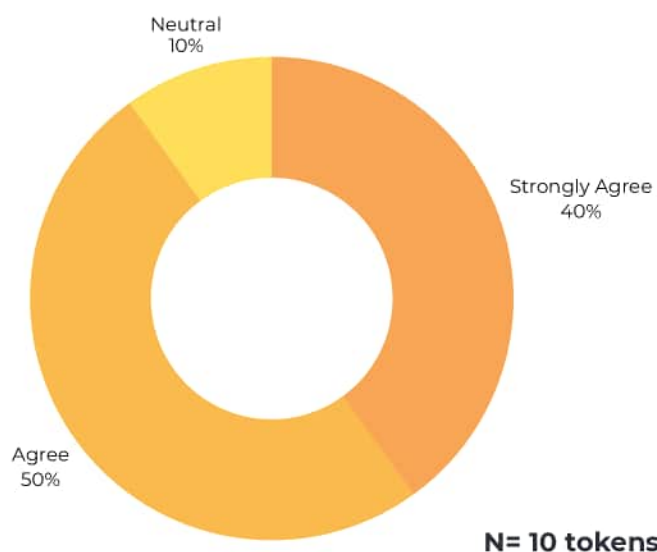
Development Pressures & Land Use Conflict

A major theme from the session was the growing friction between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses, including residential development, short-term rentals, and subdivision-style housing. Agriculture stakeholders noted that new residents are less tolerant of the everyday realities of farming such as equipment movement, noise, and manure, and that development often leads to soil degradation and land fragmentation. As one participant observed, “most land parcels are too small to use for commercial farming.” Others added that, “It is unrealistic to purchase a property with land and establish or continue a farm as a financially viable business.”

Feedback Frame Results:

- 70% supported limiting new roads and flag lots in agricultural areas (strongly agree: 40%, agree: 30%), while 30% were neutral, indicating some uncertainty or conditional views.
- Similarly, 90% supported permitting agricultural and agri-tourism uses throughout MODL (strongly agree: 40%, agree: 50%), with 10% neutral and no disagreement.

Permitting agricultural & agritourism uses throughout MODL



Zoning, Housing and Regional Tailoring

While many of the agriculture stakeholder event participants were open to more structured regulation of agricultural lands, they emphasized that a regionally tailored approach is essential particularly given the diverse settlement patterns and land pressures across MODL. One-size-fits-all zoning was seen as potentially harmful, especially if it restricts housing for farm labour or small-scale diversification.

This was reflected through the Feedback Frame results:

- 80% of respondents supported tailoring agricultural regulations to different regions (strongly agree: 20%, agree: 60%), while 20% were neutral, and no one disagreed.

Setbacks & Compatibility Between Uses

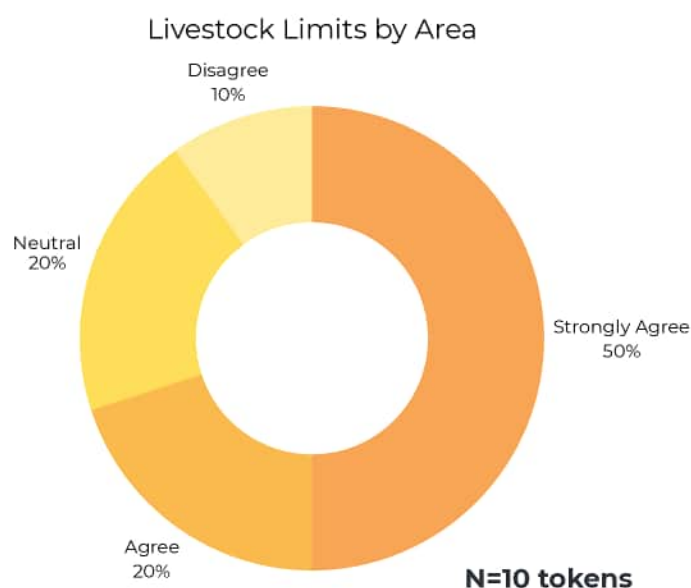
Agriculture stakeholder perspectives on setbacks were more mixed. While most supported the idea of buffering sensitive land uses from livestock or manure facilities, several cautioned against penalizing farms that predate newer residential development. One participant explained, “If the farm was there first, it’s unfair to enforce new rules.” Others noted that, “New residents bring complaints about odour and machinery use,” emphasizing the tension between established farming practices and new residential expectations.

In addition, discussion on livestock counts highlighted both enforcement challenges and broader environmental considerations. Some questioned whether MODL has the capacity to police numbers, suggesting it may be more effective for communities to self-manage.

Others emphasized the need to consider cumulative impacts, noting that while “10 chickens on one lot might not be problematic, what about 10 chickens on every lot?” This perspective underscored concerns about water quality, supply, and public health at a broader scale.

Feedback Frame results:

- 100% supported setbacks between new residential development and existing livestock operations (strongly agree: 78%, agree: 22%).
- Support for requiring setbacks from livestock infrastructure to homes or watercourses was slightly lower:
 - 55% agreed (strongly agree: 27%, agree: 27%)
 - 36% were neutral, and
 - 9% (1 respondent) was unsure, highlighting a need for further clarity or consultation on this issue.
- 50% strongly agreed with limiting livestock by area, 20% agreed, 20% were neutral, and 10% were unsure.



Support for Local Food Systems and Young Farmers

Agriculture stakeholder event participants stressed that MODL cannot resolve all economic challenges for farmers but can enable success through land use regulation, education, and support for farm-gate sales. There was strong interest in promoting incubator farms, removing unnecessary barriers, and encouraging a local food economy. As one participant suggested, “**Help support young farmers. Make land available for incubator farms.**”

Another added, “**The municipality can’t make small-scale ag viable - but it can support it.**”

Feedback Frame results showed:

- 80% of respondents supported unrestricted farm-gate sales (strongly agree: 60%, agree: 20%)
- 10% were neutral, and 10% (1 person) disagreed.

Vision for the Future

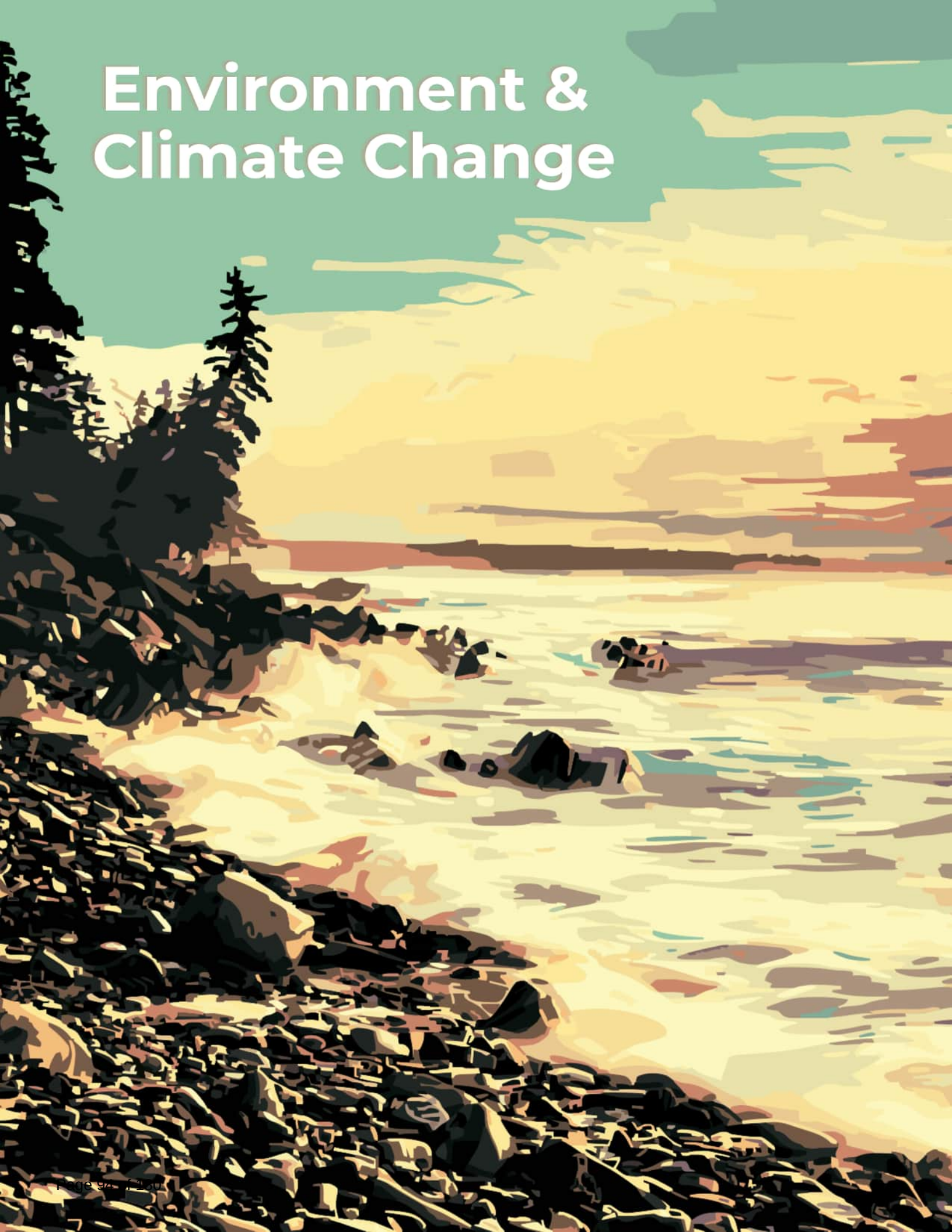
Stakeholders expressed mixed but thoughtful views about the future of farming in MODL. Some were hopeful that a viable farming sector could persist with the right regulatory framework, noting, “**I hope that a viable commercial farming sector can continue throughout the county.**”

Others, however, feared that rising land costs, infrastructure loss, and lack of succession planning may lead to the collapse of family farming within a generation. As one participant warned, “**Unless something changes... it is unlikely there will be a viable farming community in the next 20–50 years.**”

Concerns were also raised about processing capacity, with another adding, “**The loss of abattoirs is not a good situation for the local agriculture sector.**”



Environment & Climate Change



ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Environment and climate change emerged as significant themes through the engagement process. The following section summarizes the feedback received through various engagement methods, including stakeholder input, that relates to the protection of the natural environment and views on climate change.

Public Input Survey and Other Comments

Many residents emphasized the need to protect the natural environment of MODL, including forests, habitats, watersheds, coastlines, and wetlands.

A recurring theme was the importance of safeguarding water resources from the impacts of development. Some concerns about freshwater included increased lakefront density, loss of vegetation, and threats to drinking water.

“Development and Industrial activity putting endangered species at risk as well as drinking water quality” and “I am concerned about the additional subdivisions being built and the effect it will have on the water table.”

A number of residents highlighted the role of forests in maintaining ecosystem and water quality. Specific worries included the protection of endangered species, and water table impacts from new residential developments.

Comments advocated for limiting development near waterways, with suggestions like: limiting more than 1-2 family homes on 1-acre lots, enforcing 20m vegetation buffers, and supporting the consolidation of undevelopable land into larger parcels. One resident suggested erosion management strategies like retaining walls and drainage systems.

Coastal development pressures were also a concern. Additional environmental priorities included flood risk mitigation through better adaptation and floodplain mapping, as well as addressing forest fires, invasive species, and pesticide spraying.



Environment Information Board

Opinions on environment and climate change ranged from outright skepticism of climate science to urgent calls for bold climate action and sustainable living. While some rejected climate initiatives as propaganda, others urged investment in climate adaptation and renewable energy.

"Climate change does not exist. Erosion is a normal part of the earth changing. Stop pushing that agenda on people."

"Climate change is virtually unaffected by human activity."

"We need to whole heartedly accept that climate change is here."

"Yes - please consider the environment. If we destroy it we can't undo it!"

Participants suggested public education, fair enforcement of environmental regulations, and pressure on higher levels of government. "Invest money & leverage provincial/federal funds for climate action." There was notable support for protecting ecosystems, including watersheds, lakes, forests, and whitefish habitats. Comments also emphasized reducing lakeshore development, ensuring certified septic systems, and minimizing new road construction to preserve natural areas. "Natural habitats and lakes should be preserved and not destroyed by population growth."

Concerns extended to mining activities, disaster preparedness, and the need for volunteer fire departments and comfort centres in climate emergencies.

Some residents also raised issues around the costs of environmental studies and infrastructure development.

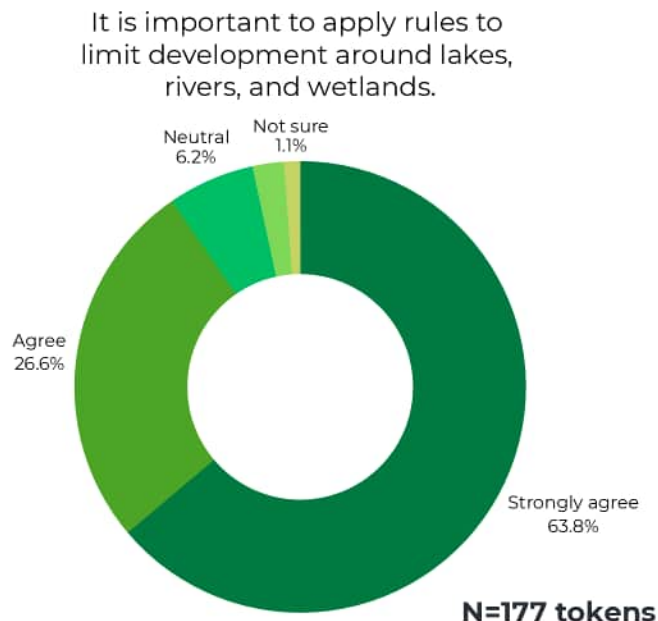
Infrastructure-related feedback included requests to use existing roads instead of building new roads, as well as protecting existing road from flooding.

