



CITY OF
PRINCE GEORGE

Official Community Plan

What We Heard Report:

Phase 1&2



We acknowledge the unceded ancestral
lands of the Lheidli T'enneh

The City of Prince George respectfully acknowledges
the unceded ancestral lands of the Lheidli T'enneh, on
whose land we live, work, and play.

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Introduction

Background

In June 2023, the City of Prince George initiated the Official Community Plan (OCP) Review process to set a new long-term vision for the community. The City's existing OCP was adopted in 2011, and much has changed within the community since that time. This review process will develop a new vision for the community, with input from as many groups of people as possible with the resources available.

Figure 1 below outlines the OCP process timeline.



Figure 1: OCP Review Process

Community engagement

Community input is essential to the OCP planning process. This What We Heard Report summarizes the feedback received through all engagement sources between September 2023 and November 2023. The engagement process was voluntary. The results summarized in this report do not reflect the views of the entire community.

First Nations engagement

The OCP Review is an opportunity to advance truth and reconciliation with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and Urban Indigenous members of the community. Engagement with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation is being conducted through a separate but parallel government-to-government process.

Our Approach

How We Informed

Project webpage

A dedicated project webpage for the Prince George OCP Review was launched on September 18, 2023. The webpage provided the community with an overview of the OCP planning process, along with a link to the online survey, and an engagement event schedule. The project webpage can be viewed by clicking [here](#). In total, the project webpage received 1,313 views between September 18, 2023, and November 8, 2023.

Social media

Social media posts were shared across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, announcing and promoting the OCP Review and the community open house. In total, there were more than 40,800 impressions across all platforms.

Newsletters and press releases

Information about the OCP Review process and the community open house was included in two (2) newsletters distributed to Super Citizens subscribers on September 8, 2023, and October 6, 2023. This information was also broadcast in 68 radio ads on Country 97FM and another 68 on 94.3 the Goat from October 10 to October 17, 2023. The community open house was advertised in the Prince George Citizen (approximately 17,500 copies printed) on October 12, 2023.

How We Engaged

Community survey

An online survey was open from September 18 to October 27, 2023. The survey included nine (9) questions focusing on community vision, planning principles, and emerging priorities for Prince George, as well as two (2) demographic questions. In total, 397 surveys were submitted.



Roundtable discussions

Four (4), two-hour in person roundtable discussions were held with community interest groups. Over 110 community organizations were emailed and invited to attend. A breakdown of those who attended the roundtable discussions is shown in Table 1 below. Each discussion session involved an overview of what the OCP is, followed by a facilitated discussion about the future of Prince George.

Date	Time	Location	Community Group	# Participated
Oct 16	10:00am – 12:00pm	City Hall	Arts and culture groups	12
Oct 16	1:00pm – 3:00pm	City Hall	Environmental groups	16
Oct 17	10:00am – 12:00pm	Two Rivers Gallery	Business and development groups	19
Oct 17	1:00pm – 3:00pm	Two Rivers Gallery	Community organizations	7

Table 1 - Roundtable discussions

Community open house

An in-person community open house was held at the Two Rivers Gallery on October 17, 2023, from 4:30pm to 7:30pm. The open house included a welcome from Mayor Simon Yu, a short presentation summarizing what an OCP is, how the OCP relates to other municipal plans, what the OCP Review process involves, and the engagement opportunities throughout the process. There were information boards, interactive boards, several table-top exercises, tablets to complete the online survey, and a youth activity room at the community open house. Staff from the city's Planning and Development Department were available to answer questions from visitors and facilitate the interactive exercises. Approximately 176 people attended the event. The open house was well attended by "Ginters Green Forever" - a local community group advocating for the preservation of Ginters Green as a public park and open space.

Municipal pop-up events

Municipal staff held pop-up events at three (3) Your City, Your Priorities 2024 Town Hall Meetings, on October 24, October 25, and October 26, 2023, from 5:00pm to 7:00pm. Attendees were invited to participate in the community mapping exercise described below and complete two (2) different comment card activities.

Community mapping

At each engagement event, there was an opportunity for participants to leave location-specific comments on a map of Prince George. Participants were prompted to identify areas of Prince George that they would like to see protected (using green sticky dots), enhanced (using yellow sticky dots), or removed (using red sticky dots). Almost 200 comments were left on the maps.

Written submissions

A dedicated email address was provided, so the community could share their thoughts on the project with municipal staff and the consultant team. In total, 49 written submissions were received. This included a petition to protect Ginters Green (which has received 3,005 signatures), a community engagement report for a Moore's Meadow survey (which had received 217 responses), and a report on Prince George's parks and the preservation of the river corridor.

How We Engaged

397 survey responses

48 written submissions 

176 open house attendees
(**500+** comments collected)



How We Informed

12 social media posts across **4** platforms
(**40,800** impressions) 

2 digital newsletters
(**449** impressions across both editions) 

