

Queen Elizabeth School Redevelopment (35 Barker Street)

Engagement Feedback Report: Stakeholder Design Charrette

Event Date: August 25, 2025

Report Date: September 11, 2025

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge that Picton is part of the treaty lands of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe, and the historic territory of the Huron Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and various Anishinaabe peoples, who through migratory and settlement patterns, have been present in Prince Edward County for hundreds and thousands of years. We offer our gratitude to the First Peoples for their care for, and teachings about, our earth and our relations.

This report summarizes the feedback and discussions from the Stakeholder Design Charrette held for the Queen Elizabeth School Redevelopment project at 35 Barker Street in Picton. We extend our gratitude to all who participated and contributed their valuable insights.

Community Members

A total of 25 community members and local agency representatives participated in the Charrette. We sincerely appreciate all individuals who dedicated their time and expertise to shape this proposal. Their engagement and collaborative spirit were essential in fostering a collective vision for the redevelopment.

County Representatives

- Phil St-Jean, Councillor Ward 1 – Picton
- Kate McNaughton, Councillor Ward 1 – Picton
- Elis Ziegler, Affordable Housing Supervisor
- Angela Buonamici, Manager of Planning

Developer

- **New View Holdings:** Tim Neeb, Alan Hirschfield

Consulting Team

- **Planning:** SvN Architects + Planners (Kelly Graham, Nicole Dilisi, Ryan Cheng)
- **Transportation:** R.J Burnside (David Angelakis)
- **Landscape Architecture:** VTLA (Bailey Austin-Macmillan)

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1.0 Introduction

The redevelopment of the former Queen Elizabeth School (located at 35 Barker Street in Picton) is an exciting opportunity to deliver much-needed affordable housing, a new community hub, and public parkland. The County faces a critical need for affordable housing and an acute shortage of affordable and attainable housing for its workforce, which is a key driver for the proposed redevelopment.

The Stakeholder Design Charrette was an opportunity for the Developer and the Project Team to gather specific ideas and feedback from the community to refine the proposal. This report summarizes the input received, which will help shape the final development plan prior to the submission of a formal development application to the County.

2.0 Meeting Overview

The Stakeholder Design Charrette for the Queen Elizabeth School redevelopment was held on August 25th, 2025 at Picton Town Hall. Participants arrived at 6:00PM, engaged with display panels (See Appendix 'B') and project team members, followed by formal introductions and a presentation, charrette format table discussions, and a report back session summarizing key insights from each discussion, closing at 7:45PM.

The initial presentation was delivered by SvN, the planning consultants for the project. Introductions were provided by Tim Neeb, a partner at New View Holdings, the Developer, and Picton Ward 1 Councillor Phil St. Jean. The full presentation is appended to this report in Appendix 'A'.

Following the presentation, participants were encouraged to choose a table for engaging in a smaller group discussion. The table discussions were facilitated by one or two development representatives or consultants and focused on the following themes: building design, housing and affordability, community hub programming, traffic and circulation, and landscape and public amenities. Photos of the graphic and discussion prompt materials included at each table can be found appended to this report in Appendix 'C'.

3.0 County Objectives and Previous Public Input

The County of Prince Edward began planning for the Queen Elizabeth School site after it was declared surplus lands in 2018, with Council directing staff to pursue acquisition and redevelopment options from 2023–2024. Building on those directions, the County issued a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) in June 2024, which launched the search for development partners in the private sector. The RFEOI and preceding Council reports set clear objectives:

- Maximize the number of affordable housing units.
- Provide up to 37,000 square feet of rental space for community-service agencies.
- Allow the municipality to recoup its investment.
- Deliver much needed housing and community space as quickly as possible to meet current need.

Previous public input had highlighted several key areas of concern and priority

A Public Information Meeting took place September 25th, 2024 to gather initial input from the surrounding residents and stakeholders. A summary of the public's feedback at this meeting is as follows:

- **Green Space:** Desire for contiguous green space, community gardens, and a greenhouse.
- **Community Hub:** Emphasis on meeting the needs of the greater community, multi-use community space for active and educational uses, and suggestions for specific facilities like a Children's Museum, Hospice, or Daycare.
- **Built Form & Housing Types:** Need for affordable housing and rentals, energy-efficient and sustainable design features, accessibility, and compatibility with low-density surroundings.
- **Density:** Concerns about compatibility with the existing neighbourhood character.
- **Traffic, Access & Servicing:** Focus on traffic, parking, pedestrian safety, road infrastructure improvements, and drainage.

