



NORTH COWICHAN / DUNCAN CORRIDOR

SAFER COMMUNITY PLAN

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

September 2024

Background

The corridor is an urban area generally described as a few blocks on either side of the Trans Canada Highway through Duncan and North Cowichan. In recent years this area has become impacted by public disorder, most of which is a downstream effect of poverty, addiction, mental health issues, and homelessness. In 2019, the Municipality of North Cowichan, the City of Duncan, and Cowichan Tribes, worked together to create a Safer Community Plan that outlined actions that responded to this public disorder, including enhanced bylaw, police, and security patrols and enforcement.

At a January 23, 2024 joint council meeting of North Cowichan and the City of Duncan, the respective Councils directed staff to review the 2019 Safer Community Plan to determine whether revising or updating the plan was required. In February and March, staff reviewed the plan with stakeholders, including North Cowichan and City of Duncan bylaw staff, the Safer Working Group, Cowichan Tribes Public Safety Working Group, the Cowichan Homelessness and Housing Coalition, the Wellness and Recovery Community Health and Safety, the South Cowichan Community Policing Society, and the North Cowichan-Duncan RCMP.

All stakeholders agreed that the 2019 Safer Community Plan had been largely completed and that they were open to participating in the creation of a new plan that provides clear, pragmatic, and effective direction going forward. Additionally, it was apparent that the development of a new plan would benefit from feedback from the people and business owners who live and work in the corridor area – those most impacted by public disorder.

“It seems that when we speak of “public disorder” these days we are talking about people who are openly struggling because there’s nowhere to go.”

What we did

An engagement plan was developed that included the following objectives:

- To inform community members about the work already underway, community actions, and areas of jurisdictional influence.
- To involve those most impacted by public disorder in the review and refinement of a new plan, and updated actions.
- Design engagement opportunities to hear from a diverse range of audiences and stakeholders.
- Ensure stakeholder and community members feel as though their feedback was heard, understood, and taken into consideration as part of a new Safer Community Plan.

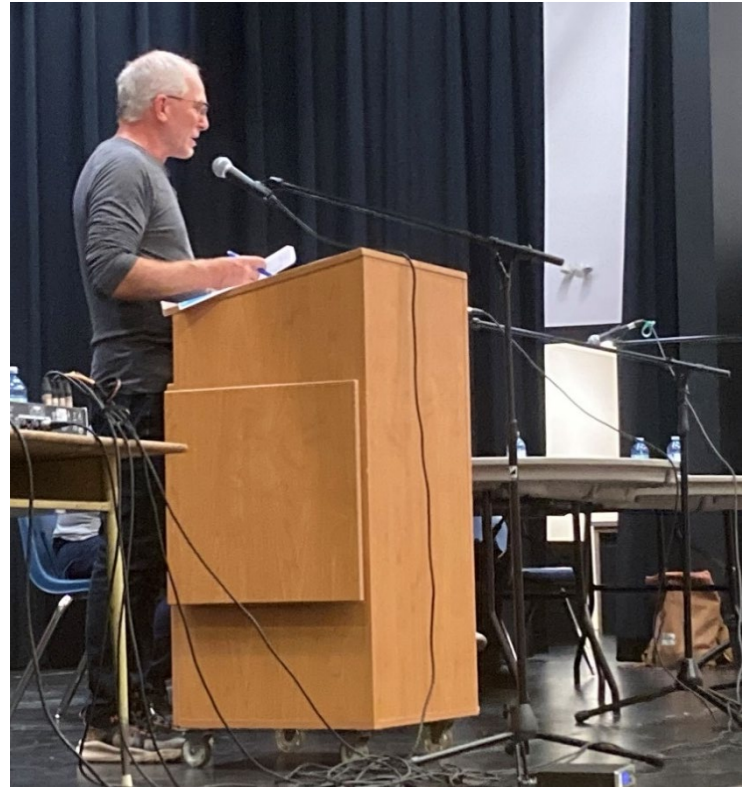
A project page was launched on **ConnectNorthCowichan.ca** containing information about the project, background documents and materials, information about engagement activities, a survey, and a Q&A forum.

The screenshot shows the website interface for the Safer Community Plan. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo 'Connect NORTH Cowichan', a search bar, and links for 'Home', 'North Cowichan Website', and 'Sign in'. The main banner features a photograph of two police officers in tactical gear standing near a tent in a field, with the text 'NORTH COWICHAN / DUNCAN CORRIDOR SAFER COMMUNITY PLAN' overlaid. Below the banner, the page title is 'Home / Safer Community Plan'. The main content area is titled 'Safer Community Plan' and includes social media icons, a thank-you message for survey feedback, and information about the new plan. A 'REGISTER to get involved!' button is prominently displayed. The 'Who's Listening' section lists John Horn, Director of Social Planning and Protective Services, and Rachel Hastings, RBO, Manager of Building and Bylaw Services. Contact information for both is provided.

Safer Community Dialogue event: On

Thursday, June 20 from 6-7:30pm staff hosted a Safer Community Dialogue event at Quamichan School. The event included panelists representing the City of Duncan bylaws department, Vancouver Island Health Authority, Mental Health and Substance Use team, Look Out Health and Housing Society, RCMP - Cowichan Detachment, Corridor Enforcement Unit, and North Cowichan Protective Services department and was led by emcee Bob Day, former Mayor of Lake Cowichan.

Those most impacted by public disorder who live and/or work in the corridor area were invited to the dialogue event and after a round of remarks from the panel, participants could ask questions. A total of **60 people** attended the event.



