

## **Official Community Plan Responses**

### **1. Housing and Neighbourhood Development**

#### **Affordable Housing**

The most pressing issue identified by participants was the need for affordable housing throughout the City targeting all stages of life from youth starting their housing journey to seniors seeking affordable housing solutions that can meet their needs on a fixed income and every stage in between.

#### **Housing Diversity**

Participants indicated a strong demand for more diverse housing options in order to meet the needs of different demographics. Various housing forms beyond single detached dwellings were requested to provide flexibility in the housing stock including RV parks, low-rise buildings, and apartment style condos to accommodate different stages of life. A diversity of tenures was also identified as a need of the community including co-ops, social housing, and non-market housing to support affordability and community living.

### **2. Urban Planning & Infrastructure**

#### **Community Planning**

Participants stated their preference for exploring collaborative opportunities throughout the City, as well as with surrounding communities to enhance cohesive planning and regional coordination. Ensuring housing is conveniently located near parks, recreation, shopping, and transit was also highlighted. Also of note, increasing density and building up rather than out was emphasized as a preference to reduce urban sprawl.

#### **Partnerships**

Participants highlighted the need for public-private partnerships encouraging the City in its role to partner with non-profits and private developers to ensure a mix of affordable housing units and streamline the development process to move projects to the construction phase faster. They emphasized the need to increase density and strategically purchase properties to aid in social housing and development, as well as the designation of mixed-use areas to integrate housing units with commercial and recreational spaces.

#### **Community Engagement**

Participants identified a desire to foster connected and informed communities suggesting the implementation of strategies to reduce “NIMBYism”, actively listening to residents and involving those most impacted in the decision-making process. They highlighted the importance of social connections and advocated for housing that facilitates neighbourly interaction through common areas or community hubs. Some also noted that “small town” mentalities can stifle progressive growth and that keeping community members informed about development projects as crucial for creating buy-in while maintaining a small-town atmosphere within denser urban developments.

### **3. Economic Development**

#### **Tourism**

Participants identified tourism as the key driver of Vernon’s economy and encouraging strong marketing campaigns to raise the City’s profile amongst potential tourists. The need

for more hotels and improved tourism infrastructure such as a convention centre, shopping centres, and enhanced recreational facilities was highlighted.

### **Employment & Supports for Businesses**

Participants focused on supporting local businesses with trade centres, exhibitions, grants and promotions, as well as simplifying business processes and improving the City's reputation as a business-friendly community. Also, many participants linked local business support back to the need for accessible and affordable housing for staff. Improving housing options forms a key component of strategies to attract a working-age demographic, large employers, and young professionals to the City.

### **Focus on Local Economic Growth**

Participants suggested a variety of strategies to encourage economic growth including investment attraction, expanding commercial waterfront amenities, encouraging the establishment of "big brands" in the communities, as well as encouraging local businesses such as bakeries, restaurants and retail shops. They emphasized the need for more hotels, diverse businesses, and entrepreneurial spaces, along with expanding patio spaces and improving shopping centres to enhance the local economy. Also of note, there was a call to overcome the small-town mentality, embrace growth, and create vibrant neighbourhoods with accessible shops and services.

## **4. Community, Social Services & Wellbeing**

### **Community Health**

Participants placed a strong emphasis on health care access and services suggesting strategies such as harm reduction initiatives including street clinics, safe consumption sites, increasing detox and treatment beds, as well as transitional housing. Creating sober safe homes, mental health facilities, and a community crisis centre to provide essential support services and showers was highlighted. Participants shared that there are no available resources to support the unhoused community after 4pm in Vernon, suggesting this reality lacks dignity for those living on the streets, in parks, or in bus shelters.

### **Vulnerable Residents**

Participants identified the need for initiatives and strategies to support vulnerable groups as crucial suggesting increased investment in youth programs, expanded childcare support, and specialized care for seniors, as well as more facilities and services to foster social connections.

### **Safety, Wellbeing & Food Security**

Participants highlighted public safety and community wellbeing as a major theme of the engagement. Suggested strategies included establishing social services as an accessory use in every zone, enhancing nighttime safety (improving lighting), and providing safe spaces with basic amenities like water, washrooms, heating and cooling. Additionally, participants advocated for improved food security and suggested initiatives ensuring access to healthy locally sourced foods and policies promoting local food systems, the formation of a food policy council, and the adoption of a food charter.