4.0 Changes to the Proposal Since September 25th, 2024

The initial proposal shared in September 2024 featured three buildings, including a larger L-shaped building containing the Community Hub on the ground floor, all at four storeys in height. The former plan included a total of 246 residential units, half of which were committed to be affordable. Parking occupied a significant portion of the site, and green space was limited to landscaped buffers adjacent to the buildings.

Between the Public Information Meeting in September 2024 to the Stakeholder Design Charrette in August 2025, the project team made the following revisions to the proposal:

- **Building Design and Height:** Building siting and layouts were adjusted. Floorplates are slightly longer and the overall building heights have been reduced to three storeys, with the exception of Building A, which sits above the Community Hub. The setback of Building 'A' along Barker Street was also increased.
- **Unit Count:** The revised proposal includes a total of 198 units, a reduction due to the loss of one floor from each building.

- **Public Park:** A new 1,449.78 m² park is proposed at the corner of Centre and Barker Streets, replacing the previous building frontage along Centre Street.
- **Community Hub:** The Community Hub has been reoriented to front Barker Street, rather than Centre Street, as in the initial plan.
- **Community Garden:** A 771.54 m² community garden is now proposed on the southwest portion of the site, replacing the additional surface parking area.
- **Access:** Vehicular access connecting to the end of Elm Street has been removed, and the perpendicular vehicular access along Elm Street has been shifted south, aligning with the Elizabeth Street access point.

5.0 Summary of Feedback from Table Discussions

From the notes recorded by table facilitators during the Charrette, several recurring themes consistently emerged across discussions. These themes represent the issues most frequently raised through participant dialogue that reflected shared priorities and concerns. The following summary highlights the key areas of focus identified through this methodology-driven process:

1. **Balancing density, height, and affordability:** maximizing the amount of affordable and family-friendly housing while keeping new development compatible with the surrounding community, and a design that contributes positively to the community.
2. **Strong emphasis on walkability, cycling, and connectivity:** within the site, to surrounding neighbourhood, and to regional trails.
3. **Greenspace and tree canopy as priorities:** both for public amenity use and to counterbalance the buildings and surface parking areas.
4. **Community Hub as a cornerstone:** clear program priorities and a design focused on dignity, flexibility, and accessibility.
5. **Traffic and parking management is critical:** addressing Barker Street reconstruction, school-related congestion, and balancing parking with greenspace.

While each discussion table was designated for a specific conversation topic, the conversations often explored aspects of the proposal beyond the topic prescribed. For the purpose of this report and overall clarity when incorporating feedback into future design iterations, the responses were grouped by theme regardless of what table they came from.

The table themes were:

- Building design
- Housing and affordability
- Community hub programming
- Traffic and circulation
- Landscape and public amenities

Key discussion points are summarized below.

A. Building Design

This table focused on the built form and layout of the proposal. Facilitated by Alan Hirschfield (New View Holdings) and Ryan Cheng (SvN), participants worked with a 3D model of the development within the neighbourhood context (see Appendix 'C': Figure 11) and were asked to explore different block arrangements that balance density, open space, and compatibility with the surrounding community. Discussions addressed circulation and access, relationships to adjacent streets and properties, impacts on sunlight and privacy, and opportunities for open space and community amenities.

Height, Density, and Design

Participants debated whether additional height and density could support a higher proportion of affordable housing and enhanced architectural design features. Some were disappointed to learn that the reduced building heights in the revised plan had lowered the number of affordable units, compared to earlier versions. Several attendees supported increasing Building D to four storeys, while keeping B, and C at three storeys, and Building A at 3 storey above the 1-storey hub. Others preferred maintaining lower heights overall, suggesting that Building A (currently four storeys) be relocated to the Building D site so that the tallest building would be farther from residents along Barker Street.

It was also suggested that building setbacks could be reduced, bringing the buildings closer to the street. This was proposed as a means of increasing the amount of consolidated green space within the project. An additional suggestion was to set back the floors above level 1 to create second-storey terrace amenities.

Sustainability

Sustainable design was highlighted as a priority by participants, with the Green Municipal Fund identified as a potential source of funding for environmentally sensitive features.

Phasing and Construction Considerations

Questions were raised regarding construction phasing, staging areas, and garbage pickup. Participants were informed that these details will be addressed later in the development process through site plan control and pre-construction planning.

Some attendees expressed concerns about rooftop HVAC equipment potentially causing noise, bulk, or shadow impacts. The Developer clarified that each unit will have its own wall-mounted HVAC system, rather than a central rooftop system, to minimize these effects.