“As a wealthy country and region we should have all the supports and services to help people who are struggling, not put bandaids on the symptoms and let people live on the sidewalks.”

Discussions with businesses: Staff (John Horn, Director, Social Planning and Protective Services, Bylaw staff from North Cowichan and City of Duncan) spent considerable time in the corridor area visiting businesses and speaking with people. All business entities facing on to the Trans Canada Highway between Somenos marsh and the silver bridge were invited to attend the community dialogue event on June 20, North Cowichan staff attended at each business location to extend the invite and / or to leave a written invitation.

In addition, **17 business entities were interviewed** using a simple dialogue script that asked three questions that prompted discussion:

1. Tell us about your experience of safety related to this site and public disorder
2. What could we collectively do to improve the situation
3. What would you like to see included in a plan to enhance safety in this area

Stakeholder discussions: A number of organizations and groups whose work or purpose intersects with people in the corridor area were engaged through meetings and updates.

“Do not feel safe walking the streets of the community I grew up in and went to school in.”

Survey: A survey was open to the public from June 18 to September 2. The purpose of the survey was to learn what the top issues related to public disorder were and what solutions could be considered to counter these issues. There was an open text box for participants to share their experiences related to public safety. Demographic questions asked where people lived or worked in relation to the corridor and their housing situation. The survey was open to anyone. A total of **398 responses** were received. A summary of the responses are contained in **Appendix A**.

Q&A forum: A total of four questions were answered in the forum at [ConnectNorthCowichan.ca](https://connectnorthcowichan.ca)

How we connected

The opportunities to provide input was shared with the public via:

- ConnectNorthCowichan project page
- A postcard mailed to addresses within the corridor area
- Emails to registered Connect participants and the News+Updates subscriber list
- A flyer handout
- Social media posts reaching:
 - June 18 – 8,249
 - August 28 – 8,984

The Connect North Cowichan page received more than 1,200 visitors during the open engagement period.

See Appendix B for examples of these.

“I have experienced issues related to public intoxication. Encountering individuals under the influence can be unsettling as its difficult to predict their behaviour.”

What we heard

"My mother lives on Beverly street since 1993 and she does not feel safe walking to McDonalds anymore to have a cup of coffee."

Safer Community Dialogue event: More than 60 people attended the June 20 event. People took turns at the microphone sharing their experiences and asking the panel members questions. The experiences and questions ranged from the negative impacts of public disorder, questions about public health and enforcement policies, and positive stories of community, support, and recovery.

Survey: A total of 398 surveys were completed between June 18 and September 2. In order to reduce barriers to participation, survey participants did not need to register on the site. As participants elected to take the survey, responses do not reflect a random sample.

"I see a lot of unhoused people around town, I've never had a negative experience with them but it's heartbreaking to see so many people with nowhere to go, and it's frustrating that a lot of community members seem to just want them out of site, yet dislike a lot of options."

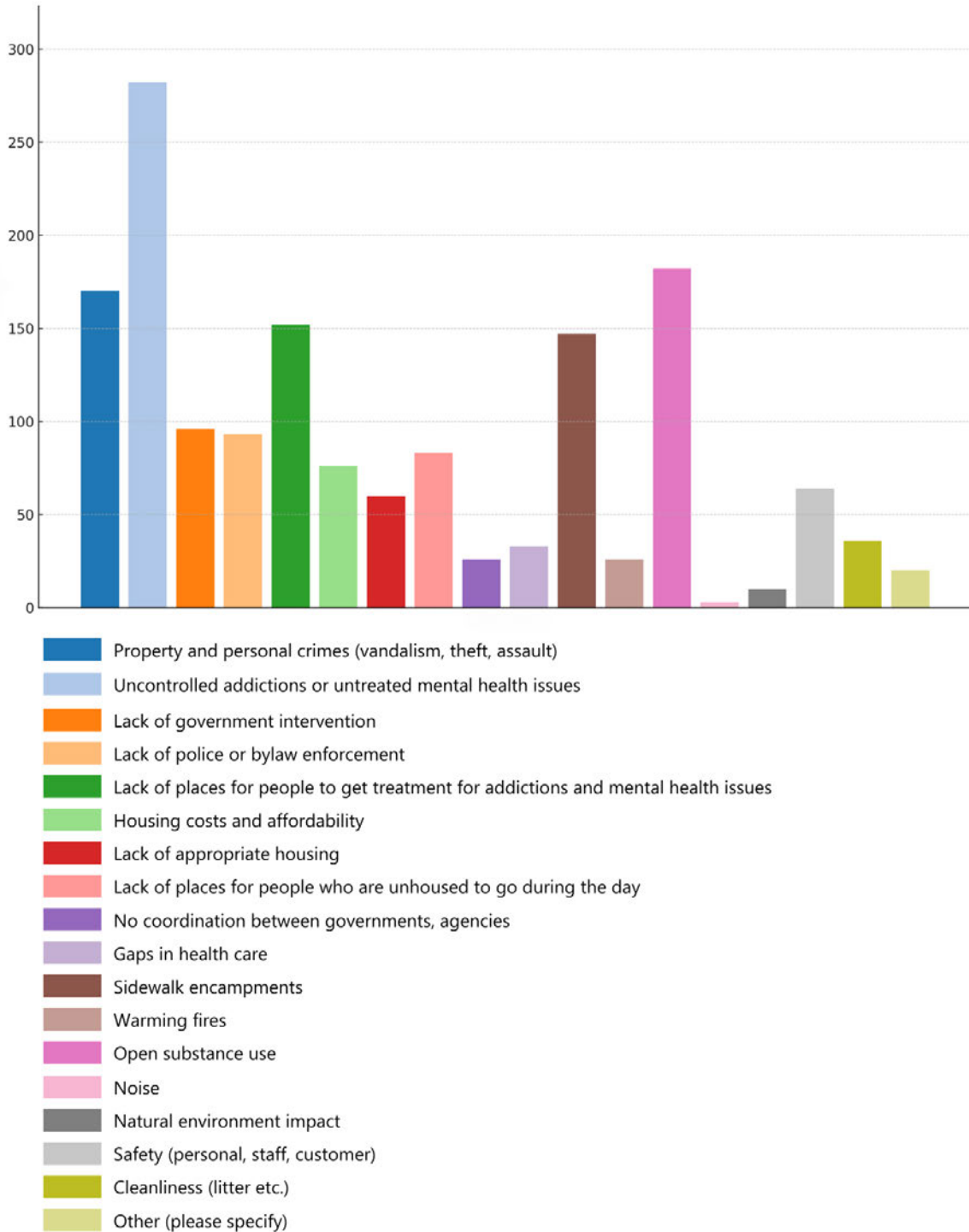
Four questions asked about their felt level of safety in the corridor, what the main problems are, what possible solutions should be considered, and an open text space to share their experiences.