136 radio ads over **8** days

1 print ad in the Prince George Citizen

50 posters distributed



54 roundtable discussion participants

500+ comments collected from roundtable discussions 

3 pop-up booths

114 community organizations emailed 

1,313 website visitors 

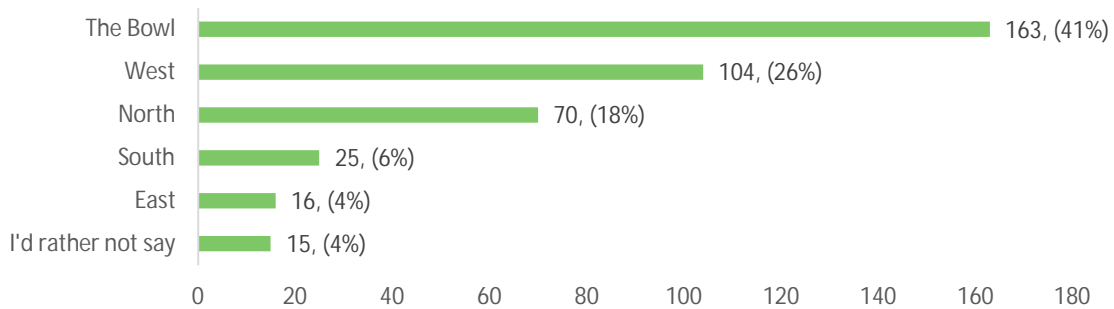
What We Heard

What We Heard: Online Survey

Between September 18 to October 27, 2023, 397 community members submitted responses to the OCP survey. Questions were asked to better understand what community members love about Prince George, what they hope to see in the future, and what opportunities they see with the OCP Review process.

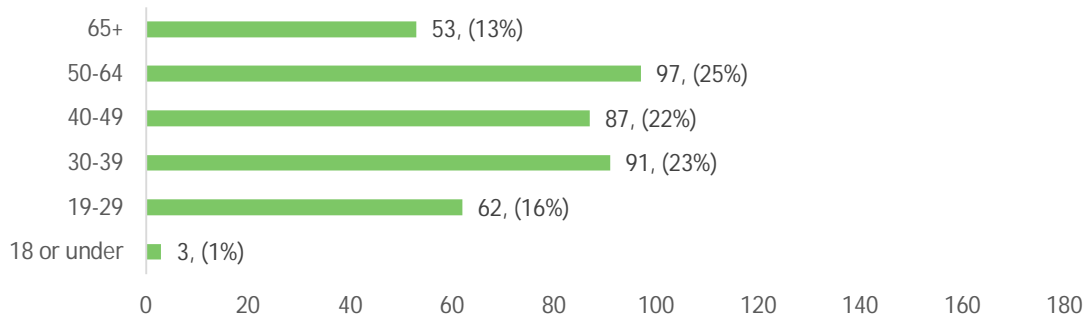
Who Participated

What region of Prince George do you live in?



Total respondents: 393

What age group do you belong to?



Total respondents: 393

Survey Results

Question 1: What do you love most about Prince George?

In total, there were 370 responses to this question. When asked what they love most about Prince George, the top themes included:

Nature and greenspace (207 comments)

- Access and proximity to nature and greenspace (155)
- Forests (14)
- Nearby wilderness and backcountry (12)
- Rivers (11)
- Lakes (9)
- Wildlife (6)

Parks and recreation (100 comments)

- Walking, hiking, and biking trails (70)
- Parks and dog parks (30)
 - Specific recreational sites like Ginters Green, Moore's Meadow, Otway, and the Pidherny Recreation Site

The strong sense of community (59 comments)

- The people / sense of community (49)
- Friendly people (10)

Other (65 comments)

- Affordability (40)
- Combination of a small town feel with big city amenities (25)

Question 2: What three (3) words do you want to use to describe Prince George in 2050?

In total, there were 378 responses to this question. The top words survey participants would want to use to describe Prince George in 2050 were:

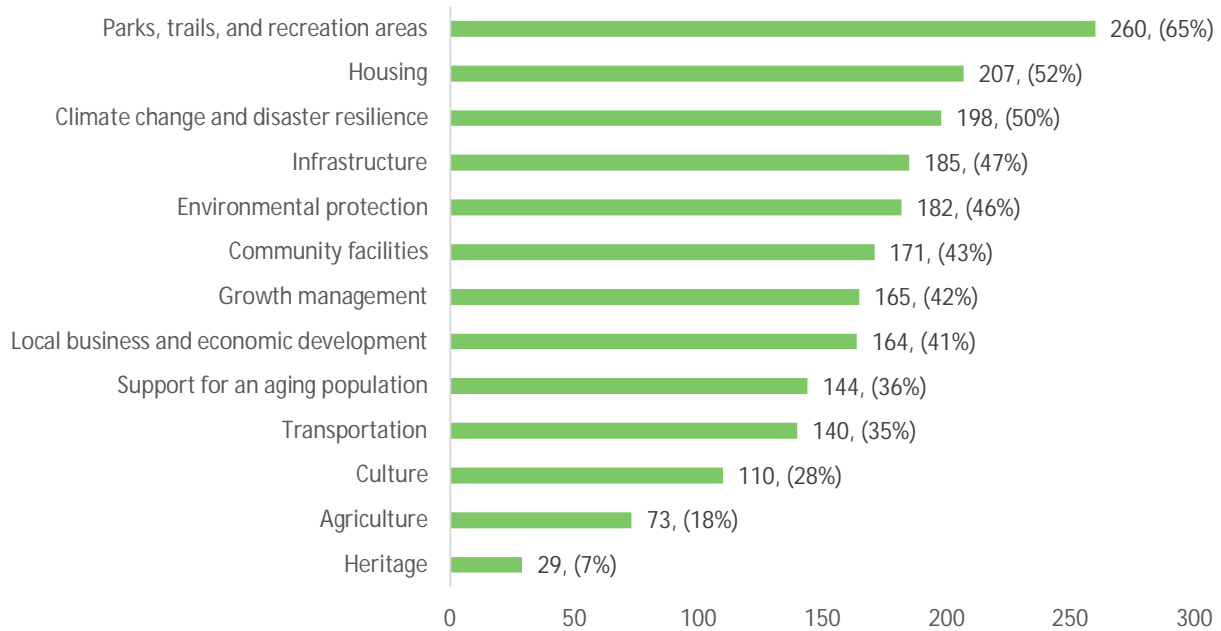
- Safe (74 comments)
- Green (62 comments)
- Affordable (58 comments)
- Clean (56 comments)
- Vibrant (41 comments)
- Inclusive (32 comments)
- Sustainable (31 comments)

Question 3: What is the greatest opportunity the OCP Review presents for Prince George?