B. Housing and Affordability

This table focused on how the project can integrate with the surrounding community while delivering a meaningful supply of affordable housing. Facilitated by Tim Neeb (New View Holdings) and Johanne Strome, (Community Living Prince Edward), participants reviewed materials including the County's definition of affordable housing, local housing data, CMHC loan program fact sheets, and sample unit layouts (see Appendix 'C': Figure 13).

Discussions focused on how "affordable housing" should be defined for this project, whether it should include rental, ownership, or both, and what the appropriate mix of affordable and market units might be. Ultimately, financial feasibility will determine the proposed mix, but it was beneficial to hear different opinions. Participants also explored which income levels or household types should be prioritized, how affordable units would be delivered and maintained, and what role government programs, grants, or private contributions could play in funding.

Social and Supportive Housing

There was strong interest in integrating social and supportive housing within the development. Seniors housing in particular was identified as a priority. Participants emphasized the importance of including programs that could serve residents with a range of needs, establishing the Hub's role to provide community-focused housing solutions.

Participants highlighted opportunities to link the project with established programs and supports. Suggestions included dedicating 16 units to the Homeward Bound program and providing rent supplements for residents at ODSP levels. The Developer noted prior experience managing fully affordable buildings, which could inform the delivery and management of units on site.

Ensuring Affordability

Some participants expressed concern that the commitment to affordable units had decreased from 50% in earlier versions to 25–30% in the revised plan. The Developer explained that lower building heights reduced the number of affordable units that could be delivered while maintaining project feasibility.

Desired Unit Mix

Attendees emphasized the need for a diverse unit mix to meet a range of household needs. The unit mix suggested by participant feedback included:

- Studios: 10% (preference for more deeply affordable units)
- 1-bedroom: 45%
- 2-bedroom: 45% (including options geared to single parents)
- 3-bedroom: 10–12% (family supportive housing)

Funding Options and Affordable Housing Definition

CMHC funding programs were identified as potential sources to support affordability, although these programs are subject to policy changes. The Developer is in frequent communication with CMHC and will look to take advantage of any funding opportunities the project is eligible for.

C. Community Hub Programming

This table focused on establishing the Community Hub as a cornerstone of the redevelopment. Facilitated by Elis Ziegler (County Affordable Housing Corporation) and Susan Treverton (Community Living Prince Edward), participants discussed programming and design priorities for the Hub, guided by prompts such as “What’s one thing your neighbourhood really needs?” and “What services or facilities are currently missing?”. Attendees emphasized the desire for a flexible, accessible, and dignified space that could serve a variety of community needs. The general feedback related to the Community Hub is as follows:

Project Timelines

Several agencies with expiring leases sought clarity on when the Community Hub might be ready. The Developer explained that construction is expected to begin in 2027 and committed to providing regular updates to prospective tenants as the project advances.

Collaboration and Governance

Participants suggested that agencies should collaborate on the co-design of the Hub to ensure the space reflects diverse community needs. Questions were also raised about governance, including whether the Hub would be municipally led. Facilitators explained that the the Hub space will be delivered by the Developer but designed in partnership with the County and community partners. Currently, it is anticipated that the County will take on the head lease for the full Hub space, and will sublease space to community partners.

Design Priorities

Attendees emphasized that the Hub should prioritize flexibility and shared spaces while integrating practical and accessible features. Key suggestions included accessible parking, bike racks and rentals, car- and ride-share options, and seating at bus stops and waiting areas for appointments. Ensuring dignity, confidentiality, and respect for service users was also highlighted as a guiding principle for the design.

Location Considerations

Some participants recommended relocating the Hub and adjacent park to the Building D area to help buffer active ground-floor uses from existing homes. Others preferred keeping the Hub in its current proposed location, highlighting the benefits of visibility and broader accessibility for the community.

Dotmocracy Exercise

A “dotmocracy” exercise was used to capture programming and community use priorities. Participants used colored sticky notes to indicate which programs or services attendees preferred most relative to others). A summary of the dotmocracy results are as follows:

- **Highest scoring:** Child & Youth Services (7), Community Support (5), Food Security (5).
- **Moderate scoring:** Health Services (3), Education & Employment (2).
- **Lowest scoring:** Community Building (1), Wellness (1).

Please refer to Appendix ‘D’ for the full dotmocracy results.