Question 1: Do you feel safe at home or at work (within the corridor area)?

- 47.8% feel safe always (56) or sometimes (128) and 52.2% feel safe occasionally (92) or never (109).

**Question 2: What, in your opinion, do you feel are the main problems in the corridor area?
(pick 4)**

The options were presented in a random order for each participant.



The top four issues identified were:

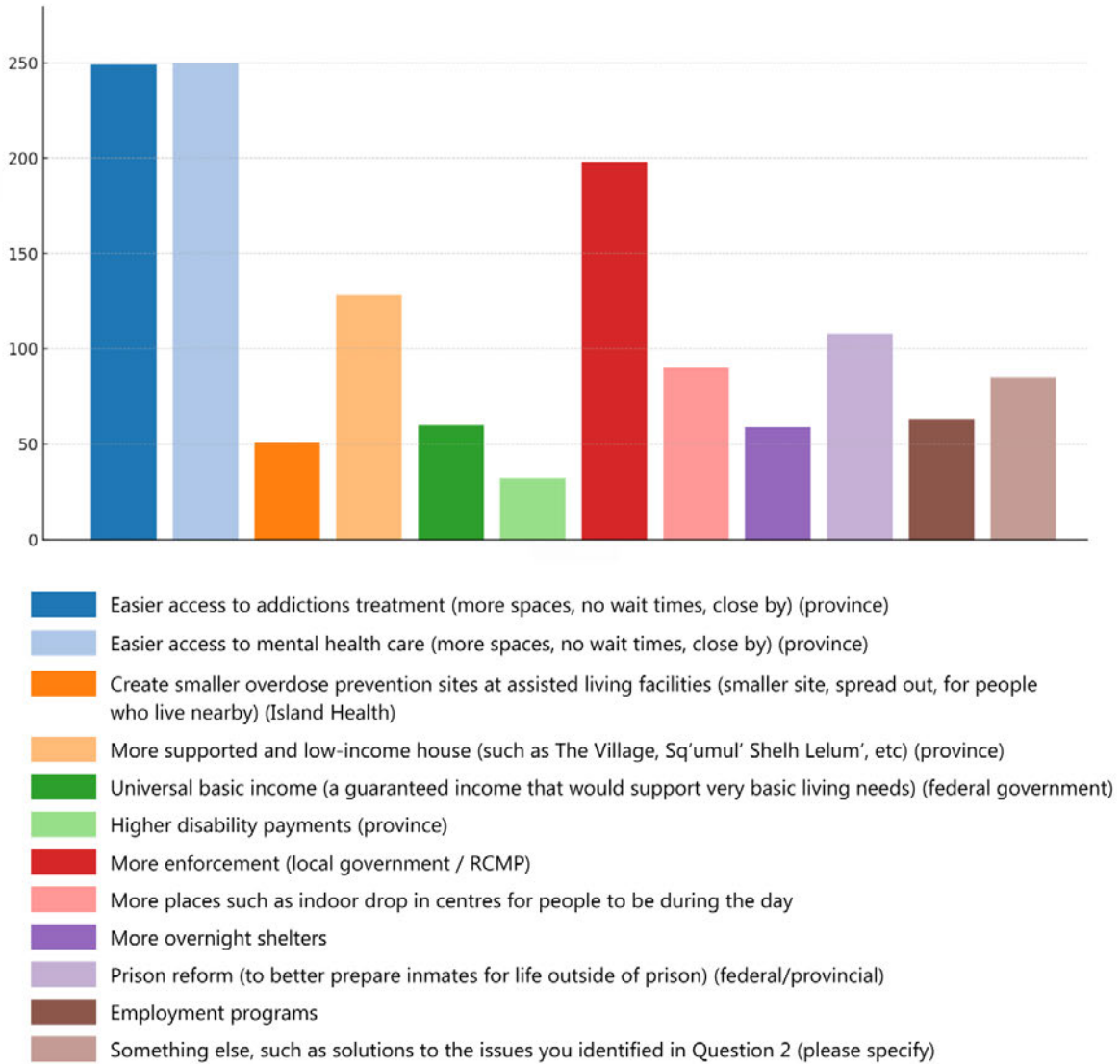
- Uncontrolled addictions or untreated mental health issues (282)
- Open substance use (182)
- Property and personal crimes (170)
- Lack of treatment (152)

A total of 20 people chose 'Other' and they were invited to specify. These responses are summarized into seven general themes:

- General disorder and vagrancy
- Drug use and paraphernalia
- Mental health and addictions
- Crime and safety concerns
- Policing and enforcement
- Public health and sanitation
- Government and policy failures

Question 3: What, in your opinion, do you feel are the best ways toward solutions?

