



# Official Community Plan Update

## What We Learned Report Phase 1 & 2

2025-01



TOWN OF  
**COMOX**

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# 1. Introduction

## Background

Fall, 2024, the Town of Comox (Town) kicked off a comprehensive review and update of the current Official Community Plan (OCP). The OCP update is intended to guide the Town’s development for the next 20 years with housing needs as a primary focus. The OCP update process is to be completed by December 31, 2025, as mandated by the province.

The OCP update is building off the Complete Communities project that is currently in progress and set to be completed early 2025. Two land use scenarios were developed through the Complete Communities project and the final land use scenario will create some of the foundational elements of the OCP update.

The OCP update has been broken into 6 phases:



Community engagement will occur throughout the update, focusing on Phase 2 Visioning, Phase 3 Draft Policy Development, and Phase 5 Refining. This *What we Learned* memo summarizes engagement from Phase’s 1 and 2.





**422** Survey Responses



**2500+** Survey Comments



**10+** Social Media Posts Across Channels



**2,669** Individual Engage Comox Valley Project Page Visits

# ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

## 2. Our Approach

A variety of community engagement activities were undertaken targeting broad feedback from a diverse range of Comox residents. The following is a synopsis of the activities that were undertaken. A summary of feedback and key take-aways is included in **Section 3**.

### How We Engaged

Engaging with the community is vital for the OCP update. Various methods were used to gather feedback during Phases 1 and 2.

#### COMMUNITY SURVEY

A community survey was created and distributed through the OCP's dedicated project page on the *Engage Comox Valley platform* November 12<sup>th</sup> to December 10<sup>th</sup>. The survey aimed to gather information on the following:

- OCP vision
- Priorities
- Complete Communities land use scenarios

The survey garnered 422 responses, indicating substantial interest in the update. The survey was promoted via social media platforms and pop-up engagement. Participants who completed the survey were invited to provide their email addresses to enter a draw for a chance to win one of three prizes.

#### POP-UP ENGAGEMENTS

During Phases 1 and 2, one pop-up event was held. The project team “popped up” at the Downtown Comox Businesses Association’s Holiday on the Harbour event November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024. At the event, the team shared information about the update and promoted the community survey.



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## ONLINE COMMENTS

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The social media posts and community survey sparked conversation online. Town of Comox residents and interested citizens engaged in productive dialog about what they enjoy about living in Comox and areas that might be improved or addressed in this OCP update.



Walkability (accessibility for all) to amenities and green spaces 😊  
Comox is already pretty good at this.

23h 4 👍



Maintaining our infrastructure before building more new.  
Promoting our character as a 'small' seaside town.  
Promoting bicycle travel.

23 hrs Like Reply 👍❤️👎 5

## ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL FIRST NATIONS

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Leveraging relationships is an important component of the OCP engagement. A letter inviting K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) to share how they want to be engaged in the OCP planning process was sent to KFN in fall 2024 and with a follow up letter in January 2025.

### How We Informed

Promotional materials and tools were used to promote the OCP update and community survey. These promotional tools helped spread awareness and share information throughout Phase 1 and 2 of the OCP update process.

## ENGAGE COMOX VALLEY PROJECT PAGE

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A dedicated project page was set up under the Town's section of the *Engage Comox Valley* platform. The project page has been visited over 2,000 times throughout Phase 1 and 2 of the project.

## PRESS RELEASES

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A press release was issued to local media and published on the Town's News Releases page on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024. This resulted in a news article shared by *My Comox Valley Now* on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024.

## PRINT ADS

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A print ad was placed in the Comox Valley Record to promote the project's webpage and community survey.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn were used to promote the project and the opportunities to get involved in the process. 10+ posts were shared across the Town’s social media channels.

Paid ads were also used to amplify the reach of social media posts and resulted in positive chatter and feedback around the project.

The social media posts were a larger driver of traffic to the community survey. We saw a spike in visits and survey submissions on days that the Town posted.



## INFORMATIONAL POP-UPS

Unstaffed, informational pop ups were placed at strategic points in the community to share information about the project and the community survey. Pop ups were placed in the Comox Mall and one at the Comox Recreation Centre. These pop ups will remain up throughout the project.



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## 3. What We Learned

### Community Survey

An online survey was conducted on the *Engage Comox Valley* engagement platform, as part of the OCP update's "Visioning" phase. The objective of the survey was to gain an early understanding of the community's vision for the Town's future and initial preferences for ways to accommodate future growth.

