

PUBLIC SURVEY SUMMARY

Housing Accelerator Fund

June 19, 2024



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1 Notes

The Zoning Bylaw amendments related to removing parking requirements citywide will be brought forward in July 2024, the survey results related to parking will soon be available at the [Minimum Parking Requirements Engage Page](#).

Rental housing is considered affordable if the rent charged is 30% or less of the tenant's income. Affordable rental units have received grants from the City, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation and charitable organizations to ensure that the rent charged for these units is affordable to low income households. More information can be found at the [City's Attainable Housing Strategy and Resources website](#).

Please note that the content in this report is subject to change as a result of new information, updated public feedback and/or in order to provide greater clarity about the Housing Accelerator Fund.

2 Background

2.1 Overview

The Government of Canada introduced the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) as a means to support local governments to build more homes and at a faster rate. The goal of the HAF is to increase housing supply and improve the affordability of housing in the community. The City of Saskatoon is proposing amendments to the Official Community Plan and the Zoning Bylaw that will eliminate barriers and provide for more homes in our community. These efforts will unlock \$41.3 million of funding through the HAF program.

Information sharing efforts related to the proposed Zoning Bylaw amendments, included, an [Engage Page](#) on the City's website, two public Information Sessions held on June 4 and 6, 2024, and an online public survey (opened from June 3rd to 10th). This document provides a summary of the feedback received through the online public survey.

2.2 Survey Methodology

The purpose of the survey was to determine the community's support for the initiatives and learn about their associated concerns related to HAF. Prior to answering the questions, respondents were provided with background information about the HAF program, the current state of housing in Saskatoon, as well as details about the proposed Zoning Bylaw amendments. The survey questions focused on the following proposed amendments:

- Permitting four-unit dwellings on all residential sites
- Permitting four storey developments within 800 metres of a Bus Rapid Transit route
- Remove parking requirements citywide.

The survey consisted of 13 questions with a combination of open-ended questions and selecting from a list of possible answers. All questions were optional, and an open-ended question was provided at the end so respondents could provide additional feedback. The survey also provided the option for people to skip the survey and move to the last question to provide their input in the final open-ended question.

There was a total of 219 respondents who participated in the survey. Therefore, the responses for open-ended questions have been organized and grouped into themes. Some of the open-ended responses were summarized due to their length, but the intent of the comment was not altered. You can find a breakdown of the number of responses per question in Appendix 1.

2.2.1 Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Respondents were able to provide the neighbourhood they live in. A total of 219 community members participated in the survey. Of these, 158 provided information about the neighbourhood they live in (Figure 1). The majority of respondents were located in Greystone Heights (31.9%), followed by Varsity View (6.6%) and Brevoort Park (6.0%). Four respondents that indicated they did not live in Saskatoon, of which only one provided their home community. The results of this survey should not be considered statistically representative of Saskatoon's population. The survey was voluntary and intended to gain insights about community support for the initiatives, as well as learn about concerns from the community.