How do you think the environment and climate change addressed? Are there any specific tools and approaches th

Feedback Frames

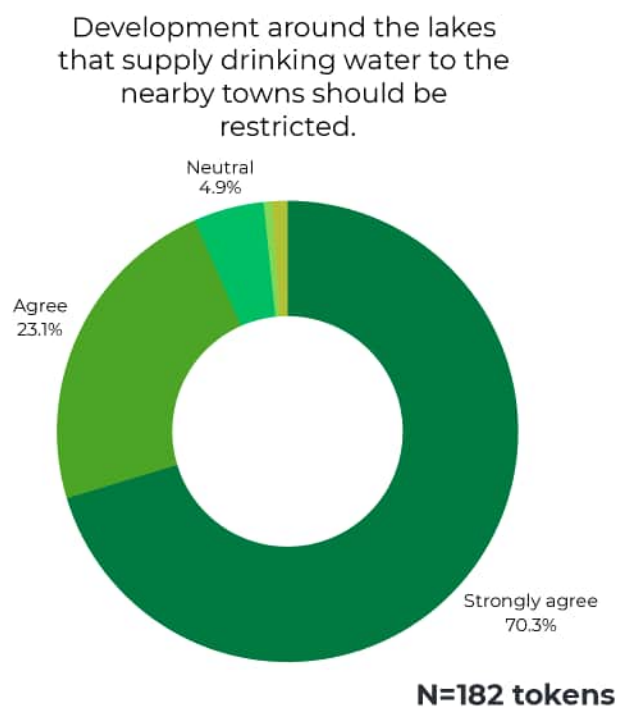
It is important to apply rules to limit development around lakes, rivers, and wetlands.

The comments in response to this statement revealed several priorities, including access to safe drinking water, limiting infill, and protecting sensitive waterbodies. Some residents expressed concern about one-size-fits-all regulations. "Every place is unique + distinct in its topography + geological formations". Some residents were in support of protecting water bodies at all costs. "Yes, it is very important - more important than the almighty dollar!" Others requested a more balanced approach, "Yes, I agree with this but not to the extreme[...]."



Development around the lakes that supply drinking water to the nearby towns should be restricted.

Comments indicated that water is precious and scarce. Residents felt that drinking water should be protected, depending on the type of restrictions that MODL is considering. "Generally agree but density and type are considerations". "Need to be informed about natural water purification to know what is necessary to restrict". One person suggested requiring a vegetative buffer within 30 feet of a water supply area, and another proposed allowing low impact dwellings.



Social Media

Environmental concerns featured prominently in the public discussion, with 34 related comments. Many residents linked land use planning directly to the health of MODL's lakes, watersheds, and coastal areas, stressing that these are not only ecological assets but also vital to community well-being and long-term sustainability. A recurring theme was the role of farmers and rural landowners in safeguarding natural systems. As one participant explained, "Farmers understand stewardship of the land and waterways. If others cared for our land, forest and water like we do the world would be in better shape."

Earlier on, residents frequently voiced their concerns about how development could affect sensitive water systems, wetlands, and shorelines. One resident urged, "Stop building right up to the lake. We need stronger setbacks to protect our water." Another emphasized the importance of natural buffers, stating, "Without trees along the watercourses, runoff and flooding will only get worse." These comments reflected

a broader awareness of climate change, with residents warning that flooding, erosion, and water contamination risks will intensify over time. Protecting drinking water sources and strengthening land use regulations were seen as essential strategies to reduce vulnerability to climate impacts.

As time went on, fewer comments were submitted, but they raised sharper, place-specific issues. A particularly urgent concern was uranium exploration in the LaHave River watershed. One resident pointed out, "On June 10, 2025, Council passed a motion to request that the province pause the RFP process for exploration of uranium in East Dalhousie, which is in the LaHave River watershed." This comment reflected fears that industrial activity could undermine both environmental quality and public health in sensitive watershed areas.

Strong support for climate resilience: protect water, limit coastal risks, and steward forests and farmland.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Planning staff met with representatives from environmental organizations to better understand challenges, opportunities, and expectations for conservation and land use planning. The discussion touched on public health, land use regulation, ecosystem protection, setbacks, and municipal support for conservation efforts. Participants emphasized the need for stronger regulation, science-based standards, and municipal leadership in advancing conservation goals.

Public Health, Natural Assets & Regulation

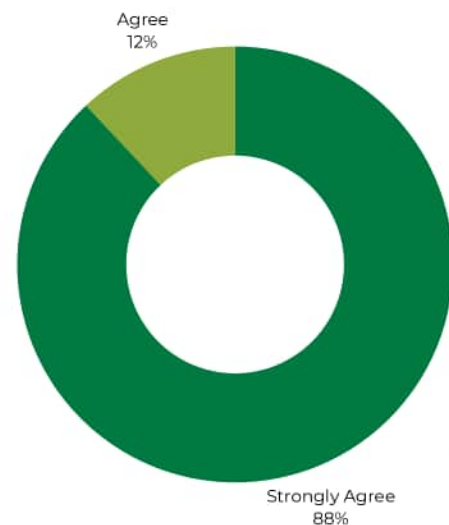
Participants stressed that connections between public health and environmental health are not being drawn strongly enough. They emphasized the role of natural assets, wetlands, and riparian buffers in supporting both ecosystem services and community well-being. As one participant noted: "There is no way to protect against industry if we don't have regulations or policies in place."

Feedback frame results reinforced this concern:

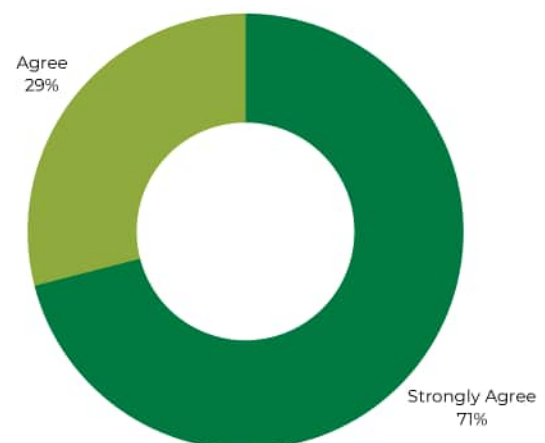
- 100% of respondents (strongly agree: 71%, agree: 29%) supported stronger protections for designated protected water areas.

- 100% (strongly agree: 88%, agree: 12%) agreed that natural shorelines with existing vegetation are one of the most effective tools for preventing erosion, flooding, and contamination.

Vegetative buffers more effective for erosion/flood control



Restrict development around drinking water lakes



Impact of Limited Land Use Regulation

Stakeholders shared that without regulation, landowners often adopt a mindset of “I can do anything I want,” particularly along lakeshores, leading to infilling, hard armouring, and habitat loss.

They also noted that lack of regulation inflates the value of sensitive lands, making conservation acquisitions more difficult. Conservation groups argued that stronger zoning and municipal policies would help rebalance land value with ecological priorities.

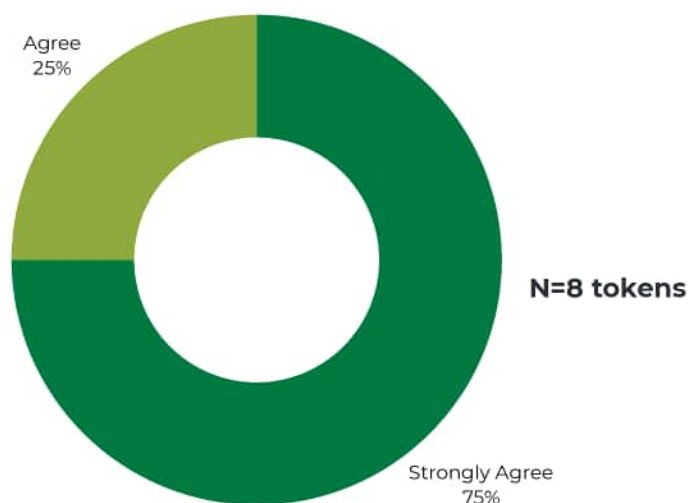
Protecting Watercourses & Sensitive Areas

Participants supported stronger protection for inland watercourses and wetlands, recommending tools such as riparian land buy-backs, municipal conservation easements, and conservation tax exemptions. They also flagged risks from invasive species (hemlock woolly adelgid) and blue-green algae, emphasizing that climate and biodiversity issues must be part of watercourse planning.

Feedback Frames Responses alignment was strong:

- 100% (strongly agree: 75%, agree: 25%) supported mandatory setbacks from lakes, rivers, and wetlands.
- 100% (strongly agree: 63%, agree: 37%) supported rules limiting development around these water bodies.
- 100% (all strongly agree) supported identifying and protecting sensitive lands from development.

Setbacks Required From Lakes, Rivers & Wetlands



Conservation Zoning and Land Designations

Stakeholders expressed strong support for specific conservation zones,

particularly for watersheds and drinking water supplies. One participant called it “one of the best mechanisms, as long as it comes with communication and education.”

Feedback Frames responses reflected this:

- 86% (strongly agree: 71%, agree: 15%) supported limiting development on lands identified by land trusts or environmental groups as having conservation value.
- 100% (strongly agree: 71%, agree: 29%) supported restricting development around lakes that supply drinking water.

Setbacks and Differentiated Standards

There was strong consensus that setbacks should be science-based and scaled depending on land use. Stakeholders argued that industrial and livestock uses should face stricter setbacks than residential or recreational uses. One participant noted: “We need to put some of this environmental burden on industry.”

Feedback Frames responses reflected this:

- 100% (strongly agree: 83%, agree: 17%) supported larger setbacks for heavy industry and livestock near watercourses.
- 100% agreed that setbacks should be relative to watershed size and vulnerability, though 43% were neutral or cautious about how to apply this in practice.

Municipal Role & Support for Conservation

Environmental organizations emphasized the importance of MODL acting as an advocate and amplifier. “Uplift the voices of conservation groups – especially when the province is trying to muzzle special interest groups,” one participant urged. They recommended that MODL should:

- Support living shoreline projects and other demonstration sites
- Integrate conservation priorities into the climate change strategy
- Partner with organizations such as MTRI and Clean Foundation for education and knowledge-sharing
- Ensure evidence-based, science-backed policy takes priority over political or industry influence

Housing

HOUSING

The topic of housing was another identified key theme. This section summarizes the input received on housing throughout all engagement methods, including input from housing stakeholders.

Public Input Survey and Other Comments

Survey respondents called for an improved housing market to attract and retain young people, with many pointing to the shortage of affordable housing options in MODL. Residents felt there was a need for lower rents, mixed-income housing, and alternative housing options such as cooperative housing. Some residents acknowledged the difficult balance of drafting regulations that are flexible enough to encourage new housing, while still making sure that some housing units are dedicated as affordable. "More diversity, more options, more competition to let the market do it's thing and bring up "availability" and bring down prices".

Concerns were also raised about the prevalence of summer homes and Airbnb's and the impact these may have on community character and the cost of living 15 years from now. "What is going to change? We have no community because our road is a revolving door of visitors."

Other residents argued that there should be no limitations on living in RVs given the current housing crisis, though some flagged potential issues around garbage and sewage.

Housing Information Board

Comments on housing emphasized the need for more housing supply and a wider variety of options, from co-ops and tiny homes to cluster housing and off-grid living.

Affordability was a central concern, with calls for lower rents, fairer land prices, and the inclusion of lower-income units in new developments.

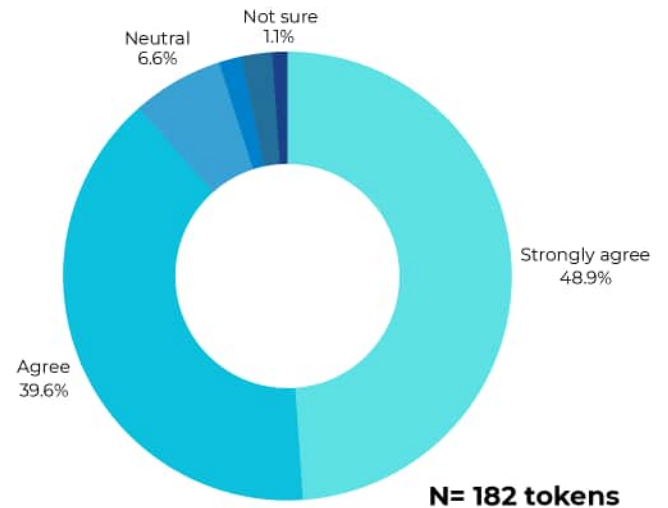
Residents also suggested accessible and safe housing across income brackets, and assisted living options. Some forms of alternative housing sparked debate, with some supporting RVs and tiny homes and others cautioning about septic systems, and protecting natural features.

Feedback Frames

There should be specific regulations for campgrounds and RV parks to minimize the impacts on things such as neighboring properties and the environment.

Participants mostly agreed that there should be regulations for campgrounds and RV parks. Regulations should be balanced, evidence-based, and specific to the context. There were also a few comments about how campgrounds and RV park represent an eyesore to the shoreline.

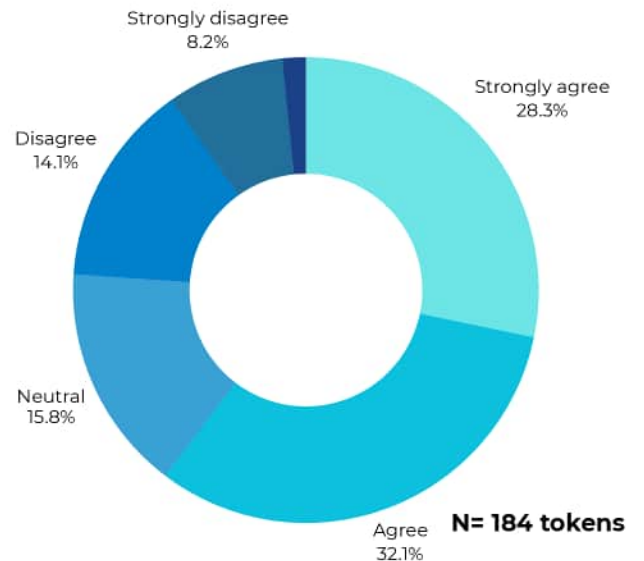
There should be specific regulations for campgrounds and RV parks to minimize the impacts on things such as neighboring properties and the environment.



People should be allowed to live in a recreational vehicle year-round, as long as there is an appropriate system for disposing of sewage.

Comments mainly represented the perspective that people should be allowed to live in a recreational vehicle (RV) year-round with some standards for servicing and visual aesthetic, taxation, and garbage collection. "For most young people traditional housing and renting is not affordable!" However, there were a few comments that opposed the idea. For example, one person said "Absolutely not. Especially where there are many such vehicles on one property with no environmental controls".