The survey also focused on two land use scenarios, which are preliminary concepts developed from the Town's Complete Communities Assessment. Community members were invited to share their thoughts on the maps as an early discussion opportunity. A total of **422 survey responses** were collected between November 12 and December 10, 2024.

#### Survey Introduction

What are the three things you value about Comox today? (n=422)

In this open-ended question, survey respondents could share anything they value about the community of Comox. The most common responses are provided below.

- **Small town charm:** Many respondents appreciate that Comox still has a small-town feel, sharing that it is easy to get around, build a sense of community, and access local businesses in a compact downtown core.
- **Safe and quiet:** Safety was another top theme shared by respondents. They value Comox as a peaceful, relaxed, and family-friendly town with low levels of crime.
- **Proximity to nature / the ocean:** Comox's location, surrounded by the ocean and natural areas, is a big advantage according to survey participants. Specific areas that were mentioned include Filberg Park, Macdonald Wood, Mack Laing Park, Goose Spit, Northeast Woods, and Brooklyn Creek.
- **Walkability and trails:** 76 respondents mentioned Comox's walkability and easy access to many daily needs, including schools and essential services.
- **Amenities:** Survey respondents appreciate that Comox is close to many important amenities, both within the community or just outside. The library, community centre, golf course, and Marina Park were the most referenced local amenities.

What are the top three things that you would like to see improved or changed within Comox now or in the future? (n=422)

The most common things that respondents wanted to see improved or changes within Comox included:

- **Road infrastructure, traffic and parking:** Many respondents would like to see improvements to Comox's transportation network, including better roads and

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Over two-thirds of respondents (68%) agreed or strongly agreed with the current OCP vision statement, suggesting a high level of support. Of those respondents, over half (51%) supported the statement generally, and 17 percent indicated that the current statement needs no changes. Meanwhile, 16 percent of respondents said they were neutral on the vision statement, and another 16 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the vision statement. Approximately four percent of respondents thought that the statement needs to be redrafted.

**Current Vision Statement:** *"The Town of Comox is an active residential community that welcomes all ages. The heart of Comox is the Downtown – a compact, pedestrian friendly area with a lively mix of commercial services, housing and public services. Comox enjoys strong connectivity within and between neighbourhoods, commercial/service areas and the waterfront through a variety of transportation choices. Comox embraces its natural areas and surroundings, recreational opportunities and ambiance as a unique seaside town. Comox will grow in a way that maintains and enhances community livability."*