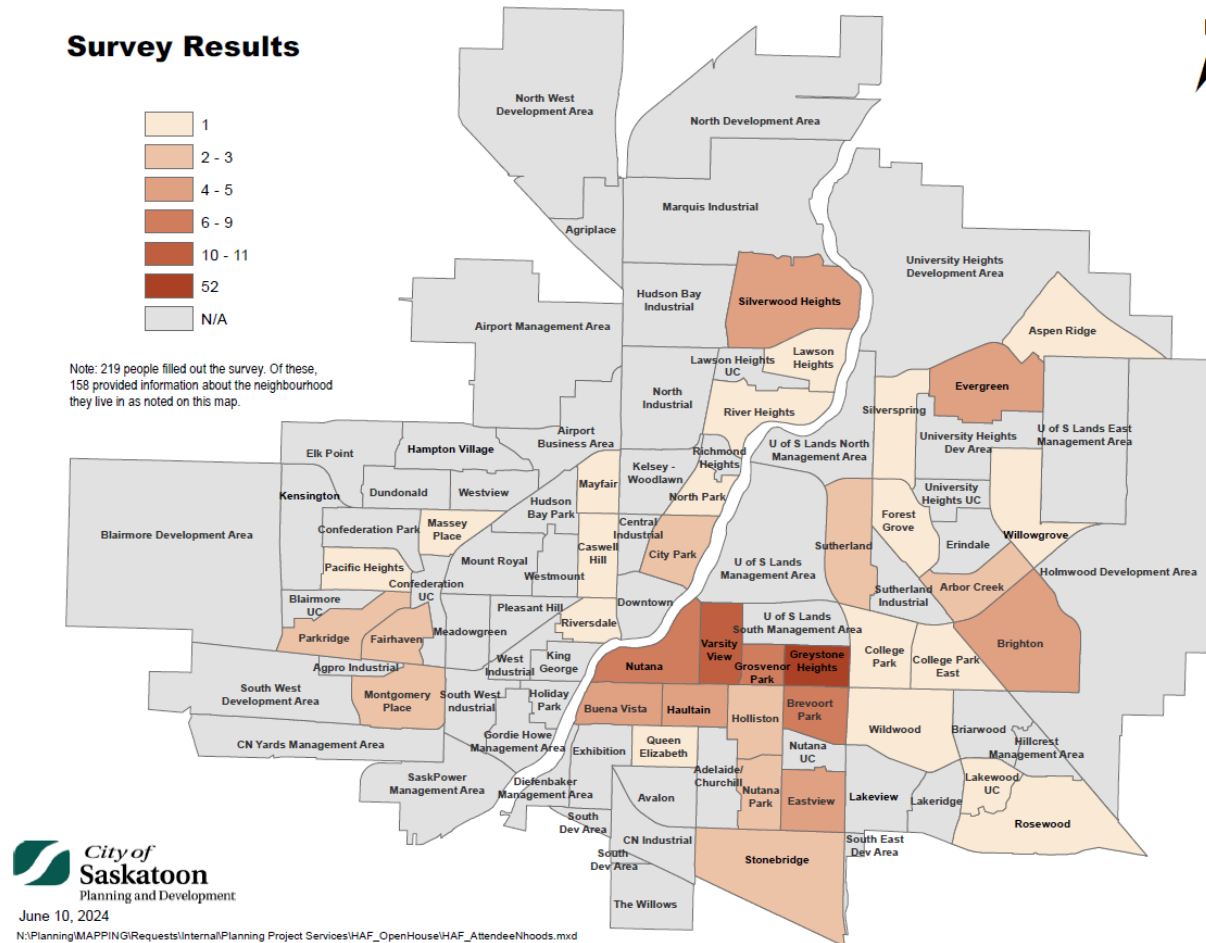


Figure 1: Map of respondent's neighbourhoods

Further, respondents were asked if they own or rent their home, or neither. The responses are provided in below (Table 1).

Table 1: Home ownership

Response Option	Number of Responses
I own my home in Saskatoon	159
I rent my home in Saskatoon	12
I do not own or rent a home	1
I do not reside in Saskatoon	4

Respondents were asked how they heard about the information events held on June 4th and 6th (Question 12). There was a total of 170 responses to this question. The graph below (Figure 2) identifies number of respondents per option. Respondents primarily heard about the information sessions through their community association or friends/family.