Program Suggestions (Specified)

Participants also scored specific uses within each program category, with the option to add other uses if they were not listed in the dotmocracy worksheets. The summary of prioritized Hub uses, and the number of votes they received, are as follows:

- **Child & Youth Services:** childcare/early learning (5), after-school tutoring (4), youth leadership and mentorship programs (4), creative arts workshops (3), child services community partner spaces (1).
- **Food Security:** food bank distribution centre (9), community kitchen (6), affordable fresh food markets (5), nutrition education programs (5), and seasonal gardening workshops (4).
- **Health Services:** counselling and emotional support services (8), disability support services (7), seniors' programs for healthy aging and mobility (7), prenatal, parenting, and early childhood programs (4), mental health support (3), workshops on healthy living, wellness, and self-care (2), presentation/boardroom (1).
- **Education & Employment:** Adult literacy and ESL classes (2) prenatal/parenting programs, digital skills and computer training (3), apprenticeship and trade training programs (3), career counselling and job placement services (2), resume clinics and job interview preparation (1), business or entrepreneur incubator (1).
- **Wellness:** walking clubs and outdoor recreation programs (5), fitness and movement programs for all ages (3), stress management and mindfulness workshops (1), yoga, tai-chi, and meditation classes (1).
- **Community Building & Support:** bookable workspaces and meeting rooms (7), housing navigation (6), skill-sharing workshops (4), public meeting space for local groups (4), cultural festivals and celebrations (2), Indigenous cultural programming and support (2), volunteer training and coordination hub (1), additional parking for dedicated services (1), settlement and newcomer integration services (1).

D. Traffic & Circulation

This table discussion focused on circulation patterns in and around the redevelopment site, including current pain points and potential road improvements. Facilitated by David Angelakis (R.J. Burnside), the table utilized a site plan and context plan (See Appendix 'C': Figure 14), allowing attendees to comment on the proposed circulation, parking and servicing locations, as well as the vehicular and pedestrian access points. Participants were also asked about existing opportunities and constraints around the site. The summary of feedback received are as follows:

On-Site Circulation, Access, and Amenities

Attendees suggested providing a direct pedestrian connection through the middle of the site between Centre Street and Building D, and asked about emergency access along the Centre Street frontage between the parkette and Building B. Concerns were raised about potential cut-throughs between driveways. Participants expressed interest in incorporating car share and bike share within the surface parking area, as well as indoor bike storage, lockers, and charging stations. Emphasis was placed on ensuring pedestrian connections through the centre of the site and linking to neighbouring future development areas.

Existing Adjacent Streets

Participants raised concerns about the current conditions on Barker Street, including potholes, one-way operation, and occasional wrong-way traffic. Many expressed support for reconstructing Barker Street to allow two-way traffic with sidewalks on both sides, though a few neighbours were concerned about the potential loss of mature trees if the street alignment changes. The County has completed a detailed reconstruction design of Barker Street to address these issues, though funding for construction is not yet in place. Some noted congestion induced by school drop-offs and pick-ups at Prince Edward Collegiate Institute, and the P1 bus route, which could be exacerbated by additional site traffic. There was also interest in exploring connections to the future Curtis Street or adjacent developments.

Parking

Feedback on parking varied. Some participants were concerned about whether there would be sufficient parking for new residents and Community Hub users and staff, while others suggested reducing surface parking, particularly in front of Building D, in favor of additional greenspace. The Developer noted that parking would be shared by Community Hub users, staff, and future residents, stating that parking spaces would become available throughout the day and evening based on resident and Hub programming schedules. One participant made a suggestion of utilizing the existing site's natural grade change to incorporate below-grade parking without excessive excavation costs. This would allow for some of the surface parking area to be replaced by larger ground floor levels. Questions were also raised about the potential for on-street parking along Centre Street.

Transit and Active Transportation

Residents asked about transit access to the new park and Community Hub and emphasized the importance of accessible pedestrian and cycling connections. Some noted that intersections such as Elizabeth and King are already busy and recommended considering signalization, crosswalks, or crossing guards during peak hours. Traffic calming measures along King Street were also suggested, as were opportunities for on-site bike rentals. Several attendees expressed interest in pedestrian-only access points from Centre Street or the greenway. Residents also highlighted the need for additional bike lanes and improved pedestrian and cyclist connections, including links to the Millennium Trail.

Waste Collection, Maintenance, and Fire Access

Participants emphasized the importance of planning for efficient waste collection and storage, as well as year-round maintenance including snow clearance. Suggestions were also made to re-orient fire access to improve safety and operational efficiency

E. Landscape and Public Amenities

This table focused on the proposed park space, public realm, and landscape elements both within the redevelopment site and along adjacent streets. Facilitated by Nicole Dilisi (SvN) and Bailey Austin-Macmillan (VTLA), participants reviewed the site plan and precedent images (See Appendix 'C': Figures 15-16) to explore how landscaping could enhance the redevelopment and surrounding community. Discussions centered on park programming, greenspace location and size, accessibility, sustainability, and integration with surrounding connections. The feedback gathered at this roundtable is as follows:

Connections

Participants emphasized the importance of pedestrian and cycling connections through the site, linking to the adjacent high school, future developments, and the Millennium Trail. Several participants suggested adding a greenway running through the site from Centre Street to Elizabeth Street to break up surface parking and asphalt, provide shaded seating, and create visual interest from residential windows. Attendees also highlighted the need for pedestrian connections to the planned subdivision and school routes toward Picton Main Street.