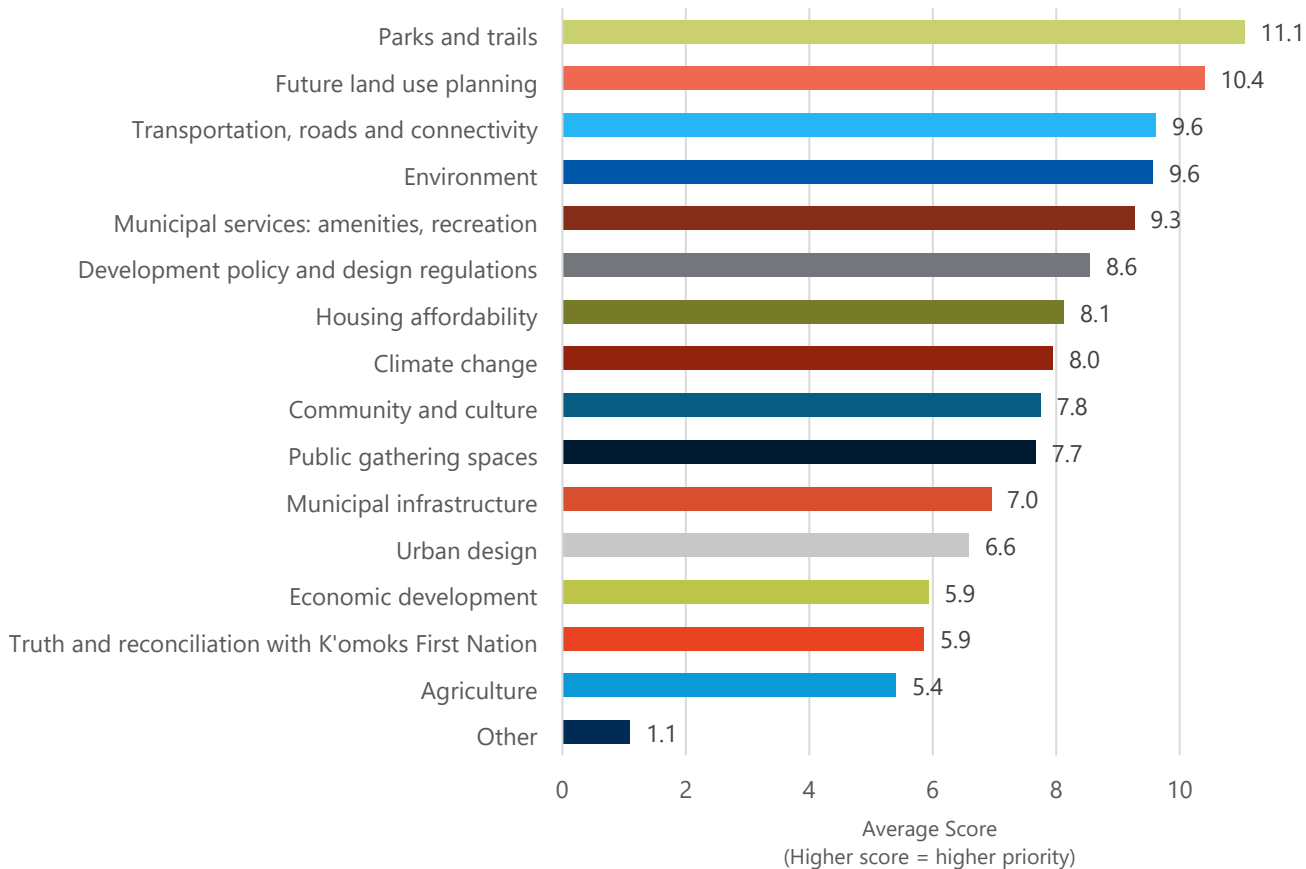
Please explain your selection. (n=346)

Respondents could then explain why they agreed or disagreed with the current OCP vision statement. Most responses reiterated their support for Comox being a livable, pedestrian-friendly place to live with protected natural areas.

Of the comments that provided additional feedback:

- Some comments suggested that the vision statement can do more to emphasize greenhouse gas reduction, air quality, and connectivity for all vehicle modes (bikes, transit, walking, etc.).
- There were also concerns about growth and development, with some respondents warning about potential strains on local infrastructure, parking, and traffic when higher densities are introduced. These responses urged for a more gradual approach to growth.
- Other comments saw ways to enhance Downtown Comox with a livelier mix of activities to attract more people, especially younger people and families. These comments saw greater potential for the area, with suggestions to make it more pedestrian-friendly and attract different business types to what is currently within the core.