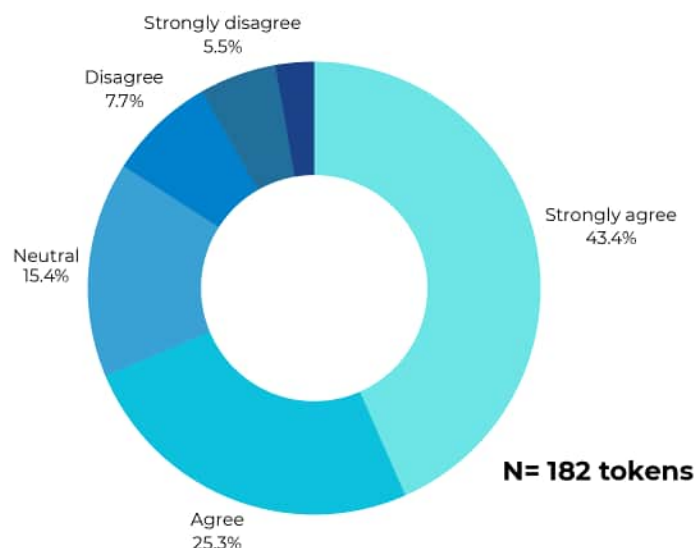
People should be allowed to live in a recreational vehicle year-round, as long as there is an appropriate system for disposing of sewage.



We need to study the impact that short term rentals (AirBNBs, etc.) are having on our housing market.

Public feedback was mixed on this statement. Many agreed that a study is needed, highlighting concerns about housing affordability, loss of long-term rentals, and the impacts of investor-owned properties on neighborhoods. Others felt that regulation is more urgently needed than further study. While some emphasized the economic benefits of Airbnbs, especially for tourism and local homeowners, many supported limits on short-term rental operations, with suggestions to align local policy with larger municipalities like Halifax.

We need to study the impact that short term rentals (AirBNBs, etc.) are having on our housing market.



Social Media

Housing was the most frequently mentioned theme, with 150 related comments. Earlier comments focused heavily on lot sizes, setbacks, and housing affordability, often tied to residents' sense of rural independence.

One participant argued, "We don't need your 'planning' on our property. If we wanted to live in a city we'd move to one. We live in the country because we want space and freedom." These concerns reflected the view that regulations could erode the choice and flexibility that many associated with rural living.

Other residents raised anxieties about fairness and intergenerational opportunity. One warned, "So I just don't get it, why would those who have owned land for years be penalized from creating lots for their children?"

Another echoed this concern, writing, "It's all about control. Things are about to get worse for young people who want a home here."

As time went on, fewer comments were received, but the focus turned to how regulations would apply in practice. Some questioned whether rules would realistically fit MODL's rural context, describing the proposed regulations as "insane rules and laws - please stop trying to tell people how to live on their own land."

Throughout the engagement period, housing emerged as a central concern shaped by strong feelings about independence, affordability, and fairness.

Residents emphasized that land use planning must preserve rural freedom while also ensuring opportunities for future generations to access and afford housing in MODL.

Housing: protect rural freedom while ensuring affordability and opportunities for future generations.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

On July 16, 2025, MODL held a housing stakeholder engagement session that brought together community members, service providers, and those with lived experience in housing challenges. The conversation highlighted the urgent need for attainable housing, diverse housing options, better guidance for development, and improved municipal advocacy. Participants spoke to the unique challenges of delivering housing in rural communities and offered concrete suggestions for municipal action.

Housing Challenges and Needs

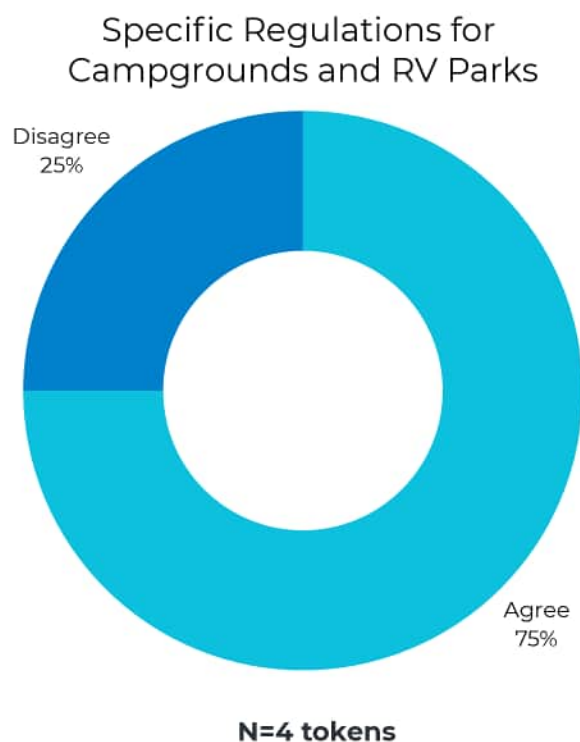
Participants emphasized the difficulty of moving residents from rental cycles into attainable home ownership. They noted that many people do not fully understand the home-buying process, from financing to long-term maintenance. "People do not know how to buy a house, beyond just getting the down payment," one participant explained.

There was strong support for diverse housing options, including transitional housing, secondary suites, and designs based on universal accessibility. The age and condition of existing housing stock, combined with high costs of

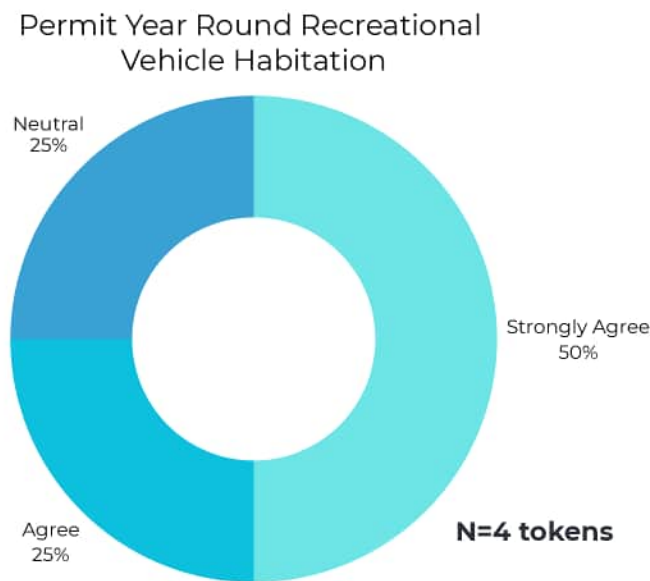
maintenance, were seen as compounding affordability challenges. Attendees also flagged a negative stigma around affordable options such as RVs and tiny homes.

Feedback Frames responses reflected this concern:

- 75% agreed or strongly agreed that residents should be allowed to live in RVs year-round, provided proper sewage systems are in place.
- 75% agreed or strongly agreed that short-term rentals such as AirBnBs should be studied for their impact on the housing market.



The feedback frames, where participants voted using tokens, also complemented the conversation: 75% of respondents supported allowing year-round habitation of recreational vehicles, while 25% remained neutral



Municipal Role in Supporting Housing

Stakeholders agreed that municipal policy must be paired with practical tools. Donating or facilitating the transfer of surplus land for housing was seen as a strong municipal role. One respondent commented, "Prioritizing or scorecarding applicants based on their commitment to financially accessible home ownership makes sense."

Feedback Frames responses supported this:

- 100% of respondents strongly agreed that MODL should create a policy to transfer or sell surplus municipal land for housing opportunities.
- 100% strongly agreed that a surplus land policy should provide greater incentives for non-profit housing over private housing.
- 100% strongly agreed that working with social enterprises and non-profits should be a priority.

However, participants also emphasized that expectations must be managed: "Don't let developers get free land and then build cheap housing just to make money." They urged MODL to ensure donated land leads to lasting, affordable outcomes.

Vision for the Future

Participants envisioned a flexible, inclusive housing system that supports innovation, community-led solutions, and a "good enough to start" approach. Feedback frames showed strong urgency, with 75% supporting more market supply and unanimous agreement on prioritizing partnerships with non-profits and social enterprises.



Transportation & Infrastructure

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

This section includes a summary of the feedback received on both transportation and infrastructure collected through the Public Input Survey, the information boards, and social media.

Public Input Survey and Other Comments

Transportation

The topic of transportation was mentioned in some of the survey responses. These comments emphasized the need for thoughtful transportation planning, improved rural public transit options, as well as active and pedestrian transportation infrastructure. Suggestions included the identification of rural hubs to act as transportation centres, improving rural bus services, and establishing community connections with bike lanes and sidewalks. Some residents mentioned a lack of transit options for youth and seniors.

“Lack of collective transportation to go to Halifax.”

“... a lack of busses etc for my teens who would like to work.”

“I feel like the lack of transit is a problem. LC Wheels helps, but not in urgent situations after hours, etc. Car sharing would help, or even incentives for neighbors helping neighbors.”

Concerns about road maintenance and traffic safety were mentioned many times throughout the survey responses. However, the topic of roads falls outside the scope of this project, and are not municipal jurisdiction.

Infrastructure

Residents emphasized the importance of reliable infrastructure to support growth, with particular focus on clean drinking water, wells, sewage disposal, and the idea of extending municipal services beyond existing serviced areas. Some called for thoughtful development and strategic planning to protect neighbouring property owners and to ensure the adequate supply of water and other factors. Concerns were also raised about the amount of development taking place in MODL with worries about the carrying capacity of the land, including pressures on ground water supplies, the potential for well contamination, environmental impacts such as pollution and threatened endangered species, as well as a range of nuisances like noise, traffic, and light.

One resident called “for very careful research regarding infrastructure (water, sewage, traffic patterns etc.) before development. For any such projects to not impinge upon the rights of land use to the neighbouring landowners.”

Some concerns were shared about new higher-density developments taking away from the servicing and infrastructure for existing residents. Some expressed the need to align future residential developments with existing transit options and infrastructure needs. One person said, “my concern is the amount of highly dense buildings and how fast they are being built but we do not have the infrastructure or other resources to sustain these people. We have very little shopping choices, doctors, specialist as it is. Now we are increasing our population with no way to support the people who are already here.” Another said, “some level of new residential development can be encouraged, but not to the point where it leads to pressure for additional services and public infrastructure.”

One respondent highlighted the importance for stormwater management and urged MODL to adopt a stormwater by-law to prevent flooding and environmental implications.

“As a Civil Engineer practicing in green infrastructure and stormwater management, I also emphasize the importance for all NS municipalities to have a stormwater by-law that requires all development sites to balance post-development stormwater runoff to pre-developed (undeveloped) conditions, through on-site stormwater management. Local municipalities that do not have such a by-law in place are increasingly subject to significant increases in downstream flooding and unplanned infrastructure and environmental costs due to unmanaged stormwater in new developments.”

Transportation and Infrastructure Information Board

The feedback on the Transportation and Infrastructure Information Board revealed some interest in a transit service in addition to other rural mobility options. Cheap, free, inexpensive, convenient, efficient, and sustainable were just a few of the adjectives used to describe an ideal transit service for MODL.

"MODL absolutely needs a sustainable transit service - cheap, frequent, quick, and operates on evenings and weekends. Perhaps an Uber x LCW hybrid model". Bike lanes were referenced as well.

Road conditions were a common frustration amongst residents who commented on this board.

Residents want better maintenance of provincial roads, including roads in Cookville and back roads. "Provincial roads should be maintained for safe transport. This will encourage development of land for residential purposes." Although most roads fall outside of municipal jurisdiction, it is still important to highlight this concern. There was also some apprehension about road safety and accidents on trails. "The ATV trail onto Pine Grove Road is dangerous. The speed of traffic needs to be slowed down."

The comments on this board indicated that residents want MODL to be intentional about infrastructure planning.

Two comments demonstrated contrasting views on this topic:

"It should be addressed during the development planning stage. Get infrastructure, transportation cooked prior to finalizing development i.e. Apartment building, subdivisions, sidewalks, medical, schools etc."

"Reverse the build first, then worry about infrastructure".

There was a sentiment that infrastructure needs to be well maintained and equitable. There was a comment about ensuring that the 99% do not bear the brunt of infrastructure costs. "Corp taxes need to be increased to pay for infrastructure & housing. The 99% need support".

Social Media

Transportation and infrastructure concerns were raised frequently, with about 55 transportation-related comments and numerous others tied to water, sewer, and basic service provision.

Many residents questioned whether the municipality was focusing on the right priorities. One participant argued, “Keep in mind that your plans for OUR property don’t change the fact that basic services like roads are being ignored.” Another noted the limits of municipal authority, asking, “MODL aren’t responsible for the roads, so why are they talking about this?”

Beyond roads, a significant share of feedback focused on infrastructure tied directly to housing and development.

Residents raised questions about whether water and sewer systems could support growth, how costs for upgrades or expansions would be distributed, and whether new rules would restrict access to existing services.

Over time, concerns became more pointed. Some residents worried that service restrictions

would punish rural communities already underserved by public systems, while others pressed for fairness in how infrastructure decisions were explained and applied.

These comments show that residents view infrastructure and transportation as fundamental to livability and fairness in MODL.

While some frustrations fell outside municipal jurisdiction, the feedback underscored the importance of linking land use planning to visible, practical improvements in daily life and ensuring that growth does not outpace essential services.

Residents see infrastructure and transportation as essential to fairness and livability, urging planning to align with practical services and not outpace growth.

Economic Development



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The theme of economic development was identified as a major theme throughout the engagement period, specifically relating to small local businesses and home-based businesses. This section includes a summary of the economic development related input gathered through all of the engagement methods.

Public Input Survey and Other Comments

Survey responses frequently emphasized the importance of small local businesses in MODL. The responses indicated that a lot of residents are against regulating home-based businesses, emphasizing that these types of businesses are crucial for self-sufficiency and maintaining the local and rural economy.

"I do not wish to have limitations on having a small business out of my home in regard to farming/homesteading at later dates."

"There should not be limits on small scale home businesses in any zone".

"It's unfair and, quite frankly, harmful to place this kind of pressure on small businesses — the very backbone of our communities. These businesses provide employment, support local economies, and contribute valuable tax revenue. Undermining them with restrictive bylaws is not only short-sighted, it's detrimental to the health and sustainability of our rural communities."

While many responses indicated support for home-based businesses and other local businesses, others shared examples of land use conflicts caused by neighbouring businesses or industrial uses. These included noise, traffic, fire hazards, parking, ground water concerns and unsightly properties.

"A commercial auto repair shop opening next door unexpectedly leaves me worried about increased ground water contamination, fire, and noise issues."

"...uncontrolled commercial development or inappropriate uses (i.e. construction related industries) in other wise residential areas with no restrictions on screening etc. We need the commercial but there should be measures in place to reduce land use conflicts and to control use of properties and industrial storage/salvage areas."