Greenspace and Planting

Many participants supported incorporating mature and mixed-species trees, larger landscape buffers, and denser planting to improve canopy coverage and the pedestrian experience while avoiding monocultures. There was interest in clustering trees with irrigation where possible, rather than relying on isolated single trees, to improve survival. Suggestions included relocating the community garden closer to the parkette to integrate with the Hub and improve accessibility for children and seniors, as well as considering a dog park in a separate location to maintain safe play areas for children.

Park design

Feedback on park programming included suggesting naturally creative play spaces, including logs, small berms with benches and integrated slides, rocks for walking, and splash pad or skating rink combinations. Participants emphasized incorporating shade structures and ensuring safe sightlines for supervision. Participants also suggested adding outdoor amenity spaces, such as barbequing and gathering areas, near each building.

Community Garden

Participants recommended shade structures, seating, picnic benches, water taps with inside turn-offs, and fencing to support programming within the community garden. Integrating the garden closer to the parkette was seen as a way to encourage participation and facilitate Hub programming for both children and seniors.

Lighting

Attendees preferred intimate, dimmable pedestrian-scale lighting while ensuring that pedestrian entrances remain well-lit for safety. Concerns were raised about excessive brightness along Centre Street, with a desire for lighting that is both functional and comfortable.

Tree Protection

Participants asked whether any existing large shade trees could be preserved, underscoring the value of mature trees for visual interest, shade, and long-term environmental benefit.

Community HUB Integration

Suggestions for integrating the Community Hub included incorporating public art along the wall facing the parkette by local artists and designing entrances and pathways to provide sensitive, accessible, and welcoming connections between the buildings and outdoor spaces.

6.0 Summary and Next Steps

From the notes recorded by table facilitators during the Charrette, several recurring themes consistently emerged across discussions. These themes represent the issues most frequently raised through participant dialogue that reflected shared priorities and concerns. The following summary highlights the key issues that will be addressed through future design iterations.

Balancing Density, Height, and Affordability

Participants emphasized the importance of providing a meaningful supply of affordable and family-oriented housing while ensuring compatibility with surrounding neighbourhoods. Stances varied on building heights, with some supporting modest increases to secure more affordable units, and others preferring lower heights to protect privacy and character.

Walkability, Cycling, and Connectivity

Strong support was expressed for a walkable and connected community. Residents highlighted the need for direct pedestrian and cycling routes through the site, safe access to schools and parks, and connections to existing trail networks and future surrounding developments.

Greenspace and Tree Canopy

Expanding and enhancing greenspace emerged as a high priority. Attendees called for shaded seating areas, mature tree planting, landscape buffers, and creative park amenities to counterbalance built form and surface parking. The integration of a dog park were also suggested to strengthen programming and accessibility.

Community Hub as a Cornerstone

Participants emphasized flexibility, dignity, and accessibility in its design, alongside clear program priorities such as child and youth services, food security, and community support. Questions of governance and collaboration were raised, with suggestions for agency involvement in co-design.

Traffic, Parking, and Street Improvements

Traffic management continues to be an important issue, particularly in relation to Barker Street's reconstruction, school-related congestion, and safe pedestrian crossings. Parking opinions varied, with some emphasizing adequacy for residents and Hub users, while others advocated reducing surface parking in favor of more greenspace. Integration of car share, bike share, and transit access was encouraged.

Next Steps

The Developer and the Project Team will now begin the process of preparing the formal development application and all of the necessary supporting documents. Following the formal submission of the application, the submission materials will be made available on the County's Have Your Say website and the County will host a Public Information Centre (PIC) to share the updated design and receive feedback from the public. The design may be modified further based on input from the community and from County Staff. Once the design has been sufficiently advanced and County Staff are comfortable with the proposal, a Public Open House and Statutory Public Meeting, will be scheduled at one of the regular meetings of the Planning & Development Committee. This will be an additional opportunity for the community to provide comments. Ultimately, for the development to proceed, County Council will need to pass a Zoning By-law Amendment to implement the permissions for the proposal.