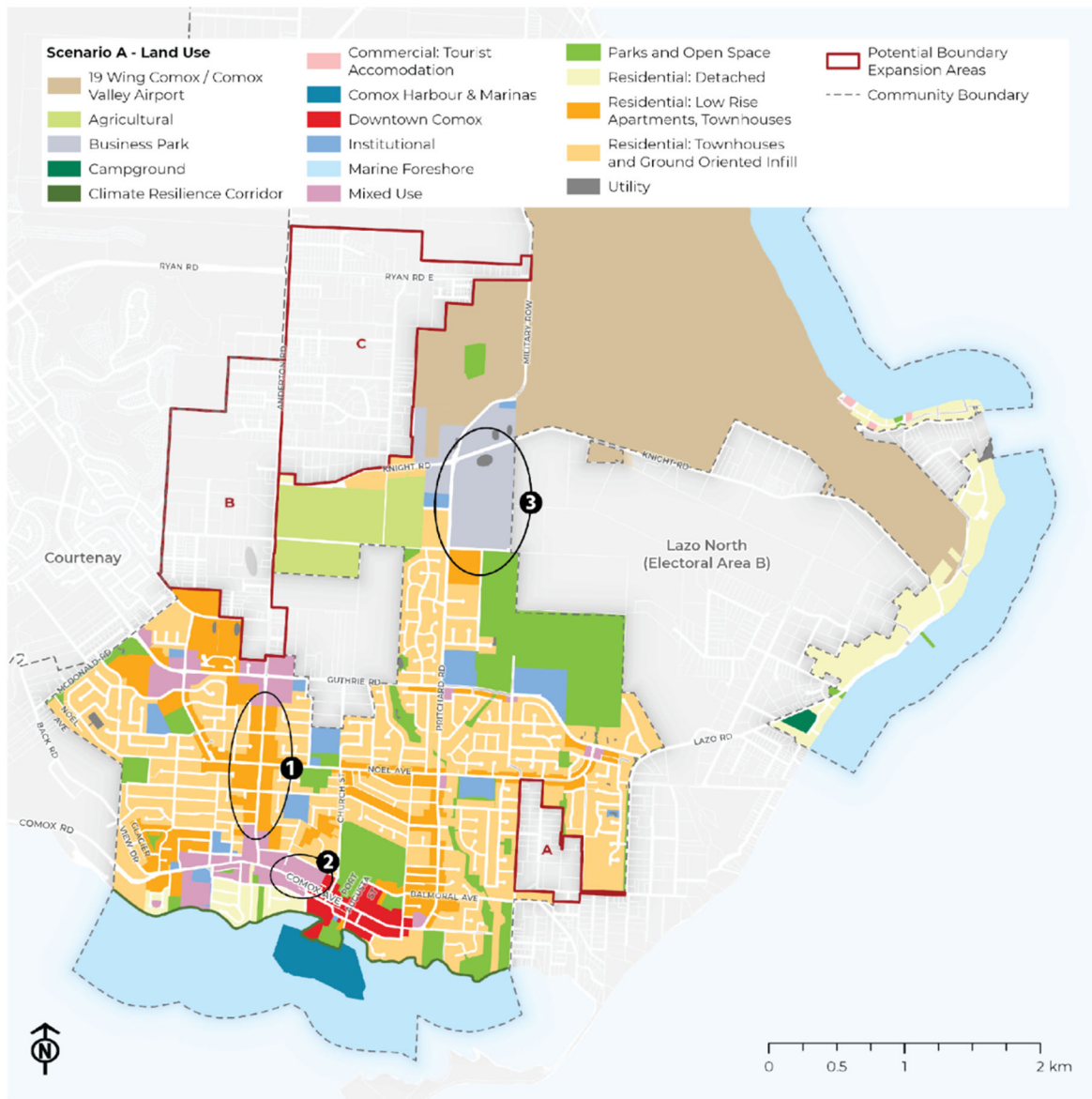
Please prioritize the issues below by ranking them in the order of importance to you.  
(n=422)



Survey respondents were asked to rank a list of 16 different issues against one another. On average, respondents indicated “parks and trails” as their top priority, followed by “future land use planning,” “transportation roads and connectivity,” “environment” and then “municipal services: amenities and recreation.” Of those that selected “other”, one of the common themes was reconciliation with K’ómoks First Nation.

## Land Use Scenarios

### Land Use Scenario A



#### What do you like about land use Scenario A? (n=422)

- Overall, respondents supporting Scenario A liked that housing designations were concentrated along main transportation corridors and supported by commercial hubs. The approach was seen as a sensible way to accommodate growth in already urban areas, without the need to increase greenfield development in other areas of Comox.
- Respondents appreciated the concentration of mixed-use designations on Anderton Road (#1) to maintain a residential feel while keeping the area walkable.