Other residents expressed concerns about large corporations harming local communities, with some sharing concerns with industrial types of land uses and businesses such as mineral extraction operations and salvage yards. There was also general concern about how zoning could impact local businesses.

RV parks and campgrounds were also brought up in a few responses, indicating their potential environmental impact and land use issues including noise, light, and traffic.

Overall, there was strong support for local businesses, especially home-based businesses, as being essential to the rural community and economy. Most residents opposed the regulation of home-based businesses with concern that restrictions might threaten their ability to operate in the future.

Economic Development Information Board

Supporting small and local businesses was a key priority of residents who placed a comment on this board. There was particular concern about large corporations and/or foreign investors controlling the local economy.

One resident wrote:

“Prioritizing LOCAL. Make it easier for locals to open businesses than for giant corporations to come in as locals will/do contribute more to local economies rather than profits going to CEOs in other places (provinces/countries)”.

Residents also advocated for MODL to permit small-scale agricultural activities, such as farm stands. These residents emphasized the importance of applying a light touch when introducing regulations so as not to overburden local entrepreneurs and residents trying to make an honest living.

Across the open houses, there were recurring comments about strengthening the local art economy. Green infrastructure and public transportation (e.g. busses) were also cited as opportunities to grow the economy and create jobs in MODL.

Tourism was mentioned as a major economic opportunity. “We need intentional planning around community sustainability including regenerative tourism”. Residents felt that promoting tourism requires investing in improving existing facilities, as well as preserving the natural environment and character that makes MODL so special.

There was also a desire for MODL to thoughtfully plan for commercial development and involve local experts, such as tradespeople, in municipal decisions on project feasibility. Commercial uses need to make sense for the context. One person presented the idea of community hubs saying it would “be great to support community “hubs” with Internet, Biz incubators, community kitchens/dining hall”, suggesting that there is some interest in mixed-use communities with access to services.

In relation to economic development, there were several comments about diversifying the supply of housing, with specific concerns about whether tourist accommodations limit housing options for residents.

Social Media

Economic development drew in 54 Facebook comments. Concerns were strong that the by-law would over-regulate and stifle home-based businesses, small-scale producers, and local entrepreneurship.

One person pointed to barriers for homesteaders and food producers, arguing that new rules would add “numerous additional hurdles for small scale food producers.”

Over time, discussion quieted, with the only related comment pointing residents back to municipal staff for direct conversation about their concerns.

Feedback Frames

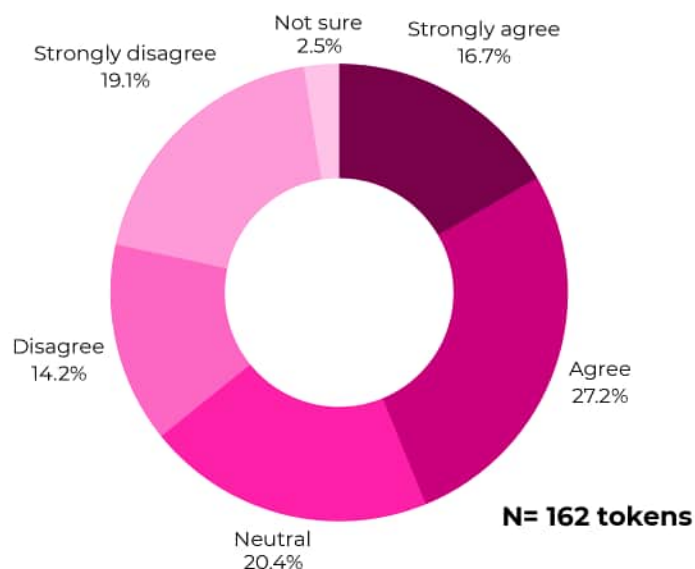
Home-based businesses (HBBs) should be regulated in some residential zones to protect neighborhood character and limit impacts on nearby residents.

The comments reflected a variety of perspectives on the regulation of HBBs. While many comments opposed regulation altogether, others supported some extent of regulation to limit potential impacts on neighbours and streets. Several emphasized the need a case-by-case approach to ensure appropriate regulation without being overly restrictive.

Concerns were expressed about over regulation, particularly for undisruptive HBBs that have minimal impact on the community. Many agreed that these businesses should not be subject to the same rules as high-impact operations. One resident stated that the regulation of HBBs “isn’t generally necessary or supportive of rural livelihoods”.

A recurring theme was the economic importance of HBBs as being a crucial income source for many residents. They argued that overregulating HBBs could result in less local services and have negative economic impacts. One resident wrote, “home-based businesses are a backbone. Our businesses out of homes are what support our economies. Tread lightly!!!”

Home-based businesses should be regulated in some residential zones to protect neighborhood character and limit impacts on nearby residents.



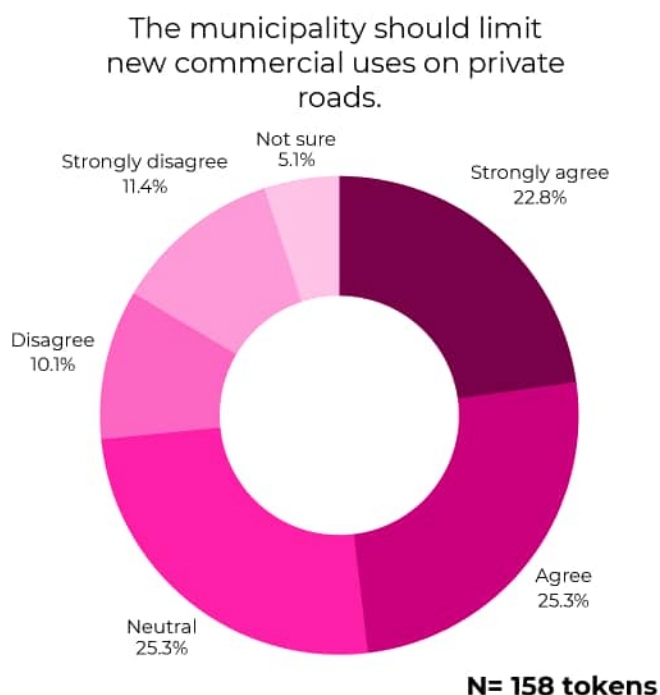
While there was strong support for HBBs, some acknowledged the need for balance and tailored regulations that address issues associated with parking, traffic, noise, and signage of home-based businesses.

“Home based businesses should be regulated to ensure adequate parking that doesn't infer on residents in area or impede traffic laws. I.e. parking on intersections blocking visibility of driveways.”

The municipality should limit new commercial uses on private roads.

The comments on limiting new commercial uses on private roads revealed mixed viewpoints. Some residents think that regulating commercial uses should be through a case-by-case basis, since the impacts on traffic, noise, and road conditions can differ depending on the type and scale of the business. One comment stated, “it depends on commercial uses; it might be decided with community for each case; automobile [dealership] may be more difficult to accept than an art gallery.” Other comments argued that MODL should not regulate commercial uses especially on private roads, since these roads are maintained by private property owners. A resident said, “there should be no additional limits. This is a private road.”

Some supported small-scale businesses such as art galleries or farms, while emphasizing that large-scale or industrial uses generate more traffic and therefore should be held accountable for road maintenance costs. Some opposed commercial uses on private roads altogether due to unfair road maintenance and safety concerns. One resident shared,



“I feel there should be no commercial use on private roads. We own a private road shared with another person and that person plans to develop on his side. It has always been our driveway and we pay for everything. Not fair.”

Overall, views were divided between encouraging local economic activities and protecting the interests of residents living on private roads.

Public Space & Culture



PUBLIC SPACES AND CULTURE

Another identified theme was public spaces and culture. This section summarizes the related feedback from all engagement methods and also includes some public input on heritage.

Public Input Survey and Other Comments

In the survey, some residents spoke about the importance of protecting and promoting public spaces in MODL. While this theme was less prominent than issues surrounding agriculture or housing, those who raised it connected it to values such as equity, accessibility, and supporting future generations. "Priority given to places that are accessible to nature for everyone, not just rich tourists." "Educational/ social spaces are needed for every kind of person, not just people who go to church and are above the age of 60". "More accessible and inclusive to ALL spaces".

According to survey responses, public space means different things for residents. For example, there were several calls for maintaining equitable public access to in-land waterbodies and the coastline shorelines. "Our shorelines need to be protected from being sold off to outsiders who prevent people from accessing recreational activities. Our children and grandchildren will no longer be able to enjoy spaces that we have traditionally enjoyed."

"Making waterways accessible to swimming and boating is important. More public boat launches (not just for lobster fishermen)..." "Maintaining natural areas on the LaHave river for fishing and recreational activities".

Community gardens were also a common interest across survey responses. "More community gardens". "I'd love to see a community garden area that is accessible and affordable in each town /community".

Others described public spaces as parks or green spaces:

"A fenced park for children including a water feature with benches, a green space, picnic tables where grandparents can take their grandkids"

"Better community resources i.e., parks etc. green spaces/after school programs". "Public natural areas expanded/reclaimed".

"Greater protection of green space, specifically forested areas, from industry and development".

These comments are closely related to the ideas mentioned under Environment and Climate Change and speak to the need to protect the natural beauty in MODL.

There were several comments about enhancing MODL culture. One resident wrote, “More country and less city. I would like to see 4H grow and get promoted more. I would like more fair grounds for oxen pulls, horse shows, and more”.

Public Spaces and Heritage Information Board

On the Public Spaces and Heritage Information Board, residents requested that MODL promote more tourism. To support this, they suggested improved signage, a tourism sustainment strategy, more public holidays, and year-round festivals. Many also emphasized the importance of educating tourists on how to be respectful visitors. For example, some residents suggested that there be signs along the route to Tancook Island that communicate the impact of cars on the Island and the fact that it is mostly private property.

Numerous comments called attention to the relationship between the tourism industry and MODL's public spaces. For example, there was a desire to protect public

water access (e.g., swim areas) as well as ensure the responsible and respectful use of MODL's waterfronts. Residents wanted MODL to celebrate local geology, appreciate existing public spaces, and conserve critical ecosystems through partnerships with local conservation groups. A recurring theme was the need to focus on improving existing public spaces before acquiring new ones.

Suggestions for improving municipal parks included adding accessible washrooms, expanding parking capacity, and increasing seating for seniors. Residents also called for the strategic allocation of resources and staff so that public spaces, like parks, can receive regular maintenance. One-off services are not good enough.

When discussing heritage, residents mentioned the built form of MODL as well as the cultural heritage of the community. Some ideas for protecting the built form were creating architectural guidelines and retrofitting aging buildings. From a cultural heritage lens, some residents acknowledged MODL's complicated history with marginalized groups, such as Indigenous peoples. One resident communicated the need to advance reconciliation without erasing the history of oppression.

Several residents stated that MODL should use tools such as place names, plaques, and museums to tell the story of the past. “We can't change history by changing street names. History should teach the wrongs of the past but still be acknowledged as a chapter of our past.”

Some residents also highlighted the value in commissioning public art and broadening MODL's arts programming. Some felt that the draft MPS and LUB did not adequately represent the importance of art to MODL. “No mention of the arts. Visual performing. Very important in Lunenburg”. “What about the arts - All kinds of arts?”

Finally, community stewardship emerged as a theme tied to public spaces and culture. Fostering community stewardship requires engaging with long-term residents, Indigenous communities, and heritage experts when finalizing planning policies related to this topic.

Social Media

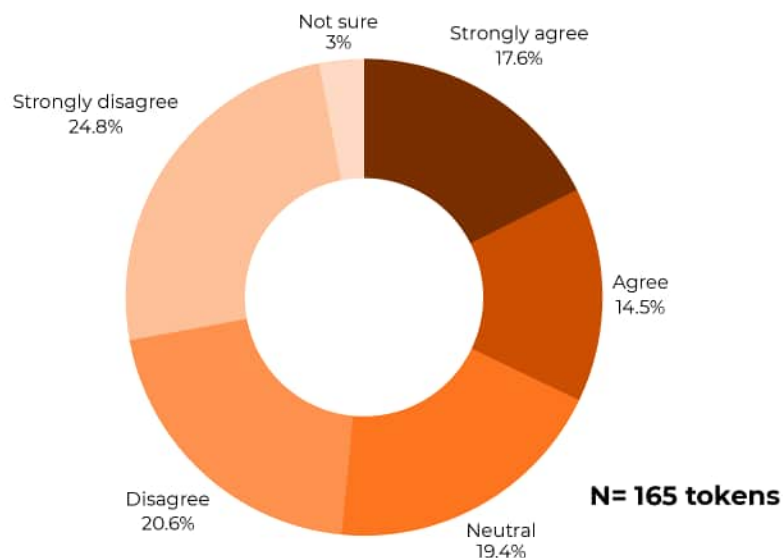
Public spaces and culture were not major themes in the Facebook comments on this project. Many residents expressed their perspectives on the community character of MODL, but these findings were communicated in the Agriculture section, as well as the What We Heard About Planning section of this report.

Feedback Frames

We should look at municipal properties or location names that may be outdated or harmful in order to implement reconciliation and address historical injustices.

Comments were generally opposed to changing the names of municipal properties that are outdated or harmful to reconciliation. Several residents noted that we cannot change the past, changing names moves us closer to forgetting the past than learning from it. "Changing names doesn't change history - don't cancel it out, use it as an opportunity for education and growth". However, one person said, "Yes if the name is offensive we should look for a new suitable name".

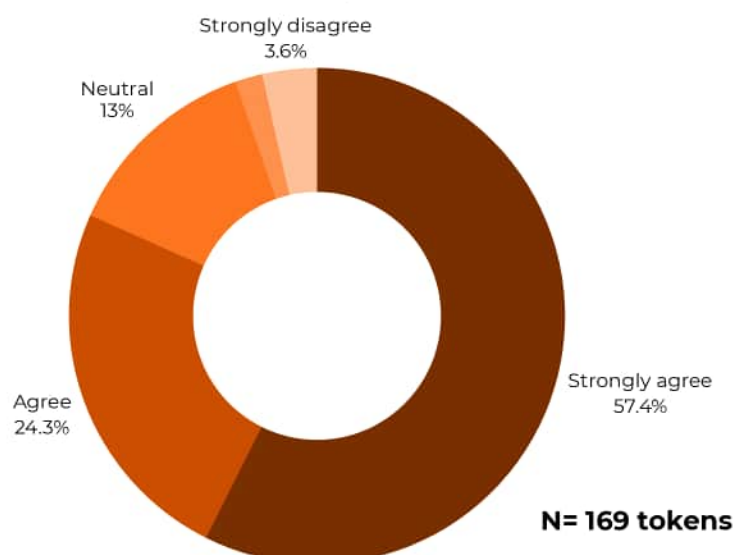
We should look at municipal properties or location names that may be outdated or harmful in order to implement reconciliation and address historical injustices.