The options were presented in a random order for each participant. The list of solutions included, in brackets, the agency or level of government responsible for that service.



The top four solutions identified were:

- Easier access to mental health care (more spaces, no wait times, close by) (250)
- Easier access to addictions treatment (more spaces, no wait times, close by) (249)
- More enforcement (198)
- More supported and low-income housing (128)

A total of 85 people chose 'Something else' and were asked to specify a solution or solutions. These responses can be summarized in seven themes:

- Rehabilitation and treatment
- Criminal justice and law enforcement
- Housing solutions
- Public safety and sanitation improvements
- Drug policy reform
- Mental health care
- Community and social supports

Question 4: Tell us about your experiences with public disorder

This question invited participants to share their stories, experiences, observations, reflections, and ideas as they related to public disorder in the corridor area. A total of 315 participants used this space.

These responses were summarized and grouped into eight general themes:

- Open drug use and addiction
 - A significant number of responses describe widespread drug use in public spaces, with individuals witnessing open drug consumption (heroin, meth, crack) and its associated paraphernalia (needles, pipes).
 - The impact on children, such as seeing people using drugs and asking questions about it, is highlighted.
 - Many respondents report frustration over the availability of "safe drugs" and the perceived lack of consequences for those using drugs openly.
- Homelessness and encampments:
 - Many mention the presence of homeless camps in public areas, particularly near schools and playgrounds.
 - Respondents describe feelings of unsafety when encountering encampments, especially in residential and commercial areas.
 - There are multiple references to trespassing, garbage, and human waste in areas surrounding encampments.
- Public safety concerns and crime:
 - Several respondents report experiencing or witnessing violent behavior, theft, vandalism, and aggressive panhandling.
 - Some describe being followed, threatened, or having property damaged by people under the influence of drugs or experiencing mental health crises.
 - Many respondents express fear for their safety when walking in certain areas, especially at night, and share concerns about the safety of children.
- Impact on local businesses and property:

- Business owners and employees frequently mention theft, property damage, and disruptive behavior by individuals struggling with homelessness and addiction.
- Some report having to install security measures like fences, cameras, or gates to protect their property.
- Public health and cleanliness:
 - Litter, including drug paraphernalia, human waste, and garbage, is frequently mentioned.
 - Many express concerns about the sanitary conditions in public spaces, parks, and sidewalks, with some mentioning specific locations like McDonald's, Beverly Street, and York Street.
- Mental health and addiction services:
 - Respondents discuss the lack of adequate mental health and addiction support services.
 - Several mention that current interventions, such as safe injection sites and free drugs, are enabling rather than rehabilitating individuals.
 - There are calls for more treatment centers, long-term housing solutions, and mental health care facilities.
- Impact on children:
 - Many responses highlight concerns about children being exposed to drug use, violence, and inappropriate behavior (e.g., nudity, public defecation).
 - Respondents frequently describe children witnessing disturbing events on their way to school or in public parks.
- Enforcement and government action:
 - Numerous comments reflect dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the situation, specifically citing a lack of law enforcement, ineffective bylaws, and frustration with the "catch and release" approach.
 - Several respondents call for more policing, stricter laws, and tougher consequences for public disorder offenses.

Who we heard from

The final survey questions asked where they lived and about their living arrangement. As participants elected to take the survey, responses do not reflect a random sample or represent the demographic makeup of the corridor area.

Question 5: I live and or work:

Participants were asked where they lived and/or worked (in relation to the corridor area).

- In the corridor area – 142
- Near the corridor area – 158
- Elsewhere in the Cowichan Valley – 136
- Not in the Cowichan Valley – 2

Question 6: I live:

Participants were asked to share their living situation.

- In a secure place I own – 300 (75.6%)
- In a secure place I rent – 66 (16.6%)
- I am currently housed, but could be unhoused at any time – 24 (6%)
- I do not have a home – 4 (1%)
- I do not have a permanent address or place I call home – 2 (0.5%)
- I live in a car or RV – 4 (1.0%)
- I live in a facility or assisted/supportive building - 0

Interviews with businesses

Comments heard from the **17 business entities interviewed** identified several issues including:

- public urination
- graffiti
- open fires
- open substance use
- overnight camping
- litter and discarded items
- vandalism
- sleepers on the site
- overdose events
- a perceived lack of safety for staff and customers.

Next steps

This report outlining what was heard will be shared for information with North Cowichan Council, City of Duncan Council, Cowichan Tribes Council, and the Cowichan Valley Regional District Board. It will also be shared with the stakeholders, partners, and community organizations that were consulted earlier in 2024.

This report will also be made available to the general public. It will be added to the Connect North Cowichan project page and people who chose to follow the project will be emailed advising them that the report is available and the next steps.

Ultimately, what was heard and shared during this engagement will inform a new Safer Community Plan that will be developed by the Municipality of North Cowichan, the City of Duncan, and Cowichan Tribes.