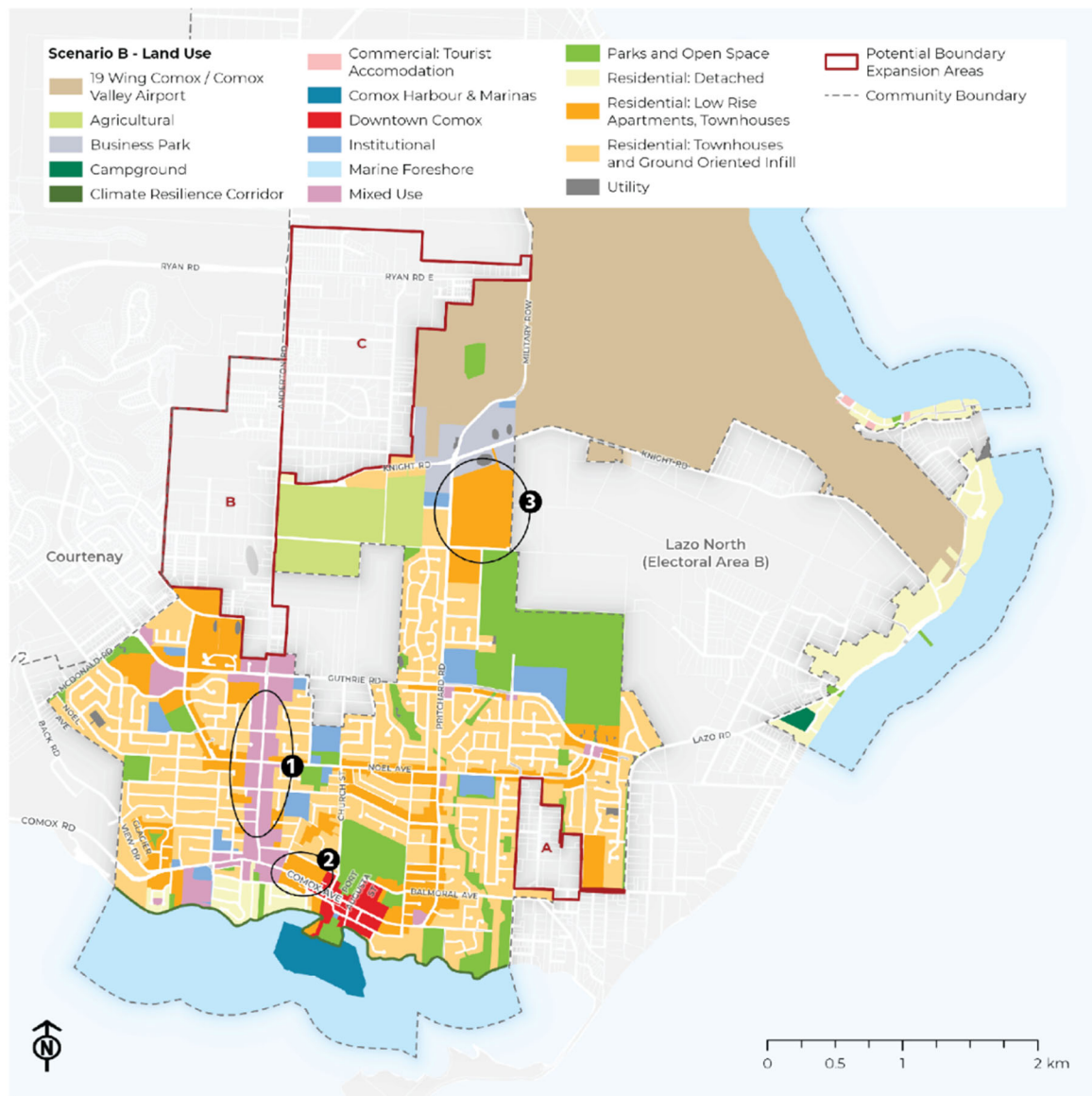


- Survey respondents liked the idea of expanding Downtown Comox (#2) to allow for more services, shops and multi-family housing within the core. Respondents saw this as a more efficient use of the area.
- Respondents who supported the business park designation on North Pritchard and Knight Roads (#3) commented on its potential to create local jobs, generate tax revenue and keep industrial traffic away from a majority of homes.

#### What do you not like about land use Scenario A? (n=422)

- Survey respondents expressed concern about increased residential density and activity along the Anderton Corridor. Respondents noted the current traffic issues on Anderton and warned that the current road infrastructure is insufficient for low-rise apartments or townhomes.
- Respondents noted the potential environmental and community impacts of the proposed business park area. They warned that development of this area would result in the loss of urban trees, and the area's proximity to protected park spaces also drew concern. Respondents also noted that surrounding residential properties would be negatively affected by noise and traffic generated by the business park.
- The proposed downtown expansion in Scenario A drew some concern, with respondents saying that it might dilute the appeal of Downtown Comox as it is today. Other concerns related to increased congestion on Comox Avenue, parking, encroachment of residential areas to the east, and the unknown demand for more commercial spaces.

## Land Use Scenario B



### What do you like about land use Scenario B? (n=422)

- Respondents who supported Scenario B liked the potential for more housing and amenities on North Pritchard Road (#3). They generally agreed that the size of the area would suit multi-family dwellings and increase housing availability for residents. These respondents preferred this approach to the proposed business park designation, which they feared would increase traffic and noise to the area.
- Respondents liked keeping the downtown boundary unchanged (#2) because it maintains the charm and small-town feel of the core. Respondents said that expanding the core could create more traffic and activity, making it a less relaxing place to gather.