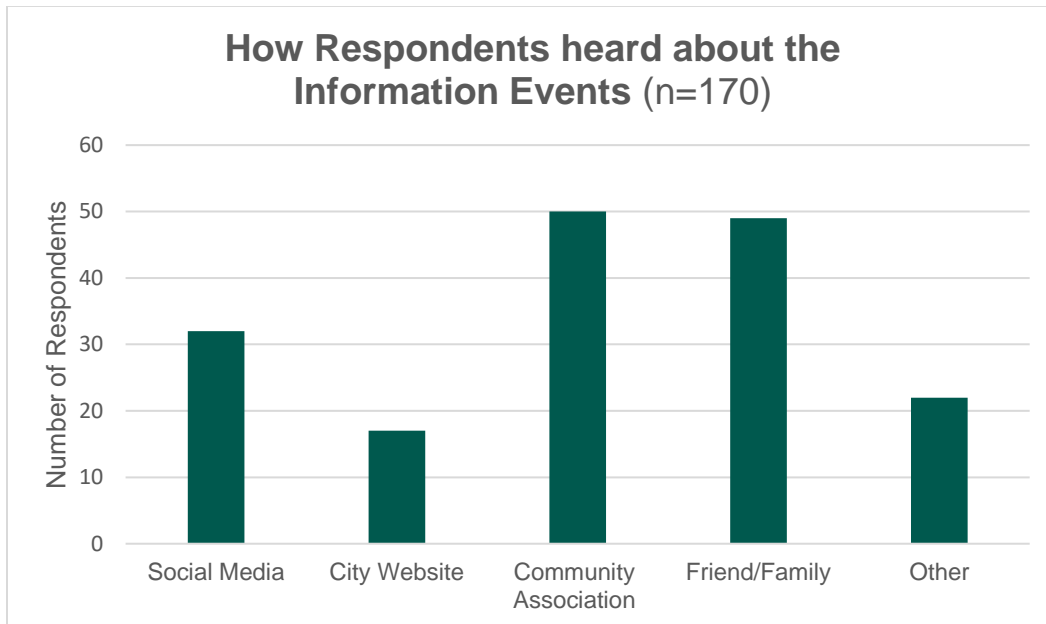


Figure 2: How respondents learnt about the information events (Question 12)

3 What We Heard

3.1 Results

The following sections present the results of the survey related to the HAF. As previously stated, the responses for open-ended questions have been organized and grouped into themes. Some of the open-ended responses were edited due to their length, but the intent of the comment was not altered.

3.1.1 Question 1

Prompted the respondents to fill out the survey or skip ahead to question 13.

3.1.2 Question 2

Question 2 asked:

How do you think changing zoning regulations to allow more housing options will impact housing affordability in Saskatoon?

The results are summarized in the table on the next page (Table 2). A total of 43.2% of the respondents believed the proposed amendments would not impact housing affordability, and an additional 23.1% felt they would decrease affordability. Of the respondents, 23.7% felt it would increase affordability.

Table 2: Impact of changing zoning regulations

Response	Percentage of Responses
<i>It will increase the affordability of homes in Saskatoon</i>	23.7%
<i>It will not impact the affordability of homes in Saskatoon.</i>	43.2%
<i>It will decrease the affordability of homes in Saskatoon.</i>	23.1%
<i>Unsure</i>	10.1%

Those who felt the amendments would improve affordability indicated that the additional housing options would lead to more housing supply and therefore reduce costs. However, all respondents indicated that other factors need to be considered, such as:

- Property taxes, interest rates, construction costs and utility costs
- The cost and availability of skilled trades people
- Market forces
- Landlords and developers ultimately decide the cost for a housing unit, and with no controls in place, the costs may remain the same and they make a greater profit

3.1.3 Question 3

Question 3 asked:

Throughout the project we heard the community is concerned about how these changes could impact their “neighbourhood’s character”. In a few words, please explain how you would describe “neighbourhood character?”

Many respondents expressed a desire to protect and preserve the existing character of the city’s neighbourhoods and indicated that the proposed amendments would impact the existing character of their neighbourhood. There was an understanding that neighbourhoods evolve over time, but changes should enhance not detract from existing neighbourhoods.