Appendix A: Engagement materials and reports

Summary Report

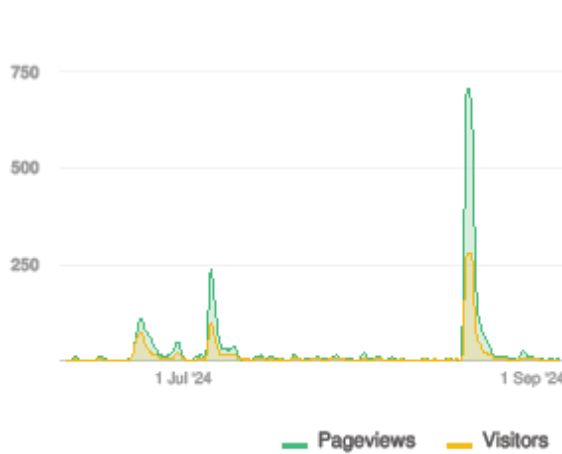
15 May 2024 - 17 September 2024

Connect North Cowichan

PROJECTS SELECTED: 1
Safer Community Plan
FULL LIST AT THE END OF THE REPORT



Visitors Summary



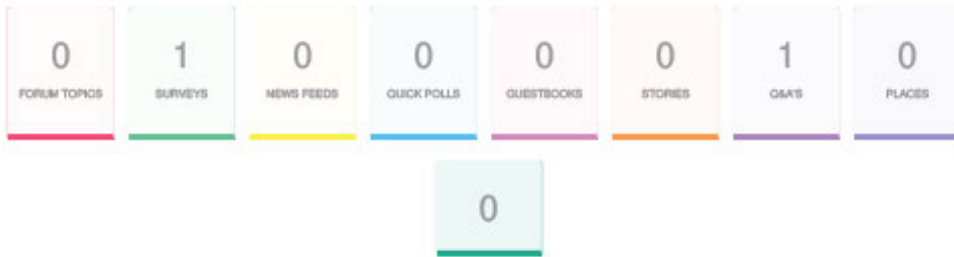
Highlights

TOTAL VISITS	1.4 k	MAX VISITORS PER DAY	279
NEW REGISTRATIONS	27		
ENGAGED VISITORS	398	INFORMED VISITORS	670
		AWARE VISITORS	1.2 k

PARTICIPANT SUMMARY

ENGAGED	398 ENGAGED PARTICIPANTS			(%)
	Registered	Unverified	Anonymous	
INFORMED	Contributed on Forums	0	0	0
	Participated in Surveys	19	0	378
	Contributed to Newsfeeds	0	0	0
	Participated in Quick Polls	0	0	0
AWARE	Posted on Guestbooks	0	0	0
	Contributed to Stories	0	0	0
	Asked Questions	3	0	0
	Placed Pins on Places	0	0	0
	Contributed to Ideas	0	0	0
	* A single engaged participant can perform multiple actions			* Calculated as a percentage of total visits to the Project
ENGAGED	670 INFORMED PARTICIPANTS			(%)
			Participants	
INFORMED	Viewed a video		0	
	Viewed a photo		0	
	Downloaded a document		18	
	Visited the Key Dates page		0	
AWARE	Visited an FAQ list Page		0	
	Visited Instagram Page		0	
	Visited Multiple Project Pages		252	
	Contributed to a tool (engaged)		398	
	* A single informed participant can perform multiple actions			* Calculated as a percentage of total visits to the Project
ENGAGED	1,204 AWARE PARTICIPANTS			(%)
			Participants	
INFORMED	Visited at least one Page		1,204	
AWARE				
	* Aware user could have also performed an Informed or Engaged Action			* Total list of unique visitors to the project

ENGAGEMENT TOOLS SUMMARY



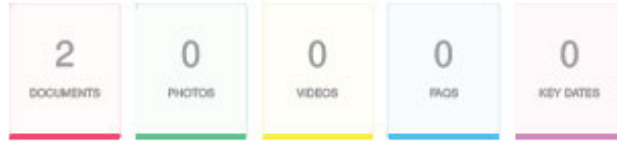
SURVEYS SUMMARY	
1	Surveys
397	Contributors
400	Submissions

TOP 3 SURVEYS BASED ON CONTRIBUTORS
<p>397</p> <p>Contributors to</p> <p>Creating a safer community</p>

Q & A SUMMARY	
1	Q&As
3	Contributors
4	Questions

TOP 3 Q & A BASED ON CONTRIBUTORS
<p>3</p> <p>Contributors to</p> <p>Have a question?</p>

INFORMATION WIDGET SUMMARY



DOCUMENTS	TOP 3 DOCUMENTS BASED ON DOWNLOADS
2 Documents	12 Downloads
18 Visitors	9 Downloads
21 Downloads	2019-06-13 Safer Community Plan Recommended Actions
	2021-10-04 Community Safety Response Model Gap Analysis summary report (Phase I and

TRAFFIC SOURCES OVERVIEW

REFERRER URL	Visits
m.facebook.com	443
lm.facebook.com	177
www.northcowichan.ca	110
l.facebook.com	106
www.google.com	36
android-app	12
www.google.ca	5
duckduckgo.com	2
t.co	2
ca.search.yahoo.com	1
mail.google.com	1
northcowichan.prevueaps.ca	1
outlook.live.com	1
search.brave.com	1
secure.campaigner.com	1