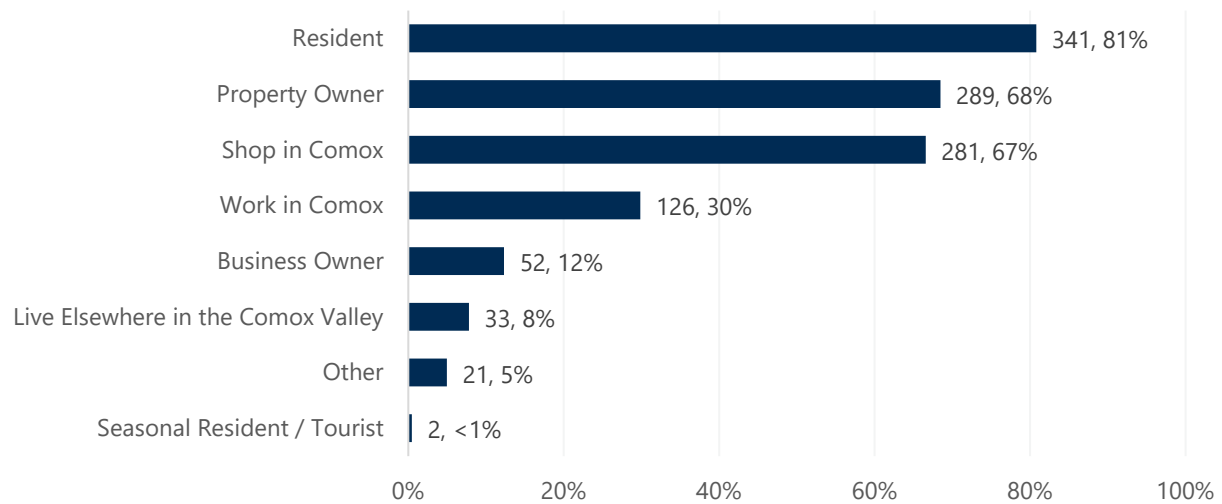
- Making Anderton Road an “urban shopping street” (#1) was seen as a creative way to bring more shops and services to Comox, reducing the need for people to travel outside of the community. Respondents suggested that it wouldn’t draw business away from downtown but instead bring more people to Comox in general.

#### What do you not like about land use Scenario B? (n=422)

- Respondents who did not like the Anderton mixed use corridor said that Scenario B might lead to an unappealing “strip mall” effect on the area. They feared it would detract from downtown’s vibrancy and draw economic activity away from the core and waterfront. Traffic congestion and road safety might also become an issue, if mixed use were to be spread across Anderton Road.
- Respondents said that leaving Downtown Comox unchanged would decrease interest in the core and disadvantage local businesses. These respondents said that the Town should celebrate and enliven its core to attract visitors and families to Comox.
- Concerns about the multi-family designation on North Pritchard Road included the environmental impact of development, the current lack of family amenities in the area, the effects of densification away from the Town core, and transportation concerns such as transit service and traffic.
- Overall, respondents who did not favour Scenario B said that the land use designations could create commercial sprawl and diffuse economic activity away from the heart of Comox, as opposed to a more concentrated village centre that maintains neighbourhoods and industrial activities to their own areas.

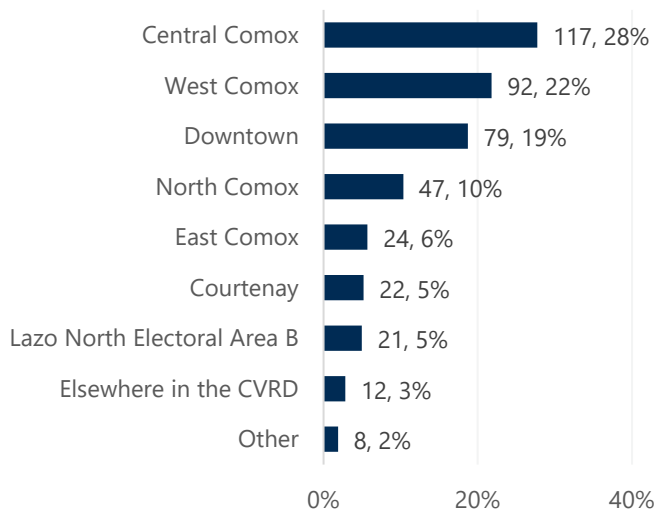
## Who We Heard From

What is your connection to Comox? (select all that apply)



Approximately four in five respondents (81%) indicated they were residents of Comox. 30 percent of respondents work and 67 percent shop in Comox. Eight percent of respondents live elsewhere in the Comox Valley. Over two-thirds of respondents (68%) are property owners, and 12 percent are business owners.