There is a need to ensure adequate parkland is provided in new developments.

Comments revealed strong support for the inclusion of parkland in new residential developments. Many comments agreed that there is a need to make sure people have a place to roam and play. Green spaces were described as valuable and important. "Parkland should be a part of life, available to everyone". Connectivity between trails and parks was referenced, as was proper maintenance of parks. One person felt that the cash-in lieu system should be completely replaced by the parkland dedication requirement.

There is a need to ensure adequate parkland is provided in new developments.



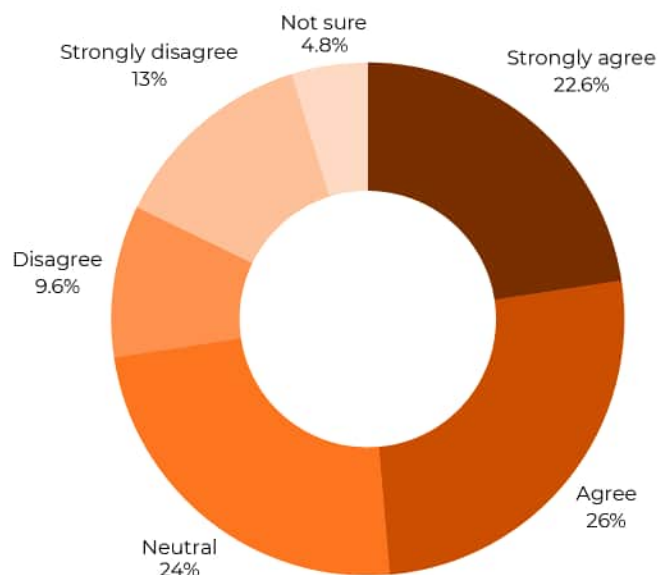
The fees collected for parks through the subdivision process should be increased so that we can invest more money in our parks.

Comments were concerned about increasing the developer fees for parkland, particularly in the context of a housing crisis. Notably, a number of comments needed more detail about what this statement means in practice.

“Context would be nice”. “Who pays the fees and what are they for? Who decides how its spent?”

Nonetheless, there was a consistent acknowledgment of the value of parks to community.

The fees collected for parks through the subdivision process should be increased so that we can invest more money in our parks.



N= 146 tokens

Zoning & Planning Process



ZONING AND PLANNING PROCESS

Feedback on the proposed zoning framework of Draft #1 and general planning processes was collected throughout the engagement period. Residents shared their personal opinions on zoning, as well as very specific property input on the proposed zones. This section summarizes this feedback gathered through the Public Input Survey, social media, and the developers stakeholder session.

Public Input Survey and Other Comments

Survey responses revealed mixed views on zoning. Many opposed zoning and land use regulations altogether. One respondent wrote, “we have a great community and it needs to stay that way without zoning!” While others expressed support for zoning, pointing out some benefits such as protecting community and rural character, limiting land use conflicts, providing predictability, designating areas for future growth and services, protecting the environment, and helping to create safe and peaceful communities.

“Planning and zoning ... should be there so that people have a general sense of how their communities function, to allow for commercial and industrial activities in a predictable and respectful way, and to provide peace of mind for residential neighbourhoods that they can expect the peaceful enjoyment of their homes and properties without fundamental changes to the nature of their communities.”

“I think that the land use regulations should be stricter, there are many people who take advantage of the lack of regulations to commit anti-social acts, and who also jeopardize environmental protection. Land use regulations and zoning protect everyone.”

Several residents provided feedback on the proposed zoning framework, which included specific comments on the permitted and restricted uses in certain zones, and the number of proposed zones with one resident saying, “Too many zones. How are they defined? What sets the boundaries between zones?” Others pointed out discrepancies in the zoning map.

Some residents also shared opinions of how the proposed zoning would positively or negatively impact their own properties. Others questioned how the zoning boundaries were created and how they will change overtime. Some concerns were shared about the impact of zoning on property values, while others

asked for flexible, simple, and less restrictive zoning, “keep it simple, otherwise neighbours turn into zoning police.”

Concerns were also raised about enforcement, with some questioning MODL’s capacity to monitor and enforce the new regulations, the need for additional staff members, and the lack of enforcement of existing land use by-laws. Some respondents even called for stronger by-law enforcement to ensure future compliance.

“I like the designation of School Street in New Germany as hamlet residential. It makes sense given the number of families with young kids living on the street seeking a safer environment for young people to live and the new consolidated school that is coming. I hope such a designation results in the construction of sidewalks and crosswalks, other traffic calming measures, and limiting the operations of auto-repair and similar companies.”

Social Media

Residents expressed a wide range of views on how land use designations and zoning should be applied in MODL. Some were resistant to zoning altogether, concerned it could limit flexibility or create unnecessary restrictions on property owners. As one participant put it, “we don’t want zoning that tells us what we can and can’t do on every acre.”

These comments reflected fears that zoning would reduce land autonomy, particularly in rural areas where people are accustomed to fewer restrictions.

Others supported zoning as a necessary tool to protect valuable resources, guide growth, and reduce land use conflicts. One resident explained, “zoning can help protect what we value most and prevent incompatible uses.”

Supportive comments often emphasized the role zoning could play in protecting agricultural land, sensitive environments, and community character. There were also differing opinions on whether land use designations should be broad and flexible, or detailed and prescriptive. Some argued that detailed designations could provide greater certainty and prevent

conflicts, while others felt that strict regulations would hinder local decision-making and adaptation to unique site conditions.

A recurring theme was the need to balance protecting rural character with allowing reasonable opportunities for development.

In addition, residents raised concerns about how new zoning categories would interact with existing uses. Questions were asked about whether current activities would be permitted to continue, whether certain lands would become too restricted for future opportunities, and how flexibility could be built into the by-law to respond to evolving needs. A few residents worried that zoning could inadvertently discourage small-scale or innovative uses by being overly rigid, while others felt it would provide clarity and fairness across MODL.

Volume of feedback shifted over time. This theme received a high number of comments in the beginning, with many residents questioning what zoning would mean in practice and expressing worry about restrictions. As time went on, fewer comments were recorded, but those received tended to be more specific, focusing on how land use designations might affect properties or activities.

Overall, the feedback on land use and designations highlighted both resistance and support. Resistance was rooted in concerns about loss of flexibility and local control, while support was tied to protection of land, resources, and rural identity. Together, these perspectives reflect the challenge of designing a zoning framework that provides clear rules while also allowing the adaptability that residents value.

**Zoning views split:
some fear loss of
flexibility, others
see protection of
land and rural
identity**

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

On July 16, 2025, MODL held a workshop with five participants from the development community, including real estate agents and a land surveyor. The discussion focused on zoning clarity, subdivision thresholds, environmental regulations, parkland dedication, and servicing constraints. Participants emphasized the importance of clear, predictable rules while raising concerns about costs, timelines, and the impacts of regulation on landowners and housing affordability.

There was general support for the introduction of a Rural Residential Zone as a clear baseline framework, with the view that predictability is more important than the specific standards applied. Much of the discussion focused on rezoning and subdivision thresholds, particularly once projects exceed six lots. Attendees expressed concern that requiring rezoning and hydrogeological assessments at this stage adds significant cost and time pressures: “It doesn’t really matter what the number is, as long as you know the rules to play by.” They noted that rezoning introduces an additional step in the subdivision process, creating more financial risk and delaying approvals, especially for smaller projects.

Environmental and climate-related regulations were also a focus. While participants recognized the need for watercourse setbacks, they questioned the rationale for a blanket 30-metre requirement: “Where did the 30-metre setback come from? I’m more familiar with 15 or 20 metres.”

Several called for more flexible, case-by-case approaches, such as functional wetland assessments or scaled setbacks based on watercourse size. Concerns were also raised about mapping accuracy and communication. Participants noted that colours such as red on maps can deter buyers and fuel misconceptions.

Parkland dedication requirements were viewed as another challenge. Attendees felt that a flat 10% requirement is too high in rural subdivisions where lots already provide green space. Suggestions included a lower baseline (5%), exemptions for small projects, or scaling requirements to lot size. As one participant noted, “Parks are not as desired here as in the city. People buying larger rural lots don’t need more park space.”

Servicing and infrastructure constraints were highlighted as barriers to development. Participants emphasized the importance of municipal advocacy on cell service, internet, and electricity, citing Nova Scotia Power as a frequent obstacle due to high costs and limited grid capacity: "You can't get power to the land without building a road under the power lines and the cost is too high."

Overall, attendees agreed that clear rules and fair regulations are needed but stressed that overly rigid or blanket requirements reduce affordability, discourage investment, and create uncertainty. As one participant summarized:

"People need confidence that their investments are safe. Rules are important, but they also have to make sense."

In a meeting with a public health expert, a key topic was whether MODL should consider an Institutional Zone to set aside land for schools and protect sensitive uses around these areas. Questions were raised on how MODL could ensure that schools, hospitals, and similar institutions are not located next to uses that pose health risks, such as breweries, cannabis shops, vape shops, or fast-food outlets.

If an Institutional Zone is not feasible, it was recommended exploring setbacks from institutional uses as a health safeguard.





Public Engagement Process

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

This section summarizes the feedback that we received on this phase of public engagement.

Public Input Survey and Other Comments

Residents expressed mixed views on the public engagement process of this project. Some called for greater transparency, improved communication, and accessibility of engagement materials, while others were appreciative of the process.

Earlier feedback tended to be more critical about the engagement process, with one resident saying, "Be more transparent about proposed changes. Better advertise legislation changes. Present proposed changes in laymens terms", but sentiments seemed to shift over time becoming more positive as more public meetings were held. Some residents said, "Great job on reaching out to the population and you offer great listening" and "Thank you for the extensive community consultations".

Some residents emphasized the need for staff and Council to continuously engage and to meaningfully reflect resident input in future drafts.

Some residents provided very specific feedback including some fully annotated documents with comments, while others indicated specific details about what they wish to see in this What We Heard Report. Another resident highlighted concerns about the influence of a vocal minority throughout the planning process, saying:

"Any forward thinking ideas will be unpopular as there is a minority of people in the municipality who shoot new ideas down loudly. They are obsessed with their own self interest and not the good of the community, but they do not represent the majority."

Social Media

Residents voiced strong opinions about the planning process itself. Comments highlighted confusion, frustration, and skepticism about how the draft by-law was being explained and debated. Some questioned the use of Facebook for such an important discussion, warning, “We shouldn’t be conducting important municipal business in Facebook comments. This is not a healthy environment for productive discourse.”

This theme first received a large volume of comments, with residents seeking clarity about what zoning changes would mean in practice and questioning whether the by-law would be too restrictive. As one participant admitted, “I’ll admit I know little about this planning and zoning... There’s a bunch of comments here that say ‘this is bad’ but none of them are giving any explanation.” Many of these comments revealed both uncertainty about the process and limited trust in how information was being shared.

The focus of feedback shifted over time, toward meeting logistics and fairness in engagement. Several residents criticized the municipality for not doing enough outreach in local communities and expressed frustration with the way zoning rules were being explained and pressed for clearer, plain-language information. Concerns were also raised about requirements such as barns and setbacks, with some describing them as “unrealistic compared to existing conditions.”

At the beginning, there were significantly more comments focused on general confusion and skepticism.

As time went on, fewer comments were submitted but they centered more on fairness, accessibility, and the quality of engagement.



Key Takeaways

KEY TAKEAWAYS

This section summarizes the feedback received on each identified major theme. It is intended to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the topics and opinions that were shared from both residents and stakeholders throughout the engagement period.

What We Heard About Planning

A major recurring theme was widespread resistance to the planning regulations that were proposed in Draft #1. Many people described the documents as overly restrictive and not appropriate for the rural character of MODL. Through multiple engagement methods, it became clear that autonomy, self-sufficiency, and freedom are deeply held community values.

Over the past few months, we heard a broad spectrum of frustration about the project: from complete opposition to planning, to a preference for only the bare minimum of planning regulations that are required by the province. Of those completely opposed to planning, some were concerned that the project was influenced by corruption, or that property regulations lead to expropriation. While these concerns are not true, this feedback highlights a need for improved communication from municipal staff about the role of municipal land use planning.

However, in addition to these perspectives, we also heard about challenges that residents have experienced, or are currently experiencing with conflicting land uses. We heard from communities that are concerned about too much growth and the possibility of losing the features that sets MODL apart from other municipalities. Nonetheless, when residents expressed support for planning regulations, there was still a sense that planning should be thoughtful and context specific, and regulations should not make the lives of residents more difficult than they already are. Many of those interested in land use regulations were not calling for heavy-handed regulations but wanted regulations that would help maintain what already exists.

Agriculture

Residents expressed strong support for maintaining farming rights and emphasized the importance of being able to grow food and raise livestock without restrictive regulations. Many opposed the livestock regulations contained in Draft #1, perceiving them as being harmful to small farms, and a form of government overreach and over regulation. While most were in opposition, some supported the regulation of keeping livestock for addressing associated land use conflicts. Overall, residents expressed the importance of providing flexibility for farmers and protecting rural lifestyles. There was desire to see all types of agricultural practices be supported, and for sustainable agricultural practices to be encouraged.

The protection of agricultural land was supported by many residents, with some raising concerns about farmland being lost to development and advocating for fallow lands to be brought back into production. Even though many agreed that farmland should be protected, many still want landowners to maintain the right to sell their properties without limitations. Priority was placed on supporting existing livestock operations, with strong resistance to the proposed livestock regulations.

There was overall support at the agriculture stakeholder's session on the protection of valuable agricultural soils and using zoning as a tool to achieve this. Farmers identified the growing friction and land use conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses, and many agreed that establishing setbacks for new residential uses from existing livestock operations could help mitigate this. Overall, there were calls for supporting farmers and removing unnecessary barriers, encouraging local food production, and protecting valuable agricultural soils.

Environment & Climate Change

Comments on this theme highlighted that water is a sacred resource and must be protected for its role in providing drinking water, supporting ecological health, and contributing to MODL's natural beauty.

While many residents strongly support protecting forests, lakes, wetlands, and drinking water sources from development and climate impacts, some expressed skepticism about climate change and concern about overly restrictive regulations that would hinder development.