SELECTED PROJECTS - FULL LIST

PROJECT TITLE	AWARE	INFORMED	ENGAGED
Safer Community Plan	1204	670	398

Creating a safer community

SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

10 June 2024 - 03 September 2024

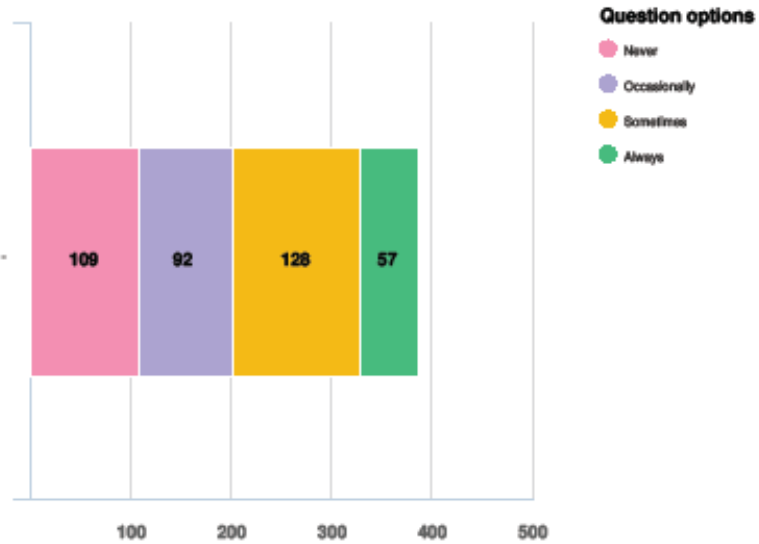
PROJECT NAME:

Safer Community Plan



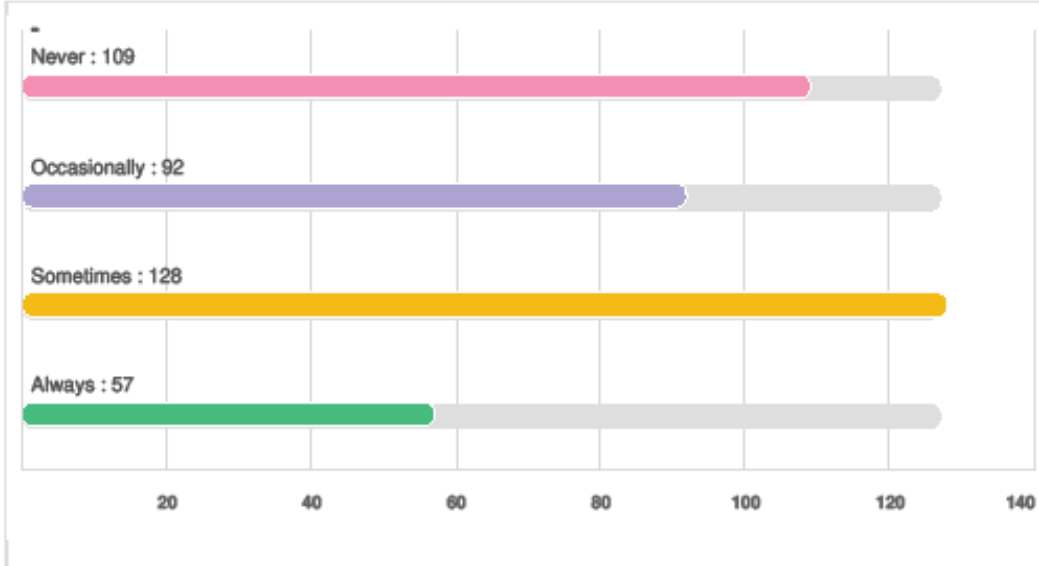
SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 | Do you feel safe at home or at work (within the corridor area)?