What area do you live in?

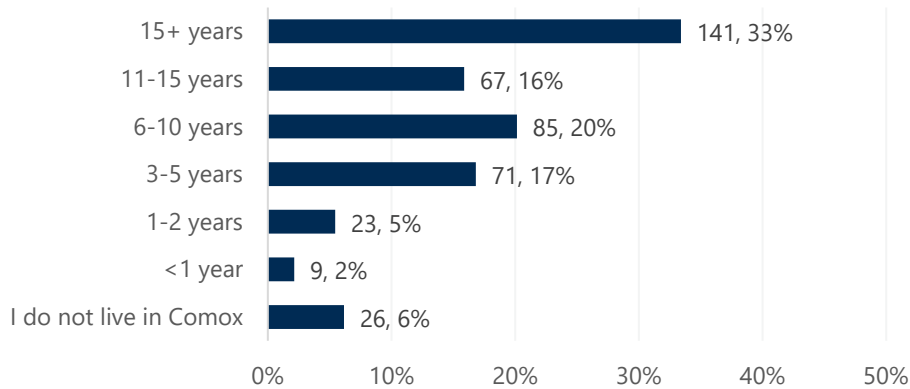


The highest number of survey respondents (28%) live in Central Comox, followed by West Comox (22%), Downtown (19%) and North Comox (10%). Respondents from East Comox represented six percent of all participants, while the remaining respondents live in Courtenay (5%), Electoral Area "B" (5%) or elsewhere in the CVRD (3%).

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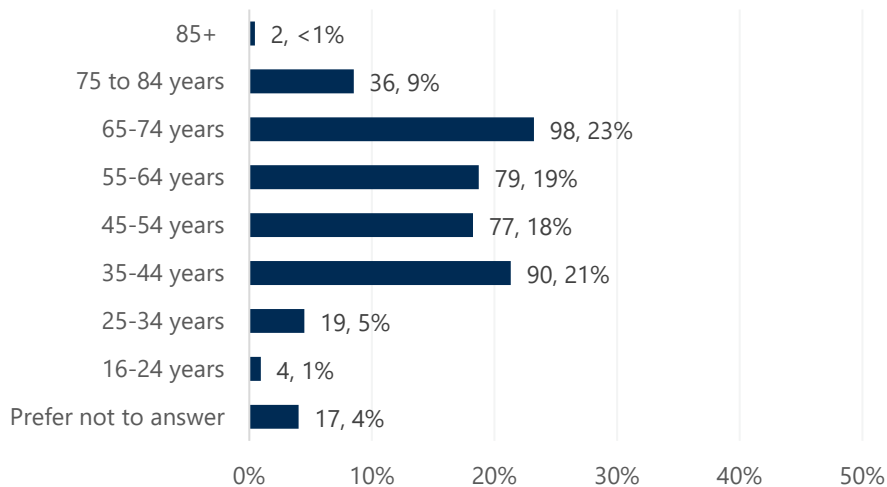


## How long have you lived in Comox?



A majority of respondents (69%) have lived in Comox for over five years, with the highest number of participants (33%) indicating they have lived here for 15 years or more. Approximately 22 percent have lived in Comox for 1 to 5 years, 2 percent have lived here for less than a year, and the remaining 6 percent do not live in Comox.

## What is your age?



Survey respondents were predominantly between the ages of 35 and 74 (81%), with the highest number of respondents indicating they were in the 65-74 age category (23%). Six percent of respondents were under the age of 35, 10 percent were over the age of 75, and the remaining 4 percent preferred not to disclose their age.

Overall, on the survey we received 422 responses and 2500+ responses to the open-ended questions posed. Themes and findings from these responses will inform the next phase of the OCP update.



## Online Comments

The Town received over 30 individual comments on social media posts shared on Facebook. The following themes and sentiments were pulled from the comments:

- Appreciation to be involved in the process but want to see change based on input provided
- More amenities options for youth
- More walkable and bicycle friendly infrastructure
- Maintaining current infrastructure
- Parking options