In total, there were 328 responses to this question. The top opportunities included:

- The opportunity for the community to have a say (53 comments)
- Protecting greenspace including parks, forests, wildlife corridors, and specific outdoor sites such as Ginters Green (48 comments)
- Improving and expanding transportation (40 comments)
- Planning for the future (37 comments)
- Reducing sprawl and increasing density (31 comments)

Question 4: What are your top priorities for the OCP Review? Please select five options from the list below.



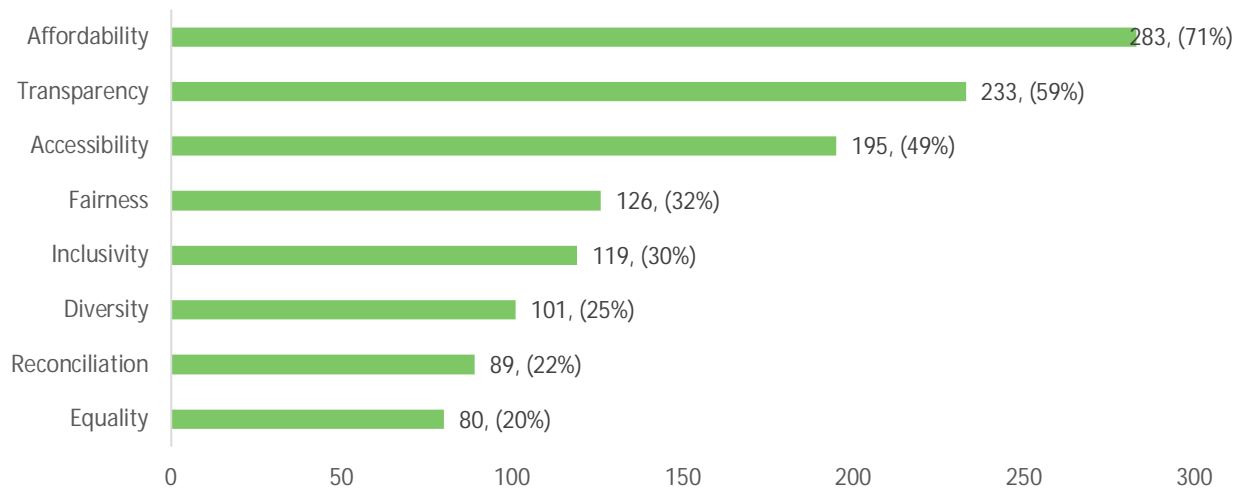
Total respondents: 397

Survey participants were asked to choose their top five (5) priorities for the OCP Review. The highest number of participants (65%) indicated that parks, trails, and recreation areas were a top priority for them.

Participants could also leave comments to highlight other priorities for the OCP Review. Some participants noted:

- Increasing social supports (3%)
- Crime and safety (2%)

Question 5: What values are most important to you? Please select three (3) from the list below.