However, most feedback frame participants agreed that it is important to apply rules to limit development around lakes, rivers, and wetlands, including those that supply drinking water to the nearby towns of Bridgewater, Mahone Bay, and Lunenburg. There were mixed perspectives on how strict these regulations should be, and on the extent to which development should be limited.

Stakeholders expressed more consistent support for setbacks, riparian buffers, and other conservation mechanisms, such as conservation easements and land trusts. It was noted that the lack of regulation in MODL hikes property values, making it more difficult for non-profit conservation organizations to acquire land for ecological protection.

Housing

Residents and stakeholders emphasized the urgent need for affordable, diverse housing in MODL, calling for flexible regulations and options ranging from co-ops and tiny homes, to RVs and secondary suites. While there is strong support for increasing the housing supply, residents want the municipality to ensure that new developments include affordable housing options.

Concerns about short-term rentals and housing opportunities for younger generations were common, while the stakeholder session highlighted surplus land policies, stronger partnerships with non-profits, and clear development guidance as key steps toward a more inclusive, innovative, and affordable housing system.

Concerns about maintaining rural character also emerged in relation to this topic. Many feedback frame participants felt that people should be allowed to live in a RV year-round, provided there is an appropriate system for disposing of sewage. Even more participants wanted specific regulations for campgrounds and RV parks to mitigate impacts on neighboring properties and the environment.

Transportation & Infrastructure

Residents emphasized the need for more rural transportation options that are affordable and accessible, as well as more pedestrian and active transportation infrastructure to help connect communities. Some expressed the need for intentional infrastructure and transportation planning to ensure that adequate servicing and amenities are available to support new developments. There was also some desire for the expansion of municipally serviced areas.

Some concerns were raised about the pace of development in MODL with specific worries about groundwater supplies, the contamination of drinking water, stormwater management, environmental impacts, and other nuisances such as increased traffic. There was a sense of agreement that growth should not outpace access to services and amenities.

Economic Development

Many residents expressed opposition to the regulation of home-based businesses, emphasizing that they are crucial for sustaining the local rural economy of MODL. There was a great deal of support for small, locally owned businesses, with some specifically emphasizing support for agriculturally related business activities such as farm stands.

At the same time, some residents raised concerns about zoning in general and the impact that it could have on businesses, with some stressing the importance of avoiding over regulation. Some residents were supportive of addressing land use conflicts associated with home-based businesses, but many felt that a case-by-case approach should be considered. Concerns were also raised about the impact of mineral extraction operations and large corporations on the local economy and environment.

Enhancing local tourism was identified as an economic opportunity, with some emphasizing the importance of preserving the areas character and natural beauty. However, some concerns were raised regarding the impact of tourist accommodations and short-term rentals on the local housing market.

Public Spaces & Culture

It is evident that public spaces are very important to the residents of MODL. Residents care about maintaining public access to natural assets such as the coastline and having more spaces like community gardens. Comments about public spaces were often tied to residents' vision for the future of MODL. Residents want to make sure that their kids have places to play, and that these spaces are not lost to development. Residents also want MODL to focus on maintaining the existing public spaces, including parks, as opposed to acquiring new ones.

Most participants agreed that there is a need to ensure adequate parkland is provided for new developments. People were less sure about whether the fees collected for parks through the subdivision process should be increased.

Residents generally did not feel strongly that municipal properties or place names should be changed to address historical injustices. Generally, residents noted the importance of remembering the past, not erasing or forgetting it. Residents felt that removing parts of history would make it easy to overlook the mistakes that were made in the past, as well as the lessons we learned along the way.

Zoning & Planning Process

Overall, mixed views were shared on the topic of zoning. Some expressed a resistance to change, issues with the loss of land autonomy, and concerns about limiting future opportunities for development and businesses. Others supported zoning and certain planning processes, with many highlighting the range of benefits that can come from land use planning such as protecting community character and the environment, reducing land use conflicts, and ensuring a sense of predictability.

There was a level of agreement that less restrictive and flexible zoning would be appropriate for the rural areas of MODL. A common theme was the importance of balancing the preservation of rural character with allowing reasonable growth. Collectively, these opposing views underline the challenge of creating a zoning framework that provides some extent of rules, while maintaining the flexibility that many residents value.

Public Engagement Process

Residents expressed mixed views, with both opposition and support for the draft documents and the public engagement process. Some initial comments reflected skepticism, confusion, and frustration, while others were appreciative for the opportunity to participate. Many called for greater transparency, clearer communication, and better accessibility of engagement materials with particular emphasis on the use of plain language.

Many agreed that both Council and staff need to continuously engage with residents and meaningfully incorporate the feedback into the future draft planning documents. Some concerns were raised regarding the enforcement of the new regulations, with some residents questioning staff capacity, and others calling for stronger enforcement.

Overall, there was an emphasis on engagement efforts needing to be more transparent, educational, and responsive to the needs of the rural communities of MODL.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS & FEEDBACK

Throughout the engagement period, we received a significant amount of resident input that specifically relates to land use planning. Residents also raised concerns and provided feedback on topics that are outside the scope of this project. While these topics cannot be addressed through this work, it is important that the comments are not overlooked. The additional topics are listed below in no particular order.

- Road maintenance and traffic safety
- Enforcement of unsightly properties
- Garbage collection and illegal dumping
- Property taxes
- Exploratory mining
- Unsustainable forestry practices
- Need for more abattoirs
- Seasonal service gaps
- Trail maintenance
- The Nova Scotia Building Code
- The Subdivision By-law
- Cell service and internet connectivity
- Electric utility reliability
- Support for youth, elderly and full-time residents
- Improved healthcare and emergency services
- Rising cost of living
- Facilities for visitors and the travelling public
- Presence of ticks
- Barking dogs



04 15-Year Vision for MODL



15-YEAR VISION FOR MODL

The Public Input Survey asked residents how they would like their community to look 15 years from now. Many envisioned a supportive, family-oriented place, where the elderly are taken care of, and a place where youth want to stay. One resident hoped to be able to remain in their own home at the age of 90, surrounded by supportive neighbours, and accessible transportation options.

Several residents expressed desire for a diverse multicultural society, while others voiced concerns about the implications of immigration. Some specific comments mentioned improved safety and walkability, more rural transportation options, greater reliability on renewable energy sources, and better upkeep and curb appeal of private properties. There was also desire for the continuation of the rural land use activities that make this area unique, including farming, fishing, and forestry. Overall, residents hoped to live in a place where everyone is supportive of one another, trustworthy, and mutually respectful.

"I would like to see controlled development, clustered around existing hamlets and towns to encourage public transport options. A great goal would be to have the county retain most of what we have now, in terms of forest, lakes, wilderness and biodiversity, so that we don't see a completely different place in 15 years".

"I would like our community to look much like it does now. Quiet, peaceful and friendly".

"I want to see rural life remain the awesome life it is now!"

"I would like to see the community grow and flourish with people growing their own food and being more self-sufficient like many of us are trying to do. I want to see people participating in small scale agriculture on their own properties to feed and support themselves as well as share abundance with the community".

"I envision for Lunenburg County to be a high trust society, where doors can be unlocked, kids can be at large, and even if there were nuisance neighbour bylaws in place, they'd become irrelevant".

05 Spotlight on Tancook



SPOTLIGHT ON TANCOOK

The open house session held at the Big Tancook Island Community Centre on June 11, 2025, drew in 40 Tancook Island residents who asked questions, provided input, and spoke with planners and staff. This Spotlight on Tancook page is meant to highlight some of the specific feedback that was received at this meeting and through the Public Input Survey. The feedback received from these residents

revealed that Tancook Islands face unique challenges and changes such as the use of recreational vehicles and tourist camping, inappropriate lighting issues, new large homes, the new car ferry, as well as sense of geographical separation from the rest of MODL.

There were specific comments made on preserving and celebrating the historic character and activities of Tancook Island. "Unique stones on Tancook - celebrate!" and "can we designate Tancook as a heritage area?" Some residents indicated that a specific zone could help address the islands unique needs and values, "we want to be our own 'rural' + unique zone in the MODL!" and "we need to be considered our own unique zone."

"A special by-law is needed to ensure we are not overrun with travel trailers. This ruins the traditional look and feel of this place"

"Abutting [land use] boundaries with other municipalities comes into play for Tancook Island, most folks just assume we are part of Chester municipality, with the ferry moving to Blandford this separation from MODL will be even more pronounced. Are we even in the right municipality?"



06 Data Limitations



DATA LIMITATIONS

A variety of methods were used to engage with as many residents as possible. However, participation was self-selected, meaning that those who participated wanted to comment on the project. Additionally, some residents may have shared the same input multiple times. As a result, though the engagement activities were extensive, the findings of this report do not claim to be representative of every resident in MODL.

As mentioned in the How We Engaged section of this report, several engagement methods were added after the open houses began. For example, feedback frames were introduced in late May, after some open houses had already taken place. It is important to highlight that this variation in engagement tools may have influenced the type and volume of input received across locations.

We also acknowledge that equity-denied groups may have faced some barriers to participating in engagement activities. For example, we received a comment that someone with a wheelchair or a mobility issue might not have been able to easily engage with the information boards at the open houses. Additionally, much of this

phase of engagement occurred in late spring and summer. These seasons tend to be busy for many residents in MODL including, but not limited to, single parents, tradespeople, and those working in natural resource related sectors such as agriculture.

Another limitation of this report is the absence of Indigenous perspectives in the feedback collected. This represents a gap in the findings. More effort can be taken to meaningfully practice and honor the words in the land acknowledgment for this report.

We recognize a key data limitation, that a summary report of What We Heard, may not convey the depth of perspectives shared throughout the engagement process. We appreciate the vast amount of detailed and thoughtful input received from residents across all of MODL.

07 Next Steps



NEXT STEPS

Thank you to everyone who participated in the public engagement activities on the Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning Project over the past several months. Planning staff received a substantial amount of resident input during the public engagement period for this project. Whether you left a Facebook comment or attended an open house, we sincerely appreciate your time and your thoughts on this work. These insights will be a valuable source of information for Council and staff, and will serve as a foundation for the future land use planning documents that will be shared with the public in Spring 2026.

A Directional Report and a series of Council workshops will take place in late Fall 2025 to provide staff with further direction when writing the second drafts. Pending Council approval, staff will prepare new draft documents of the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law through Winter 2025-Spring 2026, incorporating the findings from this engagement summary. Additional public engagement will take place after the second drafts are released to the public.

To stay up to date on the Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning Project, or to subscribe to receive notification of project updates, please visit: [**https://engage.modl.ca/modl2040**](https://engage.modl.ca/modl2040).





Learn more at:
engage.modl.ca/modl2040
planning@modl.ca
or (902) 530-2802

Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning What We Heard Report

October, 2025

This What We Heard Report was completed by the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg's Planning and Development Services Department.

Appendix

- Engagement Project Summary Handout
- FAQ Handout
- Public Input Survey
- Public Engagement Information Boards
- Agriculture Stakeholder Event Questions
- Developers Stakeholder Event Questions
- Housing Stakeholder Event Questions
- Environment Stakeholder Event Questions

Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning

What is it? Why is it required?

In 2018, the Province of Nova Scotia announced that all municipalities must create municipal-wide land use plans to direct future development, protect the environment, and manage infrastructure efficiently. In response, the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (MODL) has been working to develop a plan that follows the province's requirements and guides growth in MODL over the next 20 years.

Statements of Provincial Interest

The Statements of Provincial Interest are standards set by the provincial government that municipalities must comply with and incorporate into their planning documents. These include:

Drinking Water: Ensuring safe, high-quality drinking water sources are protected.

Flood Risk Areas: Preventing development in flood-prone areas to reduce damage and safety risks.

Agricultural Land: Preserving farmland to support local food production and the agricultural economy.

Infrastructure: Encouraging efficient use of municipal services to manage growth sustainably.

Housing: Supporting a range of housing options to meet community needs.

Implementation of Land Use Planning

Implementing municipal land use planning requires two key documents; the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and the Land Use By-law (LUB).

Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS): Sets goals to guide the municipality's growth and contains policies that outline the intent of the different zones and land use regulations.

Land Use By-law (LUB): Carries out the intent of the MPS by outlining the specific types of buildings and land uses that are permitted in each zone.



Zoning

Zoning categorizes land into different uses such as residential, commercial, industrial. Each zone often has its own rules. This helps communities grow in an organized way, protects property values, and supports the environment. It also prevents conflicts between different uses, ensuring homes, businesses, and farms can coexist while keeping the area's character and long-term uses intact. The specific goals and rules of each zone are found in the MPS and LUB.

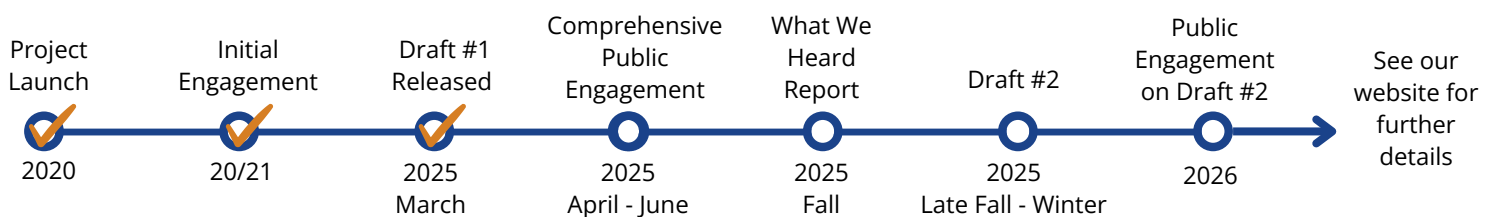
Existing Uses and Buildings

When municipal-wide planning is implemented, the land use regulations only apply to new developments or changes that happen after the new rules come into effect. Existing uses and buildings do not have to meet the new rules and are considered grandfathered or “non-conforming.” They can continue to exist legally without any need to change.

Have Your Say!

We want to hear directly from residents about the Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning Project. Staff and Council will attend events across every district—see the complete list under the Open Houses and Events tab at engage.modl.ca/modl2040 or by scanning the QR code below. Can't make an event? Share your thoughts by emailing planning@modl.ca or calling a Planner at (902) 530-2802 between Monday to Friday, 8 AM–5 PM.

Project Process



Scan to learn more about this project and upcoming engagement opportunities!

Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is zoning and why is it important?

Zoning regulates land use by dividing areas into zones focused on uses such as residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural, each with its own rules. Zoning helps communities grow in a safe and planned way. It protects property values, keeps people safe, helps the environment, supports jobs and businesses, and keeps rural areas peaceful and natural.