The three main themes to describe neighbourhood character discussed by survey respondents were:

1. Physical Attributes of a Neighbourhood
 - Consistent architecture
 - Green space and natural elements such as mature trees and parks
 - Streetscapes including the layout of the streets, sidewalks and parking
2. Social and Community Aspects of a Neighbourhood
 - General sense of a community where everyone knows each other
 - Safe spaces for children to play
 - Diversity and inclusivity
3. Intangible and Subjective elements
 - General feel or “vibe” of an area

- Historical homes and spaces
- Landmarks and traditions

3.1.4 Question 4

Question 4 asked:

How would the proposed changes have an impact on “neighbourhood character?”

The four main themes identified by respondents to describe the impacts the amendments will have on neighbourhood character are detailed below:

1. Negative Impacts on Physical Character
 - Loss of aesthetic cohesion and architectural integrity, particularly from four storey apartments and new buildings not fitting in with the existing housing styles
 - Loss of mature trees and green spaces
 - Impact on parks
 - Increased traffic, congestion, and parking issues
 - Skepticism about the City’s ability to manage the changes effectively and ensure that new developments would be of high quality and fit in with the existing character of the neighbourhood
2. Negative Impacts on Social Character and Community
 - Loss of community feel and neighbourliness
 - Increased crime and safety concerns
3. Economic and Environmental Concerns
 - Decreased property values
 - Loss of green spaces and mature trees
4. Positive Impacts on Neighbourhood Character
 - Increased vibrancy and diversity
 - Support for local businesses

3.1.5 Question 5

Question 5 asked:

As noted above, changes are being proposed to permit multiple unit dwellings within the Transit Development Area. As part of the project, the City is developing design guidelines to help four-storey dwellings fit into residential areas. What design consideration do you feel are important in making four-storey residential developments more desirable in Saskatoon?

This question listed seven categories, with three potential responses for each. The table on the next page (Table 3) identifies the number of responses for each category. Respondents indicated that all categories are important considerations when developing design guidelines, with size and shape of buildings receiving the most responses as “important” and how environmentally friendly the building are receiving the least responses as “important”.

Table 3: Design considerations of multiple unit dwellings

Category	Not Important	Unsure	Important
Size and shape of the buildings	13	4	149
Impact on neighbouring properties such as shading or comparable size	8	15	140
How lively and engaging the building fronts are	10	37	107
How easy it is to get access to the site and buildings by foot/bicycle/or other non-vehicle modes of transportation	20	31	99
How easy it is to access the site and buildings by vehicle	20	31	110
How environmentally friendly the buildings are	32	32	95
How safe and secure the buildings feel	36	12	142

Question 5 also had an open-ended question where respondents were able to provide their thoughts. The open-ended question asked: *Are there any other considerations you feel are important?* The four main themes identified by respondents about what other considerations are important are detailed below:

1. Architectural and Aesthetic Elements

- Appropriate building size and shape
- Complimentary colors, materials, and architectural styles
- Lively front entrances
- Landscaping features

2. Accessibility and Transportation

- Convenient access to the site by all modes of transportation (pedestrians, bicycle, vehicles)
- Sufficient parking

3. Environmental Impact

- Include features like solar panels and green roofs
- Concerns about strain on local utilities (roads, sewers, water)

4. Safety

- Buildings need to be secure for residents
- Need a general feeling of safety

3.1.6 Questions 6 to 8

Questions 6 to 8 dealt with parking-related matters. These questions will be summarized in a separate report to be posted on the [Minimum Parking Requirements website](#) in the near future.

3.1.7 Questions 9 to 12

Questions 9 to 11 were demographic questions and the findings of question 12 are captured in Table 1 above.

3.1.8 Question 13

Question 13 asked:

Do you have additional comments you'd like to provide?

This open-ended question was answered by 141 participants. There were six themes, which are summarized below.