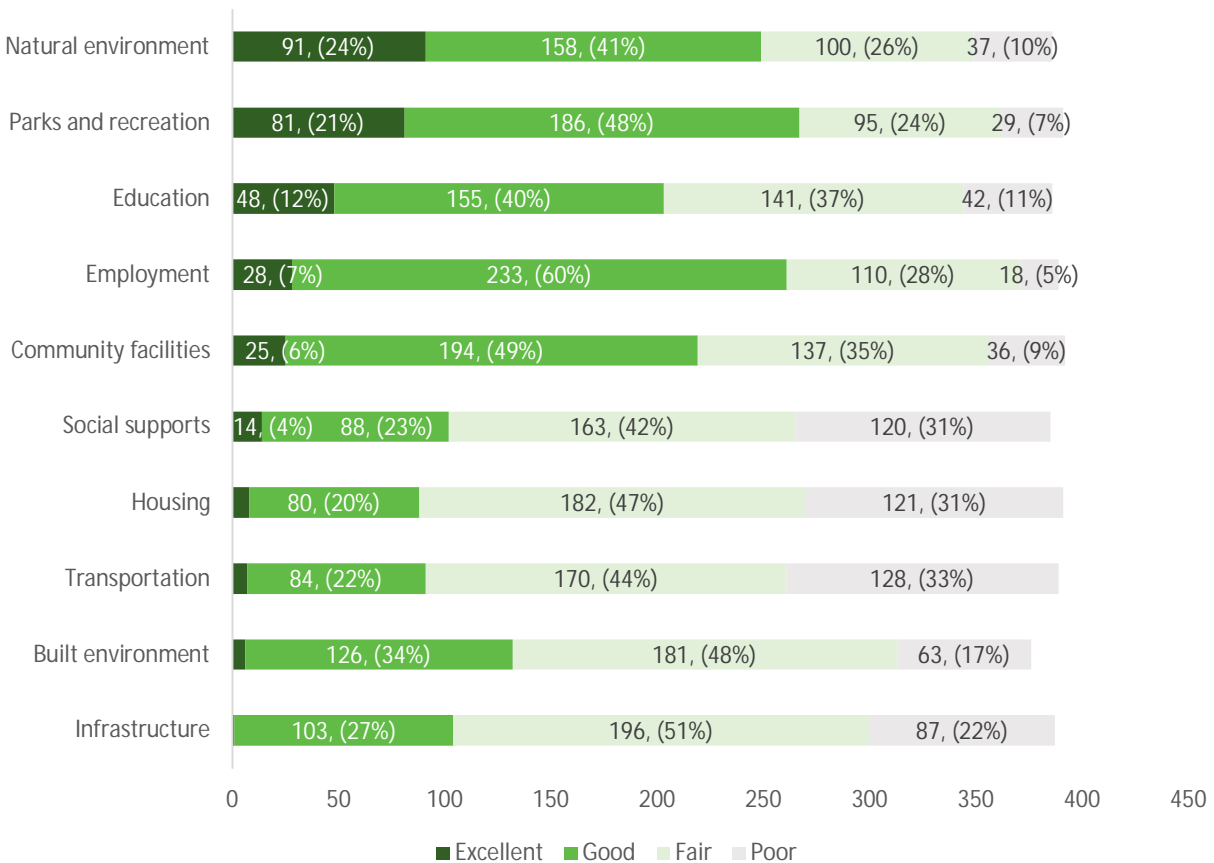
Total respondents: 397

When asked about important values for the OCP Review process, most participants (71%) selected affordability, followed by transparency (59%), and accessibility (49%).

Participants could also leave a comment to specify other important values. Some participants noted:

- Safety (2%)
- Health (1%)
- Sustainability (1%)

Question 6: The places we live, work and play have a big impact on our quality of life. How well do you think Prince George is doing in each of the following areas? Please check one box per row.



Total respondents: 396

Participants were asked to rate Prince George in several areas related to a community's quality of life. Overall, participants gave the most positive ratings ("Excellent" and "Good") to Prince George's current parks and recreation (69%), employment (67%), and natural environment (65%).

The areas receiving the most "Poor" ratings were Prince George's transportation (33%), housing (31%), and social supports (31%)

Question 7: If you could change one thing about Prince George, what would it be?

In total, there were 361 responses to this question. When asked if they could change one thing about Prince George, survey participants suggested:

Improving transportation options (77 comments)

- Expanding cycling infrastructure (23)
- Improving public transit (19 comments)
- Reducing dependency on cars (12)
- Increasing walkability (9)

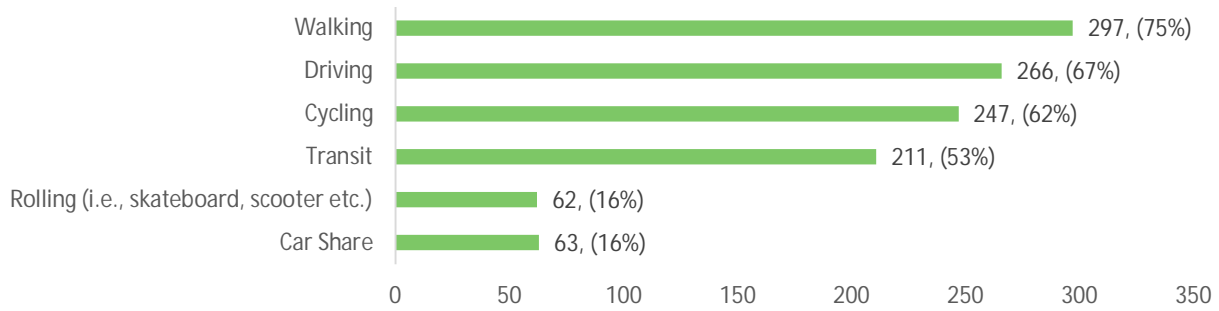
Supporting the unhoused population (57 comments)

- Providing more supports (42)
- Addressing other concerns with unhoused populations (15)

Improving the downtown core (56 comments)

- Revitalizing the downtown area (27)
- Addressing crime and safety concerns downtown (24)

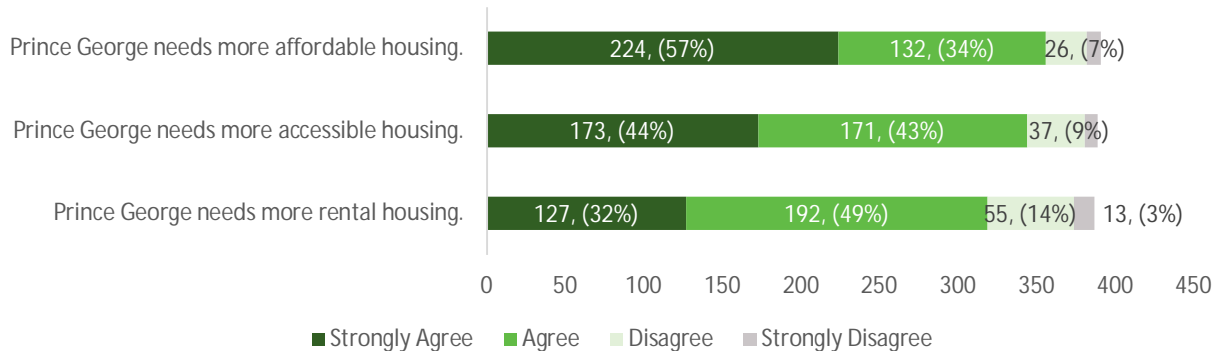
Question 8: How would you like to move around Prince George in the future? Please check all that apply.



Total respondents: 396

When asked how they would like to move around Prince George in the future, participants indicated they would prefer to travel by walking (75%), driving (67%), cycling (62%) and transit (53%).