2. What is the purpose of the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB)?

The MPS is a plan that shows how the municipality wants to grow in the future. The LUB is a set of rules that helps make that plan happen by controlling how land is used and what can be built. Together, they are intended to promote sustainable, organized growth by addressing issues such as population changes, economic development, environmental sustainability, and community needs. These documents ensure land use regulations remain current, aligning with the municipality's future goals and provincial standards.

3. How will the MPS and LUB affect my property?

The MPS and LUB are rules that explain what you can and can't do with your property. Every property will be put into a zone, like for homes, businesses, or farms. If you want to build something or make changes to your property, these documents will tell you what is allowed and what steps you need to take.

4. How does the MPS and LUB align with provincial regulations?

In 2018, the Province of Nova Scotia made it mandatory for all municipalities to have land use plans and zoning for every property.

The MPS and LUB must also follow provincial rules called "Statements of Provincial Interest." These rules help protect things that are important to the province, like housing, roads, clean water, farmland, and areas at risk of flooding.

5. Who decides what is included in the MPS and LUB?

The MPS and LUB are written by professional planners, with extensive input from community members, stakeholders, and elected officials. The final documents are approved by municipal Council.

6. How do I know if my property is affected by zoning changes?

You can check your property's zoning through engage.modl.ca/MODL2040 or at the municipal office, where you'll find maps and detailed information on current zoning regulations and any proposed changes.

7. How can I provide feedback on the MPS and LUB?

Public consultations are held during all stages of the development of the MPS and LUB. You can participate by attending public meetings, submitting comments, or contacting municipal planning staff directly. Comments and input are welcome at any time at planning@modl.ca.

8. How will zoning and land use regulations affect my property taxes and property values?

Property taxes are based on assessments by the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC), which updates values annually using "Market Value Assessment." The municipal government sets tax rates, applied to the capped assessment value. Zoning changes do not automatically increase taxes. Property values are also assessed by PVSC under the Nova Scotia Assessment Act.

9. What if I live in an area with an existing Planned Areas with Land-use Bylaw?

Zoning is already in place in several communities within MODL, including Blockhouse, Hebbville, Hemford Forest, Oakland, Osprey Village, Princes Inlet & Area, and Riverport & District. The secondary planning strategies are proposed to remain unchanged for now and will be incorporated into the new document as appendices. Draft #1 includes specific policies/regulations that would override the secondary planning areas, where the new document may be more stringent (wetlands, watercourse setbacks, cluster developments and coastal protection). The secondary plans will be revisited and updated/incorporated with the new document one-by-one once this project is completed.

10. Will I be able to change the zoning of my property in the future?

You can ask to change the zoning by applying to the municipality. The process normally includes a public meeting where people can share their thoughts, and then Council makes the final decision.

11. Will new regulations force me to change a building or use that is already in place? What is a legal non-conforming structure or use?

No, you won't have to change something that was built or used legally before the new rules. A "legal non-conforming" building or use means it followed the old rules (or was there before any rules) but doesn't meet the new ones. These are often called "grandfathered." They're still allowed and can be fixed, expanded, or rebuilt if damaged.

12. Can these documents be changed in the future?

Yes, Council can make changes to planning documents at any time. Different processes are required depending on the level of change being considered, but most involve a public notification and commenting process and approval by Council. These documents must be reviewed frequently to make sure they're kept up to date.

13. What is the expected project timeline?

Council is committed to taking all the time needed to ensure that the planning documents reflect the needs of residents.

Municipal-Wide Land Use Planning Public Input Survey

Name: _____

Email: _____

Community: _____

Complete this survey online by
scanning the following QR code:



1. Based on what you've heard or read, do you have any thoughts or comments on the recently shared draft land use regulations?

2. Are there any issues or challenges that you are currently experiencing in your community?

3. Are there any topics that you think should be addressed through land use planning?

4. What would you like your community to look like 15 years from now? Is there anything you would like to see changed? Is there anything you'd like to see stay the same?

5. Do you have any additional ideas or comments that you'd like to share?

**Please return this survey to a planner
or drop it off at the municipal office.**

WELCOME TO THE MUNICIPAL OPEN HOUSE

Read on: What to expect today

Brief welcome statement

Staff will say a few words at the start of the open house. A short presentation is available online at engage.modl.ca.

Read handouts & boards

We encourage you to take handouts and read the information boards around the room. Each board speaks to a theme that can be addressed through land use planning.

Provide input

Have your say in the process by sharing your thoughts and ideas on sticky notes and placing them on the boards.

You can fill out a municipal survey online, or in-person today. Physical copies of the survey are available at the front table and can be returned there or to the MODL Municipal Services Building at a later date. Please don't hesitate to ask staff if you have trouble finding them.

Speak with staff & Council

Councillors and MODL staff are here to answer your questions about the process and about land use planning.

How does your input factor into the decision-making process?





Municipal Wide Land Use Planning Project

The municipal-wide land use planning project is an initiative of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg to develop a comprehensive Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB) for the entire municipality. This municipal project is being carried out in response to provincial legislation introduced in 2018, which requires all municipalities to adopt planning documents that meet minimum planning standards and align with the Statements of Provincial Interest. These guidelines are referenced in the Municipal Government Act. The project will guide future growth and change across the municipality—preserving the rural landscape and community character, protecting natural and cultural assets, and supporting the development of healthy, sustainable, and resilient communities.

What is land use planning, and why is it important?

Land use planning is the process of managing how land is developed and used to ensure that growth benefits the community while protecting the environment. In this case, it focuses on balancing the needs of people, the economy, and nature, with a special emphasis on preserving rural landscapes. Effective planning also ensures efficient infrastructure and transportation systems, making communities safer, healthier, and more connected.

Statements of Provincial Interest

 Housing



Agricultural Land Protection



Infrastructure



Flood Risk Areas



Drinking Water Supply

What is a Municipal Planning Strategy?

A municipal planning strategy is a key policy document that sets long-term goals and direction for land use, development, and environmental protection. It guides zoning, permitting, and other regulations to ensure growth aligns with community values and provincial requirements.

What is a Land Use Bylaw?

A Land Use Bylaw is a regulatory bylaw that controls how land is used and developed. It includes general provisions (like setbacks and lot size) and zoning rules for specific areas, helping ensure growth aligns with community goals and supports sustainable, organized development.

How will this impact residents/properties?

- All properties will be zoned.
- Existing uses and structures are grandfathered.
- Future uses and structures will need to follow the new rules.
- Zoning in existing planned areas will largely remain unchanged.
- Zoning can and will be changed over time as needed.

Project Timeline



For more information or to share your feedback on the project, please visit engage.modl.ca/modl2040 or email the project team at planning@modl.ca or call (902) 530-2802

Environment & Climate Change



The natural landscape of the municipality is integral to its cultural identity and ecological well-being, creating a distinctive environment for residents and visitors alike. From lakes and rivers to forests, wetlands, and coastal areas, these diverse ecosystems provide essential services that support both nature and community life.

Environment in MODL

- 14% of MODL's land is covered by lakes, rivers, and wetlands, including the Oakland Lake, Dares Lake, and Milipsigate, Hebb & Minimkeak watersheds.¹
- 72 dry wells were reported in 2022 - all during summer droughts.²
- MODL has approximately 111,018 hectares of coniferous forest and 42,593 hectares of deciduous forest.³
- MODL has an estimated 4,000 wetlands, key to filtration, flood control, and biodiversity.⁴

Provincial Planning Requirements

Provincial guidelines underscore the importance of prioritizing environmental protection. The emphasize safeguarding natural features and proactively planning for climate risks, such as flooding. Additionally, the Statements of Provincial Interest highlight the requirement to protect drinking water, which requires municipalities to identify water supply watersheds and implement measures like restricting development near these vital sources.

Tools & Approaches



Setbacks and Buffers

Horizontal setbacks and vegetative buffers are well-known, effective tools to protect inland watercourses like lakes, rivers, and wetlands from contamination and sedimentation.



Coastal setbacks and buffers, approved in June 2024, are now in effect to protect development from erosion and flooding while preserving natural shorelines.



Zones

Zoning tools like lakeshore and conservation zones can help protect the environment—limiting development near water and preserving natural areas while allowing low-impact uses like hiking.



Protected watershed zoning is an approach to protect drinking water by restricting development in the watershed protected areas.



Studies

Water or environmental studies can help determine environmental impacts, or see if there's enough water to support larger developments without causing harm.



Education

Awareness of wildfires and drought can help shape regulations and protect residents.



For more information or to share your feedback on the project, please visit engage.modl.ca/modl2040 or email the project team at planning@modl.ca or call (902) 530-2802





How do you think the environment and climate change should be addressed? Are there any specific tools and approaches that you prefer?

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Natural resource industries including agriculture, fishing, forestry, and resource extraction are the backbone of MODL's economy and cultural identity. Agriculture in particular, plays a vital role in local food security, the economy, and the ongoing viability of the regional food system. However, farmland is currently facing various threats from development pressures, land use conflicts, and climate change. Protecting farmland and supporting the sector can help address these challenges and ensure long-term benefits for current residents and future generations.

Agriculture in MODL

- Approximately 15% of all lands are classified as Class 3 soil which is considered prime for agriculture.¹
- There has been a 22.3% decline in land used for crops between 2011 and 2021 excluding Christmas tree area.²
- In 2021, 6.3% of the total workforce was employed in agriculture, fishing, and hunting which is almost double the provincial average.³

Provincial Planning Requirements

In Nova Scotia, the protection of agricultural lands is a Statement of Provincial Interest. Therefore, municipalities must identify agricultural lands and planning documents must include an approach for preserving these lands. Provincial guidelines also state that planning documents must include statements of policy regarding resource uses.

Tools & Approaches



Maintaining Farmland

Limiting the subdivision of lots can help to maintain large parcels of farmland and reduce land fragmentation. This can involve regulating the number, size, and density of new lots.



Restricting Topsoil Removal

Limiting topsoil removal can help to preserve valuable agricultural soils. This approach is commonly used in municipalities where high quality agricultural soils are present.



Setbacks

Setbacks for barns and manure storage facilities can help prevent land use conflicts such as noise or smell from occurring between agricultural operations and other uses. Setbacks can also help protect watercourses and drinking water supplies from contamination.



Regulating Land Uses

Permitting agricultural land uses and activities in established agricultural areas, while limiting or restricting other non-agricultural uses can help to ensure that the agricultural sector can thrive.



Regulating Structures

Regulating structures associated with natural resource industries including agriculture, forestry, mining, and pits and quarries can be used to prevent land use conflicts and environmental contamination.



For more information or to share your feedback on the project, please visit engage.modl.ca/modl2040 or email the project team at planning@modl.ca or call (902) 530-2802





**How do you think agriculture and natural resources should be addressed?
Are there any specific tools and approaches that you prefer?**



Economic Development



MODL's growing and diversifying economy benefits both local residents and the wider south shore region. Land use planning can help support this continued growth. Planning for economic development involves considering a range of uses including commercial and industrial uses, home-based businesses, and tourist accommodations such as short-term rentals, campgrounds, and RV parks.

Economic Development in MODL

- In 2022, there were 7,315 jobs in MODL.¹
- In 2021, there were 1,964 businesses with 64% of them being small businesses with 5 or fewer employees.²
- The largest industry sectors by employment are construction, retail, manufacturing, and agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting.³
- In 2023, there were approximately 256 home-based businesses throughout the unzoned areas of MODL.⁴

Provincial Planning Requirements

Provincial guidelines state that planning documents must address commercial and industrial land uses. It emphasizes the importance of planning for commercial and industrial uses to help guide and support economic growth as well as addressing land use conflicts.

Tools & Approaches



Pre-zoning

Identifying and reserving lands for future commercial and industrial developments can be used to ensure that the rules support business activities and minimizes the potential for land use conflicts.



Flexible Zoning

Zoning that permits a range of commercial and industrial uses can be used to ensure that the type and size of the use is appropriate.



Planning Processes

Planning applications like site plan approvals, development agreements, and rezoning can allow for more appropriate oversight to ensure larger developments are suitable with their surroundings.



Signage and Parking Requirements

Signage and parking requirements in commercial areas can help guide development in a compatible way.



Setbacks

Setbacks can be used for certain types of commercial and industrial uses to prevent land use conflicts and protect environmentally sensitive areas from contamination.



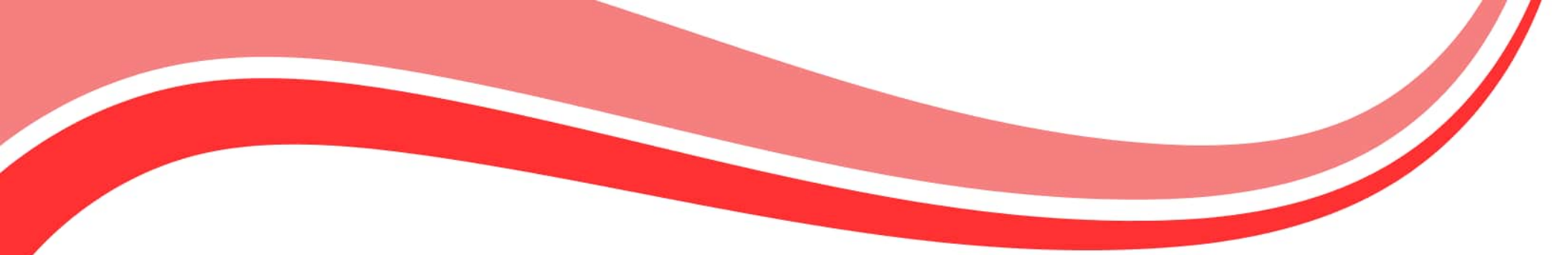
Regional Approach

Regulations can be aligned with neighbouring municipalities to support regional economic growth and development.



For more information or to share your feedback on the project, please visit engage.modl.ca/modl2040 or email the project team at planning@modl.ca or call (902) 530-2802





**How do you think economic development should be addressed?
Are there any specific tools and approaches that you prefer?**



Public Spaces & Cultural Heritage



Parks, public spaces, and heritage sites are essential to healthy, connected, and vibrant communities. They support active lifestyles, gathering spaces, and preserve community stories and traditions. As populations grow and change, protecting these spaces and local culture can promote well-being, community pride, and local economic growth through tourism.