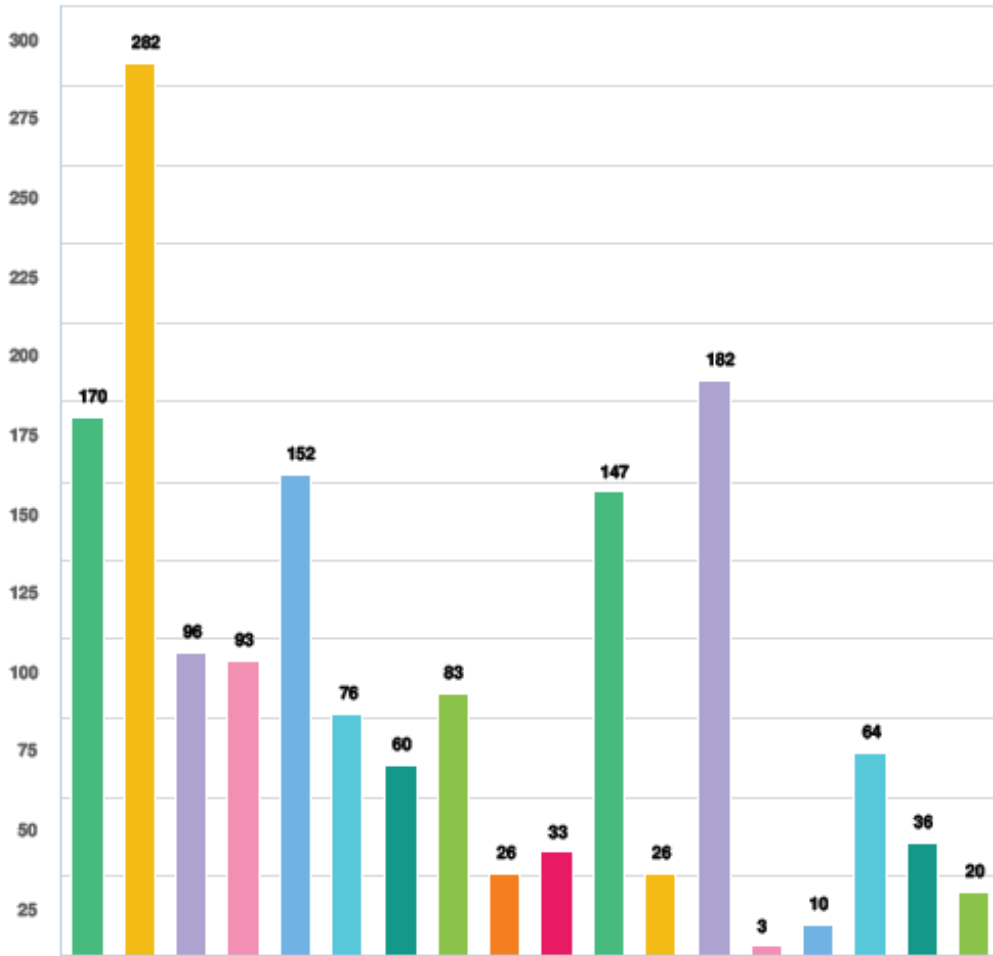


Optional question (386 response(s), 14 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

Q1 | Do you feel safe at home or at work (within the corridor area)?



Q2 | What, in your opinion, do you feel are the main problems in the corridor area? (pick 4)

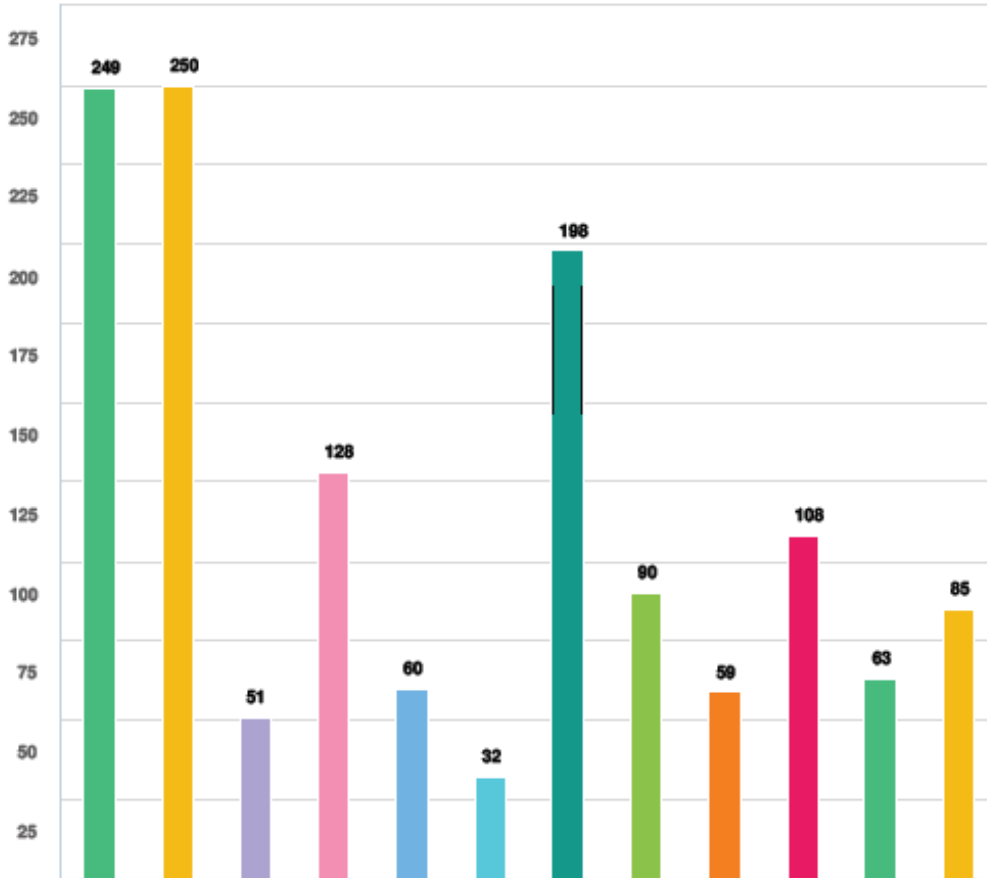


Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Cleanliness (litter etc.)
- Safety (personal, staff, customer)
- Natural environment impact
- Noise
- Open substance use
- Warming fires
- Sidewalk encampments
- Gaps in health care
- No coordination between governments, agencies
- Lack of places for people who are unhoused to go during the day
- Lack of appropriate housing
- Housing costs and affordability
- Lack of places for people to get treatment for addictions and mental health issues
- Lack of police or bylaw enforcement
- Lack of government intervention
- Uncontrolled additions or untreated mental health issues
- Property and personal crimes (vandalism, theft, assault)

Optional question (398 response(s), 2 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q3 | What, in your opinion, do you feel are the best ways toward solutions? Note that some solutions are the responsibility of o...