Question 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.



Total respondents: 396

Survey participants were shown three (3) statements, all related to Prince George's housing needs, and asked to indicate their level of agreement. Generally, participants agreed with all three (3) statements with more people indicating a strong need for more affordable housing (57% Strongly Agree, 34% Agree). Although agreement was still relatively high, participants were most divided on the statement about rental housing needs (14% Disagree, 3% Strongly Disagree).

What We Heard: Roundtable Discussions

On October 16 and 17, 2023, four (4), two-hour in person roundtable discussions were held with community interest groups. Each roundtable discussion session involved an overview of what the OCP is, followed by a facilitated discussion about the future of Prince George.

Date	Time	Location	Community Group	# Participated
Oct 16	10:00am – 12:00pm	City Hall	Arts and culture groups	12
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The following groups were represented at the roundtable discussions:

Chamber of Commerce	Northern BC Tourism Association	PG Speech Art and Drama Association
CHBA Northern BC	Northern United Football Club	PG Symphony Orchestra
College Height Community Association	Nove Voce	PG Therapeutic Riding Association
Community Arts Council	Northern Regional Construction Association	Pisces Summer Swim Club
Crescents Community Association	PG Air	Prince George Council of Seniors
Downtown PG	PG Airport Authority	School District 57
Engage Sport North	PG Blizzard Speed Skating Club	Silver Tip Archers
Fraser Basin Council	PG Cantata Singers	Spruce City Wildlife Association
Ginter's Green Forever	PG Conservatory of Music	Theatre NorthWest
HUB	PG Fibre Arts Guild	Tourism PG
Miracle Theatre	PG Library	UNBC Environmental Planning
Moore's Meadow	PG Naturalists Club	UNBC MBA Program
NDIT	PG Roadrunners	Zahirah Dance Studio

Community groups participated in a Now, How, Wow exercise, where they were asked to describe what the City of Prince George is like today, what they envision for Prince George's future, and how Prince George could transition from where they are today (the NOW) to where they want to be (the WOW). The City of Prince George has read and considered all feedback, however, for the purposes of this report, only the top responses have been included.

Now: What is Prince George like today?

Strengths

- Access to greenspaces (6)
- Access to outdoor recreation (6)
- Lots of potential (5)
- Friendly people (4)
- Small town feel with big city amenities (4)

Challenges

- Lack of transit / active transportation opportunities (11)
- Concerns with sprawl (10)
- Socio-economic challenges (9)
- Losing community affordability (5) and affordable sports programs (3)
- Concerns with personal safety (6)

Wow: What do we want Prince George to be like in the future?

- High quality transit (7) and active transportation opportunities (7)
- Protected greenspaces (14)
- Mixed use developments (7) / flexible zoning options (4)
- Vibrant, revitalized downtown (7) / densified core (5)
- Performing arts centre / cultural district (9)
- High quality of life for all (7)

How: How can we get from the “Now”, to the “Wow”

- Densify the downtown core (9) / support infill developments (6)
- Plan for long-term infrastructure development (12)
- Invest in more active transportation opportunities (8)
- Protect parks and greenspaces (11) and increase access to the river (4)
- Increase pride in the community (5) / better advertising of the community and community brand (5)
- Increase emergency planning (wildfire, forestry health, flooding) (5)

What We Heard: Community Open House

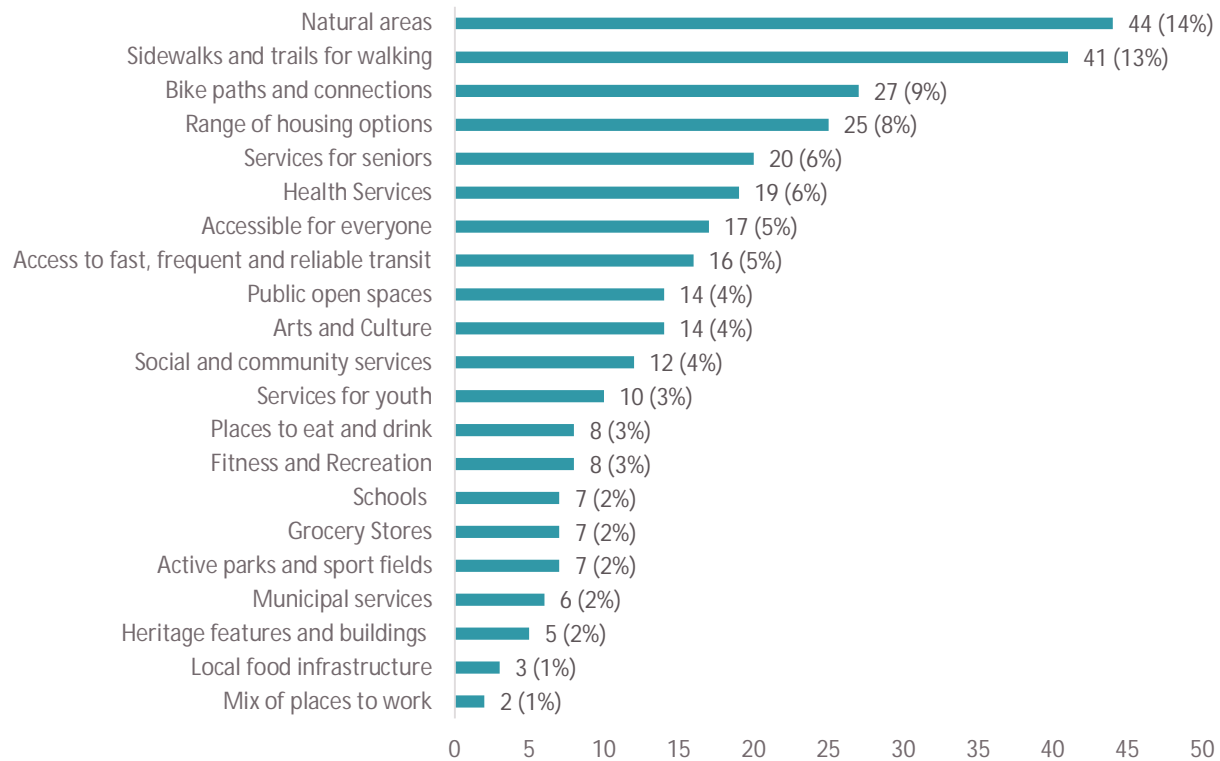
The in-person community open house event was held at the Two Rivers Gallery on October 17, 2023, from 4:30pm to 7:00pm. In total, there were approximately 176 attendees. At 5:00 pm, there was a short presentation which provided information about what an OCP is, and what the process will be for further engagement. There were information boards, interactive boards, several table-top exercises, tablets to complete the online survey, and a youth activity room at the open house. Staff from the city's Planning and Development Department were available to answer questions from visitors and facilitate the interactive exercises.