1. Concerns about Negative Impacts on Existing Neighbourhoods and Residents
 - Decreased property value
 - Loss of neighbourhood character
 - Increased traffic and parking issues
 - Negative environmental impacts
 - Loss of privacy
 - Historical preservation
2. Concerns about the Planning Process and City Governance
 - Lack of transparency and communication / Lack of trust in City government
 - Rushed decision-making
 - Federal overreach
3. Support for Increased Density and Affordable Housing
 - The need for more housing options
 - Economic benefits of housing growth
 - Environmental benefits of density and less reliance on cars
 - Improved walkability of neighbourhoods
 - Transit-oriented development
4. Concerns about the Effectiveness and Implementation of the HAF Amendments
 - Questionable effectiveness of HAF funding
 - Concerns about developer incentives
 - Implementation challenges
 - Consider alternative funding sources rather than HAF
5. Alternative Solutions and Priorities
 - Focus should be on existing infrastructure before increasing density
 - Expand outwards not inwards to minimize impacts on existing neighbourhoods
 - Prioritize homelessness and addiction as they are root causes of the housing crisis
 - Improve public transportation before increasing density
6. Additional Comments and Considerations
 - Concerns about quality of construction and design if trying to keep costs down
 - Infrastructure concerns
 - Consider the social impacts of increased density
 - A desire to see more “missing middle” housing units
 - Concerns about equity and fairness with distribution of affordable housing
 - Should prioritize implementation of BRT before implementing zoning changes
 - Should explore a more nuanced or targeted approach to increased density
 - Should provide for more community involvement and input into the decision
 - Should explore other opportunities including renovating existing housing stock and addressing underlying issues of housing crisis

4 Next Steps

Saskatoon City Council will be considering the amendments to the [Official Community Plan](#) and [Zoning Bylaw](#) at their meeting on June 27, 2024. The meeting is open to the public and can also be viewed online: [Upcoming and Past Meetings | Saskatoon.ca](#)



Appendix A

The following table provides an overview of the survey questions, the number of responses received for each question and the percentage of responses.

Table 4: Survey questions, number of responses and percentage of responses

#	Question/Option(s)	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
1	Skip to end of survey or complete survey	219	100%
2	How do you think changing zoning regulations to allow more housing options will impact housing affordability in Saskatoon?	169 with 106 open ended responses	77.1% 48.4%
3	Throughout the project we heard the community is concerned about how these changes could impact their “neighbourhood’s character”. In a few words, please explain how you would describe “neighbourhood character?”	161	73.5%
4	How would the proposed changes have an impact on “neighbourhood character?”	162	73.9%
5	As noted above, changes are being proposed to permit multiple unit dwellings with the Transit Development Area. As part of the project, the City is developing design guidelines to help four-storey dwellings fit into residential areas. What design consideration do you feel are important in making four-storey residential developments more desirable in Saskatoon?	166 with 107 open ended responses	75.8% 48.8%
6	<p>Currently, the City requires a set amount of parking spaces for most uses, based on factors such as size and type of use. The City is pursuing the removal of minimum parking requirements for all uses in the City, which means Developers, Businesses, Residents, and Homeowners will be able to determine the number of parking spaces they want to provide when they develop. Do you agree with this change?</p> <p><i>NOTE: The results related to parking questions are provided at https://www.saskatoon.ca/engage/minimum-parking-requirements</i></p>	173	79.0%
7	<p>Please tell us why you might not agree with this change. Select all that apply. This question was available to respondents who selected “No”, “Somewhat”, or “Unsure” in the previous question 6</p> <p><i>NOTE: The results related to parking questions can be found at the Minimum Parking Requirements website.</i></p>	133 with 66 open ended responses	60.7% 30.1%

8	Based on the options, rank what the City should prioritize. <i>NOTE: The results related to parking questions can be found at the Minimum Parking Requirements website.</i>	151	68.9%
9	Demographic Questions	176	80.4%
10		1 of 4 possible responses	25%
11		163	74.9%
12	How did you hear about today's event?	170	77.6%
13	Do you have additional comments you'd like to provide?	141	64.4%