Public Spaces and Heritage in MODL

- MODL's 65+ population will make up 54% of the total population by 2041, highlighting the need for park and open space accessibility.¹
- While coastal and inland waterfront access is highly valued by the public, approximately 87% of MODL's waterfront properties are privately owned.²
- There are currently 13 municipally and 4 provincially registered heritage properties in MODL.³

Provincial Planning Requirements

Provincial guidelines require planning documents to include policies regarding institutional uses, recreational facilities, and public open spaces.

Tools & Approaches



Heritage Uses and Flexibility

Recognizing heritage as both historic buildings and natural areas can allow them to be reused in ways that keep their character while serving new purposes.



Zoning

Zoning can protect parks and institutional uses from conflicting activities like heavy industry, and encourage their placement near compatible uses such as schools and residential areas.



Create New Parks in Growth Areas

In fast-growing areas, land for parks can be required when new neighborhoods are built so green spaces can keep up with community needs.



Strategic Parkland Acquisition

Parkland and trails that connect neighborhoods can be used to support active transportation and protect natural features like waterways, scenic views, and culturally significant sites.



Improving Waterfront Access

Efforts to protect historically used pathways to waterfront areas can be supported.



For more information or to share your feedback on the project, please visit engage.modl.ca/modl2040 or email the project team at planning@modl.ca or call (902) 530-2802



How do you think public spaces and cultural heritage should be addressed? Are there any specific tools and approaches that you prefer?



Infrastructure & Transportation



Roads and services like water and wastewater have a significant impact on how communities grow. Land use planning can help make sure new development is serviced appropriately.

Infrastructure & Transportation in MODL

- Cookville is the only area with municipal water and sewer in MODL.
- 21% of roads in MODL are privately owned and maintained.

Provincial Planning Requirements

The Statements of Provincial Interest require municipal planning to focus on efficient use of existing infrastructure by encouraging infilling and compact growth, as well as limiting costly extensions without adequate density.

Tools & Approaches



Water Supply Studies Prior to Development

Groundwater studies can be conducted to ensure new developments won't deplete the water sources of their neighbours.



Connecting to Existing Services

New developments can be required to connect to existing water, sewer, and road services to help reduce costs, prevent sprawl, and make better use of what's already in place.



Zoning to Direct Growth

Zoning can help encourage larger developments that may require servicing to be located where density and infrastructure already exist.

Housing



MODL's mostly single detached housing style will be difficult to accommodate the growing senior population and affordability issues. Land use planning can support a wider range of housing types to suit diverse needs.

Housing in MODL

- The gap in housing demand and supply in MODL was approximately 645 units in 2022, and is projected to increase to 1,195 units by 2027.
- In 2021, 27% of renter households and 20% of lone parent households were living in housing that was unaffordable and did not meet their needs.

Provincial Planning Requirement

The Statements of Provincial Interest require planning documents to include policies on affordable and varied housing types by assessing local needs and supply.

Tools & Approaches



Incentives and Supports

Incentives like pre-approved designs, grants, and tax breaks can be used to encourage affordable housing developments.



Supportive Housing Options

Residential care facilities and small option homes can be permitted across zones that have other residential uses.



Allowing Unique Housing Options

Secondary units in backyards and basements, RVs and tiny homes can offer housing options that are more diverse and affordable.

For more information or to share your feedback on the project, please visit engage.modl.ca/modl2040 or email the project team at planning@modl.ca or call (902) 530-2802





How do you think infrastructure, transportation, and/or housing should be addressed? Are there any specific tools and approaches that you prefer?

Agriculture Stakeholder Open House - June 25, 2025

Note-taking template for round table discussions

Notetaker:

Introductions

- a. Write names, farm type, and farm name in the space below:

Questions 1.

What are some challenges or concerns that you have as a farmer or as someone working in the agricultural sector in the municipality?

Question 2.

Has the lack of land use regulation in MODL impacted you and your farm in anyway?

Secondary question (if needed): What changes have you seen to farmland and the agricultural sector over time?

Question 3.

The protection of agricultural land is a Statement of provincial Interest and needs to be addressed in the planning documents. Some municipalities achieve this by establishing a specific agricultural zone that limits the number of new lots or new private roads. Other municipalities regulate activities and land uses in agricultural areas, or limit the removal of high-quality topsoil.

What do you consider to be a good approach to protecting agricultural land?

Question 4.

Setbacks can help to ensure adequate distances between farms and non-agricultural developments, helping to reduce the potential for land use conflicts between uses. They can also help protect the environment from contamination when keeping livestock.

- a) **What do you think about required setbacks for new manure storage facilities and livestock barns from nearby homes and watercourses?**

- b) What do you think about required setbacks for new homes from existing livestock operations?**

Question 5.

How can the municipality help support the agricultural sector and local food producers?

Question 6.

What are your hopes or vision for the future of the agricultural industry of MODL?

Engagement with Developers on the Draft MPS and LUB

Purpose

To gather feedback from developers and development professionals to ensure the draft Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB) are clear, practical, and aligned with local development needs especially as zoning is being introduced to areas that have not previously been subject to land use regulations.

Why This Engagement Matters

For the first time, many areas of the municipality will be subject to zoning and land use controls. This represents a significant shift in how development is reviewed and approved. Developer/surveyors etc input is essential to ensure that the new policies support responsible growth while remaining workable and adaptable.

Proposed Engagement Methods

1. Targeted Developer, Surveyors and Real Estate Agents Roundtables

- Format: Small, focused discussions with local developers, builders, surveyors, realtors and consultants.
- Focus: Key policy changes, zoning updates, and implementation challenges.
- Benefit: Encourages open, technical dialogue in a constructive setting.
 - A planner lead discussion and a notetaker to ensure active listening.

2. Written Submissions

- Opportunity for developers etc to submit detailed written feedback.
- Clear deadline and explanation of how input will be reviewed and considered.

Topics for Discussion

Zoning Designations & Permitted Uses.

1. **How well does the zoning align with how land is currently being used in rural areas of MODL?**
 - Are there any areas being zoned for the first time where you foresee issues or need more clarity?
2. **The Rural General Zone allows a wide range of uses with minimal restrictions.**

- From your perspective, does this strike the right balance between flexibility and protecting rural character? Are there any uses that should be better defined or managed?
3. **Should subdivision and private roads be restricted to protect high-quality farmland.**
 - Do you anticipate any challenges this may create for development or landowners? Are there scenarios where some flexibility might be appropriate?
 4. **To better protect water quality in lakes experiencing development pressure, would it be appropriate to establish a dedicated lakeshore zone?**
 - Should measures such as setbacks, vegetative buffers, or other land use controls be considered to support water quality protection?
 5. **The previous draft plan proposed that residential subdivisions creating six or more lots from the same parent parcel—with an internal road or shared driveway will be rezoned to the Rural Residential Zone.**
 - This applies whether the lots are created all at once or cumulatively over five years. Rezoning will occur and meet several conditions, including the completion of any required studies such as a hydrogeological assessment.
 - From your perspective, how workable is this approach? Are there any practical concerns you'd like to raise?
 6. **The previous draft plan allowed pre-existing structures and land uses that don't conform to new zoning regulations to continue as "non-conforming uses."**

These uses can remain in place and expand, alter, or change with some restrictions. The Land Use By-law outlines conditions for how and when these structures can be renovated or replaced (section 7.40 of the land use by law and 7.39 and 7.38, 7.14.3 and 7.15.3)

 - From your perspective, do the proposed non-conforming use rules provide enough clarity and flexibility for property owners and builders?

Parkland Dedication & Cash-in-Lieu.

1. **The previous draft MPS proposed increasing parkland dedication or cash-in-lieu contributions from 2% to 5% in rural areas and 10% in growth centres and hamlets.**
 - How do you think this increase might impact development feasibility and project costs?
 - Beyond costs, what potential benefits could stronger parkland dedication bring to new developments, such as enhanced community appeal, marketability, or resale value?

- From your experience, do buyers and renters place value on nearby parks or recreational spaces, and how might this influence demand or pricing?
- Can you share examples or approaches where well-planned open spaces and creatively integrated parkland enhanced community livability while also contributing to development success or faster sales?

2. What concerns or opportunities do you see with applying these parkland dedication policies in MODL's rural and growth centre contexts?

- While dedicating land can be challenging in rural or constrained sites, what positive outcomes might arise, such as stronger neighbourhood identity, enhanced aesthetics, or improved environmental stewardship?
- In growth centres, how might cash-in-lieu be strategically used to develop quality public spaces that boost neighbourhood desirability and support local economic growth?
- From a real estate perspective, how important is access to parks or green space in attracting residents or tenants?
- Are there opportunities for partnerships between developers, the municipality, and community groups to create innovative or multifunctional open spaces that add real value to communities and developments?
- **Use as a prompt to help steer the conversation in a constructive or forward-looking direction, if needed:** How could MODL encourage flexible and collaborative approaches that turn parkland dedication into a community asset rather than a hurdle?

Environmental Protection Measures

- 1. The previous draft proposed 30 m development setbacks and 15 m vegetative buffers from watercourses and wetlands.**
 - How easy or difficult do you think it will be to apply these setbacks during subdivision design and site layout, and what implementation challenges do you foresee?
- 2. The previous draft plan restricted vegetation removal within buffers for specific purposes (e.g., access corridors, hazard trees).**
 - What tools would help with implementation on the ground for example, clear diagrams, permit checklists, or site plan templates?

- Who should be responsible for confirming that vegetation removals meet the intent of the policy- landowners, consultants, or staff?
 - Should there be a permitting process for buffer modifications, or should this be handled during subdivision or building permit review?
3. **From your perspective, how might the introduction of a Lakeside Zone and Conservation Designation shape future development considerations in ecologically sensitive areas?**
 4. **What would help make participation in environmental stewardship programs clear, accessible, and attractive to landowners and developers?**

Agricultural Policies and Zoning

1. **The previous draft MPS introduced a Rural Agricultural Potential Zone to preserve large parcels of land with Class 3 soils.**
 - Preserving agricultural land is important. How do you think we should be doing this? Is it a limitation on subdivision activity (e.g., maximum of two lots/year and six total per parent parcel)?
 - Do these restrictions help protect agricultural land, or could they unintentionally limit rural landowners' flexibility or land value?
2. **The draft policies supported a wide range of agricultural activities, even on lower-quality soils.**
 - Are there opportunities to better support small-scale or non-traditional agriculture that also aligns with development interests (e.g., hobby farms, Agri-tourism, farmers' markets)?
3. **The draft includes detailed setback and separation distances for small-scale and intensive livestock operations.**
 - Do you think these distances are appropriate for managing land use conflict between agricultural and residential areas?
 - Are the requirements clear and workable from a site layout or land-use planning perspective?
 - Would additional education or guidance help landowners and developers navigate these distances more effectively?

Servicing & Infrastructure Expectations

1. **What types of development do you anticipate in the next 10–15 years?**
What kinds of support or servicing are needed from the municipality to enable that growth?
2. **Are you currently facing challenges related to labour, financing, market feasibility, or municipal servicing?**
What is the role for the municipality in helping to address any of these issues?
3. **What is the appetite for denser forms of development outside the current growth centres?**
If there is interest, where do you see that happening?
4. **When it comes to mid- to large-scale developments, such as 10–12-unit buildings; what are the main challenges with on-site services (e.g., water, wastewater, stormwater)?**
5. **For mid- to large-scale rural developments, what is the best approach for determining the number of units for on site servicing?**
 - Can ask a follow up question:
 - how you know there is enough water or onsite sewer capacity?
 - Traffic?
 - Emergency access?

Do you think a stormwater management bylaw would be helpful, and have you experienced challenges with stormwater management in your projects?

MODL Land Use Planning - Housing Session

July 17, 2025

Agenda

1. Brief presentation
2. Roundtable & open discussion
3. Feedback frames

Questions

1. What do you see as the greatest housing challenges in MODL?
2. How can the Municipality support the housing sector in MODL?
3. Have you experienced any challenges when working with MODL to build or enable more housing in the region?
4. Has the lack of land use regulation impacted the housing sector in MODL?
5. What are your concerns for the housing sector when it comes to this project (municipal-wide land use planning)? If any?
6. Are there specific housing policies from other municipalities that you like or do not like? If so, why?
7. What are your hopes or vision for the future of the housing sector in MODL?

Environment Stakeholder Event – July 23, 2025

Relevant Topics:

- Setbacks and vegetative buffers from inland watercourses and wetlands
- Additional setbacks for heavy industrial uses and livestock operations adjacent to watercourses
- Protected watershed zones
- Conservation zones for environmentally sensitive areas
- Lakeshore Zone to protect inland lakeshore communities and habitats

Agenda:

- Welcome presentation / overview of project (slides)
- Round table discussions
- Opportunity for questions with staff and answer feedback frame questions
- Closing remarks

Feedback Frame Questions

1. It is important to identify and protect environmentally sensitive lands and ecosystems from development.
2. It is important to apply rules to limit development around lakes, rivers, and wetlands.
3. Setbacks for new developments from lakes, rivers, and wetlands, should be required to protect water quality and ecosystems from runoff and sedimentation.
4. Heavy industrial uses and livestock operations should have a greater setback from lakes, rivers, and wetlands than other types of development.

5. Natural shorelines that maintain existing vegetation can be a more effective and long lasting tool to decreasing erosion, flooding, and water contamination.
6. The Municipality should limit development on lands identified by land trusts and environmentalist groups as having conservation value.
7. Development around the lakes that supply drinking water to nearby towns should be restricted.
8. The level of restriction on development near watershed areas should be relative to watershed size and contamination vulnerability (ie. The smaller the watershed, the more restrictive).
9. Lands surrounding lakes that experience lots of development should have greater setbacks, larger lot requirements, limits on paved or hard surfaces, and vegetation removal restrictions.

Round Table Discussion

Questions:

1. What are some challenges or concerns that you have for environmental protection in Nova Scotia? Are any of these specific to MODL?
2. Has the lack of land use regulation impacted your organization's environmental conservation work?
3. How do you think inland watercourses and other sensitive ecosystems should be protected from development?

4. What is your opinion on having specific zones to protect conservation lands, watersheds, and lakes?
5. a) What are your thoughts on required setbacks for new development from watercourses? Do you have thoughts or studies on what an adequate distance would be?

b) What are your thoughts on different types of development/land uses having different setback distances from watercourses (heavy industry/livestock operations having bigger setbacks)?
6. We already have municipal-wide coastal protection regulations in place. What similar measures should we consider for inland watercourses, and what should be different? What specific considerations apply to protecting inland water bodies?
7. What can the municipality do to help support local and regional conservation organizations?
8. What are your hopes or vision for the future of environmental conservation in MODL?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to share?