Interactive Display Boards

Board 1: What makes a great community?

Attendees were asked to place a sticky dot next to their top five (5) community features. The top three (3) answers included:

- Natural areas (14%)
- Sidewalks and trails for walking (13%)
- Bike paths and connections (9%)



Total dots placed: 312

Board 2: How could the OCP include Indigenous perspectives and advance Reconciliation?

The OCP Review is an opportunity to advance truth and reconciliation with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and Urban Indigenous members of the community. Attendees were asked to share their ideas on how the OCP Review could include Indigenous perspectives and advance reconciliation. In total, 42 comments were received. The top suggestions included:

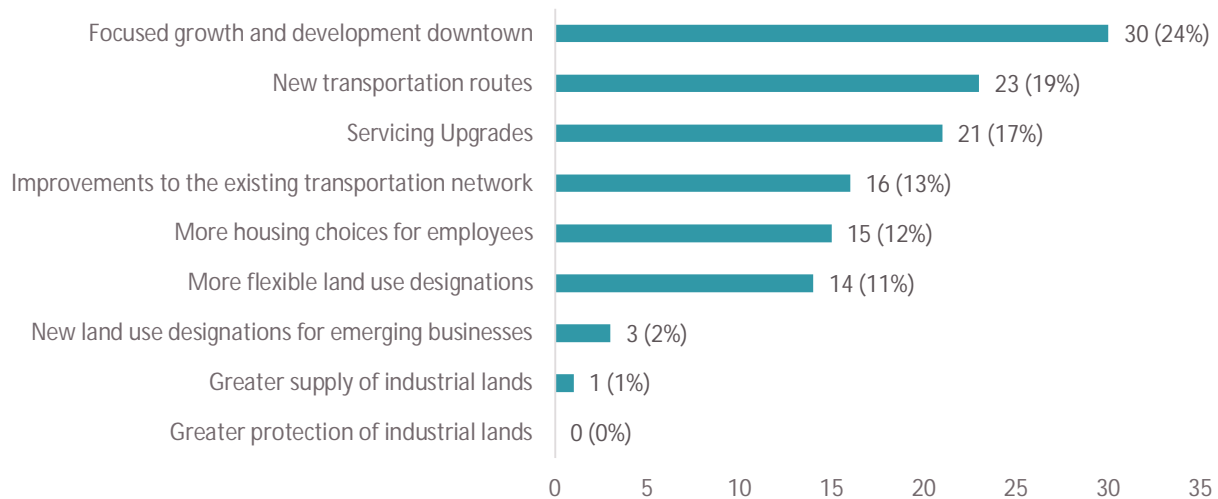
Meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples (12 comments)

- Hosting events at locations significant to First Nations, such as the House of Ancestors, and Friendship Centre (6)
- Seeking guidance from Elders / have Elders open engagement sessions (2)
- More engagement overall (2)
- Including unhoused populations and youth (2)

Increased First Nations representation (9 comments)

- Greater presence on Council (6)
- Greater presence on relevant planning committees and staff (3)

Board 3: What do businesses need to thrive here? Place a sticky dot next to your top three choices.



Total dots placed: 123

The top choices for what businesses need to thrive were focused growth and development downtown (24%), new transportation routes (19%), and servicing upgrades (17%).

Participants could also specify other options for what businesses need to thrive. The most common themes among these additional comments were making improvements to downtown (such as safety, cleanliness, and parking), protecting greenspace, and making the city more walkable.

Board 4: How could we move around Prince George better?