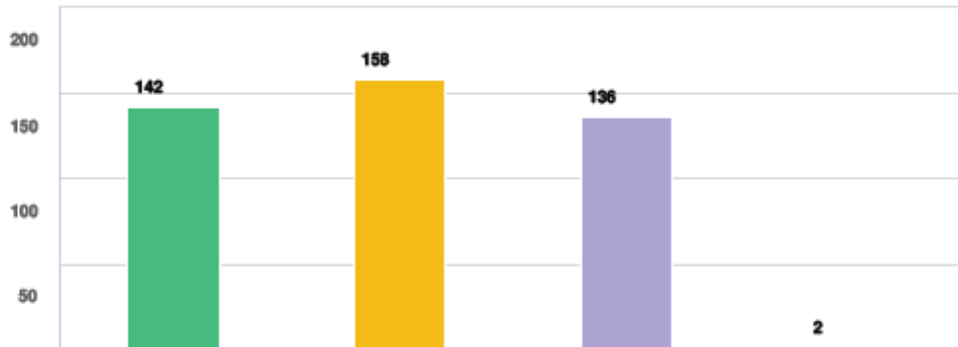


Question options

- Something else, such as solutions to the issues you identified in Question 2 (please specify)
 ■ Employment programs
- Prison reform (to better prepare inmates for life outside of prison) (federal/provincial)
 ■ More overnight shelters
- More places such as indoor drop in centres for people to be during the day
 ■ More enforcement (local government / RCMP)
- Higher disability payments (province)
- Universal basic income (a guaranteed income that would support very basic living needs) (federal government)
- More supported and low-income house (such as The Village, Sq'umul' Shelh Lelum', etc) (province)
- Create smaller overdose prevention sites at assisted living facilities (smaller site, spread out, for people who live nearby) (Island Health)
- Easier access to mental health care (more spaces, no wait times, close by) (province)
- Easier access to addictions treatment (more spaces, no wait times, close by) (province)

Optional question (398 response(s), 2 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q5 | I live and/or work

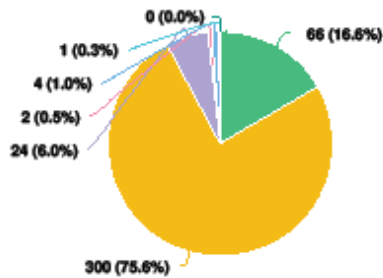


Question options

- Not in the Cowichan Valley
- Elsewhere in the valley
- Near the corridor area
- In the corridor area

Optional question (396 response(s), 4 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q6 | I live:



Question options

- I live in a facility or assisted/supportive building (hospital, care home, halfway house, etc)
- I do not have a home
- I live in a car/RV/boat
- I do not have a permanent address or place I call home
- I am currently housed, but could be unhoused at any time
- In a secure place I own
- In a secure place a rent

Optional question (397 response(s), 3 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question



May 7, 2024

7030 Trans-Canada Highway
Duncan, BC V9L 6A1 Canada
www.northcowichan.ca
T 250.740.
F 250.745.

SAFER Community Plan

Site / Respondent;

1: Please tell me about your experience of safety related to this site and public disorder

2: What could we collectively do to improve the situation

3: What would you like to see included in a plan to enhance safety in this area



Questions for Business Community in the context:

Appendix B: Communications and promotional materials

NORTH COWICHAN / DUNCAN CORRIDOR
SAFER COMMUNITY PLAN

North Cowichan and the City of Duncan are creating a new Safer Community Plan

- Help us develop a Safer Community Plan by learning more and sharing your ideas or comments.
- We want to hear from people who are most impacted by public disorder related to homelessness, addictions, or mental health in the corridor area.


You are invited to attend a special facilitated conversation with housing, health care, and public safety experts. We welcome your input so that our Safer Community Plan reflects the needs of the community.

Space is limited and you must register to attend.

A Safer Community Dialogue

- Thursday, June 20 | 6-7:30pm | Quamichan Middle School

Register at [SaferCommunityDialogue.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com)
and use password **safer**



Postcard mailer



Municipality of North Cowichan
June 18 at 5:15 PM

North Cowichan and the City of Duncan - Local Government are beginning work on a new Safer Community Plan that will outline recommended actions to address public disorder. We are hosting a special facilitated dialogue event for people and businesses most impacted by public disorder related to homelessness, addictions, or mental health in the corridor area. Panelists representing housing, health care, and public safety will be on hand to share their expertise and answer questions.

A Safer Community Dialogue
• Thursday, June 20, 6-7:30pm, Quamichan Middle School

Space is limited and a ticket is required. Visit www.connectnorthcowichan.ca/safercommunity to learn more and to reserve a free ticket to attend the event.



Safer Community Plan update

Connectnorthcowichan.ca/safercommunity



Municipality of North Cowichan
August 28 at 6:10 PM

North Cowichan and the City of Duncan are creating a new Safer Community Plan and we want to hear from people who are most impacted by public disorder related to homelessness, addictions, or mental health in the corridor area. Share your ideas, comments, and your experiences - take the survey before it closes September 3.

www.ConnectNorthCowichan.ca/SaferCommunity



Aug 28, 2024 - 6:10 PM PDT



North Cowichan @NorthCowichan • 1h

North Cowichan and the City of Duncan are creating a new Safer Community Plan and we want to hear from people who are most impacted by public disorder related to homelessness, addictions, or mental health in the corridor area. 1/2



🗨️ 🔄 ❤️ 📊 📌



North Cowichan @NorthCowichan • 1h

Share your ideas, comments, and your experiences - take the survey before it closes September 3 www.ConnectNorthCowichan.ca/SaferCommunity 2/2

🗨️ 🔄 ❤️ 📊 📌

Social media posts

NORTH COWICHAN / DUNCAN CORRIDOR

SAFER COMMUNITY PLAN

North Cowichan and the City of Duncan are creating a new Safer Community Plan

- Help us develop a Safer Community Plan by learning more and sharing your ideas or comments.
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A Safer Community Dialogue

- Thursday, June 20 | 6-7:30pm | Quamichan Middle School

Register at [SaferCommunityDialogue.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com)
and use password **safer**

northcowichan.ca/safercommunity



MUNICIPALITY OF
NORTH
Cowichan

Community poster