## **5. Climate & Environment**

### **Natural Resources**

Participants centred their conversations on natural resources management, as well as preserving and enhancing natural spaces to maintain biodiversity and ecological health in Vernon. Suggested strategies included avoiding urban sprawl, protecting natural corridors, and encouraging planting native species while actively managing invasive species. Additionally, the importance of water conservation and management was highlighted suggesting initiatives including increased use of reclaimed and grey water, installing more drinking fountains to reduce plastic use, and implementing policies for rainwater collection and water source protection.

### **Climate Resilience**

Participants identified the importance of integrating climate resilience into all city planning with a focus on reducing carbon emissions and enhancing green infrastructure. Suggested initiatives included promoting zero-carbon new builds with EV charging infrastructure and heat pumps, encouraging the use of passive solar energy, fast-tracking permits for green initiatives, creating shade for parking spaces with solar panels, and incorporating drought-tolerant perennials in public gardens to support pollinators.

### **Urban Green Space**

Participants emphasized the need for increased and interconnected green space within the urban core, and integrating natural areas into city planning. Suggested strategies included enhancing streetscapes, promoting densification while maintaining green space, as well as preserving and enhancing the urban tree canopy, banning artificial landscaping, and encouraging biodiversity.

### **Agriculture**

Participants recommended enhancing agricultural investment and protection within the City. Key initiatives included protecting agricultural spaces, promoting organic farming, and preserving hobby farms within City limits, as well as strategies such as winter markets, food security plans, and promoting agri-tourism.

### **Emergency Preparedness & Safety**

Participants identified wildfire risks as a crucial topic for the safety of the community. Suggested strategies included enhancing community education on safe evacuation procedures, planning for evacuation routes via lakes, and ensuring developments have multiple routes in and out, as well as updating bylaws to require fire-smart principles on private property.

## **6. Parks, Recreation & Trails**

### **Recreation and Events**

Participants emphasized a need to invest more in recreational activities including an active night life, diverse and spread-out activities, and increased options for young adults. Suggestions included revitalizing festivals, supporting cultural activities, organizing block parties to foster community engagement, year-round farmers markets, increased teen events, and vibrant neighbourhood cores with extended hours.

### **Parks, Facilities and Recreational Infrastructure**

Participants focused on enhancing the cleanliness, safety, and accessibility of community spaces. Suggestions included increasing garbage facilities and maintenance, creating more indoor sports complexes and play areas for winter, and providing safe, free places for youth. Also, the need for shaded playgrounds, community gardens, and better dog friendly areas was highlighted.

### **Accessibility and Inclusivity**

Participants identified the need for multi-generational, income-diverse, age-inclusive, and ability-friendly designs and programming for public and community places within the City. Challenges such as the cost of events and space rentals were noted, with calls for lower user fees and streamlined processes for event bookings and program implementation.

## **Transportation Plan Responses**

### **1. Public Transit & Personal Vehicle Alternatives**

Participants highlighted the need for significant improvements to the public transit system, including more routes, increased frequency, and extended hours to better serve commutes and key destinations such as hospitals, tourist areas, and downtown. They also emphasized the importance of affordable, accessible, and flexible transportation options to reduce reliance on personal vehicles, such as car-sharing, ride-sharing, and car co-op programs, and expanding the active transportation network. Additionally, participants proposed exploring options like a hydrogen rail system to connect communities.

### **2. Roads**

Participants identified the need for road infrastructure improvements to enhance safety, reduce congestion, and accommodate various modes of transportation. Concerns were raised about inadequate wayfinding and signage, gaps in the active transportation network, and the need for better traffic flow management. Suggestions for improvement include creating more non-car spaces, enhancing safety measures, and improving visual appeal and road aesthetics with greenery and art.

### **3. Walking & Bike Trails**

Participants indicated a strong desire to improve walkability in Vernon, focusing on year-round accessibility, better connectivity, and reducing reliance on cars. They highlighted the need for safe, connected trails and bike paths, with calls for better lighting, winter maintenance, and secure end-of-trip facilities for active transportation users. Suggestions also included creating walkable neighbourhoods, enhanced pedestrian routes to parks, lakes, and offering more programming that promotes active transportation and infrastructure.

### **4. Scooter & Mobility Devices**

Participants identified the need to make the shared e-scooter program more affordable and improve safety. Suggestions included creating separate lanes for e-scooters, adding parking and charging stations, and providing education on safe use to prevent conflicts with pedestrians, especially on sidewalks.

### **5. Parking**

Participants requested more accessible parking in downtown Vernon, along with adequate parking for multi-unit buildings and the hospital. They emphasized the importance of balancing parking demand while avoiding the overuse of gravel parking lots. Suggestions included introducing no-parking zones on certain streets, addressing parking-related

complaints, and ensuring there is sufficient parking availability for various needs and at key destinations.