Attendees were prompted to leave a comment about how the transportation systems in Prince George could be improved. The top suggestions included:

Cycling infrastructure (35 comments)

- Safer, protected bike lanes (16)
- Better connected bike lanes (19)
 - connecting the Hart to downtown
 - connecting the city to trails, greenspace, and the riverfront

Expanding and improving transit (21 comments)

- Better transit connections (13)
- More frequent services and longer service hours (4)
- Increased transit accessibility (2)
- Transit to the airport (2)

Increasing walkability (18 comments)

- More sidewalks downtown and through residential neighbourhoods (11)
- Increased sidewalk accessibility for wheelchairs, scooters, mobility aids (5)
- Maintaining and resurfacing existing sidewalks (2)

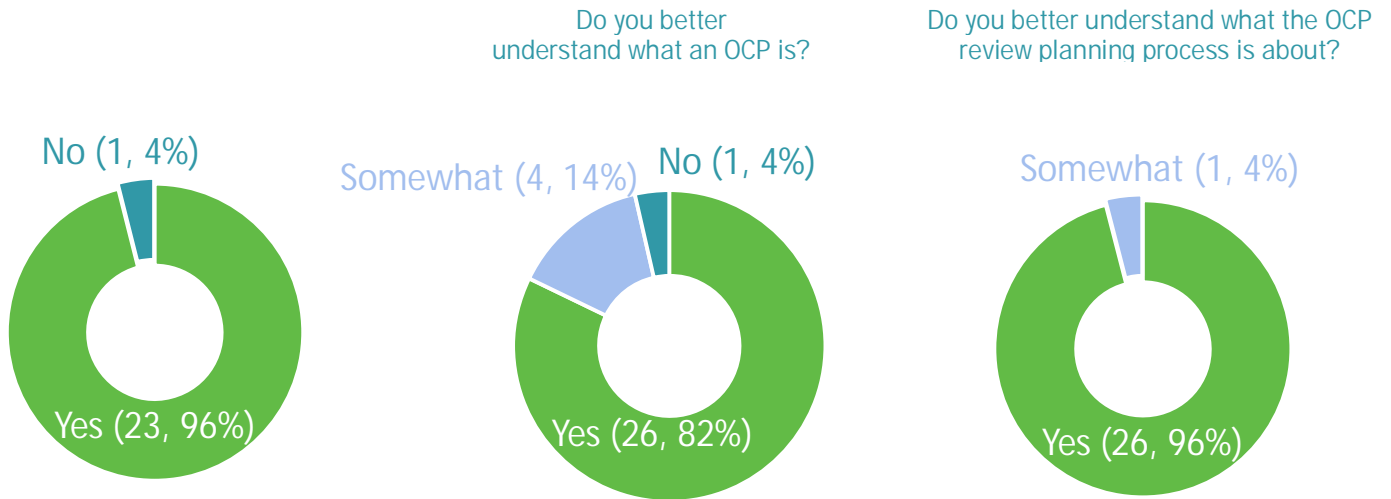
Board 5: What should Prince George's environmental legacy be?

When asked what Prince George's environmental legacy should be, the most common suggestions were:

- Protecting the City's greenspaces (such as Ginters Green and Moore's Meadow) (34 comments)
- Reducing sprawl (8 comments)
- Protecting the escarpment from development (5 comments)

Board 6: Exit survey

A feedback board was available as participants exited the open house, presenting three (3) questions:



Two (2) comments were left on the board, relating to improving the accessibility of future engagement events, and increasing First Nations representation across visual engagement materials.

Youth Engagement

At the event, there was a room set up at the back of the space with toys, colouring sheets, and snacks for younger attendees. They were given a sheet of sticky dots and asked to place them on the top five (5) amenities they would like to see in their community. The most popular feature was the swimming pool.

Stick a dot on what you like!



What We Heard: Comment Cards

At the community open house and municipal pop-up events, attendees were asked to complete two (2) comments cards.

Municipal staff held pop-up events at three (3) Your City, Your Priorities 2024 Town Hall Meetings, on October 24, October 25, and October 26, 2023, from 5:00pm to 7:00pm. Attendees were invited to participate in the community mapping exercise (described below) and fill out two (2) different comment card activities.

Vision for the City

The first comment card asked about their vision for the City, by completing the sentence "Prince George is a City..." In total, 148 cards were received.

The most prominent themes for this vision were, Prince George is a city:

- That preserves and values nature and greenspace (52)
- With effective transit and active transportation (20)
- With diverse and affordable housing (17)
- That is inclusive (12), safe (10), accessible (10), and diverse (10)

Things to avoid

Participants were asked what should be avoided as Prince George grows and develops to 2050. In total, 74 cards were received.

The most common responses were:

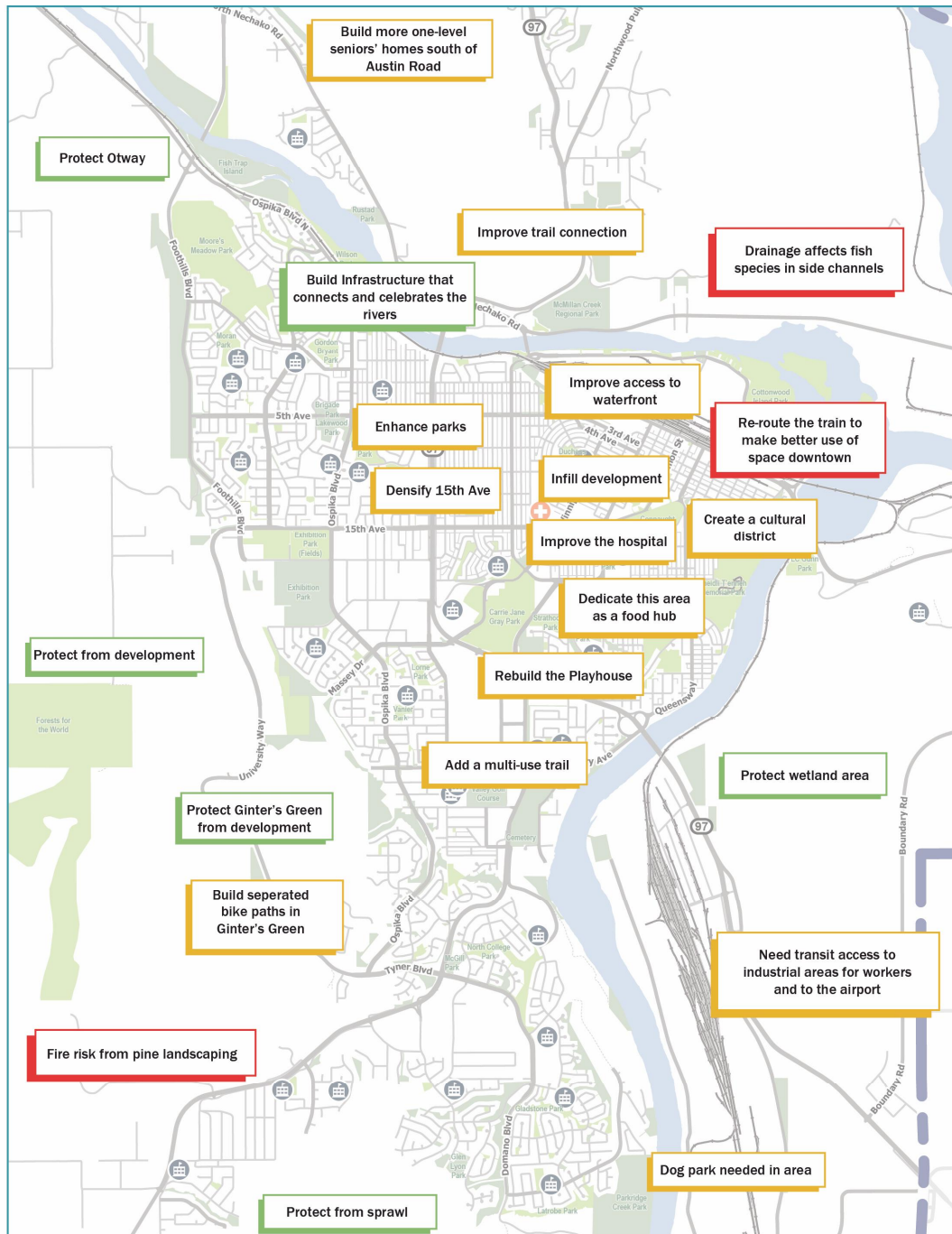
- Avoid losing or damaging greenspace (28)
- Avoid sprawl (11)
- Address ongoing homelessness (7)
- Lessen dependence on cars (6)
- Avoid focusing too much on new developments instead of updating old infrastructure (2)
- Avoid development without mixed uses (commercial areas, community spaces) (2)



What We Heard: Community Mapping

At the community open house, the roundtable discussions, and the municipal pop-up events, attendees were asked to participate in a mapping activity.

The maps prompted attendees to identify areas of Prince George that they would like to see protected (using green sticky-dots), enhanced (using yellow sticky-dots), or removed (using red sticky-dots). Almost 100 comments were left on the maps. There was strong support for the protection of Ginters Green from attendees. The City of Prince George has read and considered all feedback. For this report, a high-level summary has been included below.



What We Heard: Written Submissions

An OCP project email address was created to encourage written submissions from the community. In total, 48 written submissions were received, including two (2) given to staff at the roundtable discussions. The most common themes from the written submissions included:

Protect Ginters Green (34 submissions)

Community members demonstrated their support for designating Ginters Green as a protected park. Submissions highlighted the importance of protecting this area as a greenspace for the public (and their dogs), leveraging it as a tourist draw, protecting the wildlife habitats. It was noted that the City could consider focusing on densification instead of further developing greenspaces.

Protect Moore's Meadow (2 submissions)

Community members also presented a report to staff, highlighting the value of Moore's Meadow to residents of Prince George. The report included a summary of a survey which gathered 217 responses. It was noted that Moore's Meadow provides an important habitat for wildlife, and a place of refuge and recreation.

Additional submissions:

- Increase and leverage access to the waterfront (trails, cafes, pubs) (3)
- Increase walkability (downtown, College Heights) and enhance transit service (3)
- Work to retain more students (2)
- Encourage infill downtown and encourage mixed use development (2)
- Plan for an ageing population (incentivise building updates) (2)
- Protect the wildlife corridors from the Fraser River to the University area
- Provide incentives to support small businesses (many are closing)
- Address the unhoused populations with compassion
- Invest in local food security programs
- Support for Ginters roadway to ease traffic congestion and access
- Increase cycling infrastructure (using Thompson, Manitoba as a winter city example)
- Protect heritage features and homes
- Study the lack of parking for hospital staff, patients, and neighbours
- Improve traffic flow on Tyner Boulevard
- Protect mature forests from urban sprawl
- Invest in more recreational amenities
- Address the overcrowding of schools in College Heights

Conclusion

There were several common themes that consistently emerged across the engagement events and activities:

- Preservation of parks and open spaces
- Expansion of the existing active transportation and pedestrian networks
- Upgrades to existing infrastructure
- Environmental protection and climate preparedness
- Growth, density, built form, and housing.

Next Steps

This What We Heard Report will be presented to Council for their information on January 8, 2024. The feedback provided through the first phase of engagement will be used to draft a vision statement, guiding principles, goals, and objectives for the updated OCP.

Phase 3 of the OCP Review process will begin in December 2023 and continue to August 2024. Phase 3, which will focus on policy development, will include more opportunities for community members and those interested to provide their input, including:

- Municipal pop-up events
- Two (2) more community open house events.

Future engagement events will be published on the project webpage: www.princegeorge.ca/ocp and through social media.

