



Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw Update – Round 1

November 2024



ISL Engineering and Land Services Ltd. is an award-winning full-service consulting firm dedicated to working with all levels of government and the private sector to deliver planning and design solutions for transportation, water, and land projects.

At ISL, your identity is part of our identity. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) speaks to our core values and provides space for our teams to bring their authentic selves to work. ISL believes DEI creates the best outcomes for our clients while sustaining a happy and thriving work environment that allows for career development opportunities for all staff. ISL is committed to a focused effort on continuous improvement and development of a respectful and safe workplace.



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1.0 Introduction

The Town of Athabasca has engaged ISL Engineering and Land Services Ltd. (ISL) to undertake a targeted review and update of the Town's current Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB). This work will reflect recent changes in provincial legislation and better meet community needs now and into the future.

The current MDP and LUB were adopted in 2010, and updates to some sections are needed to make sure they address community needs, reflect changes in the community and development trends, and align with recent changes in provincial legislation.

The following table describes the purpose of a MDP and LUB:

The MDP	The LUB
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serves as a roadmap that guides community growth, development, and infrastructure needs• Identifies goals, objectives, and policies to link the physical and social development of the community• Contains general policies about future land use, development, sustainability, transportation, utilities, and municipal facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organizes the town into land use districts (ex. commercial, residential, industrial, etc.) and identifies how land and buildings within each district may be used.• Sets standards for lot size, setbacks, and building height.• Outlines requirements for parking, signage, and landscaping.• Establishes decision-making processes for land development applications



2.0 Consultation Process

Public feedback is an important part of the MDP and LUB update process. Throughout this project, residents and interest holders will have the opportunity to participate in two rounds of consultation: the first in September/October 2024, and the second in April/May 2025. Feedback received will be used to inform proposed updates to the MDP and LUB.

The first round of public consultation included the following:

- A virtual workshop was held with members of Council on September 23, 2024, to provide information about the project and obtain feedback about concerns and opportunities for the town as they relate to the MDP and LUB.
- A public survey was available from September 26 to October 15, 2024. Respondents could complete surveys online or submit paper copies at the pop-up event that was hosted on September 28, 2024, or at the Town Office. In total, 44 survey responses were received.
- A youth drawing contest was available from September 26 to October 15, 2024, where youth under 18 were invited to submit a drawing of places or things they enjoy about the community or something they hope it will have in the future. No submissions were received.
- A pop-up event was held on September 28, 2024, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Athabasca Regional Multiplex (2 University Drive, Athabasca). In total, 25 people provided feedback at the event.



3.0 Summary of What We Heard

The following is a summary of key themes that emerged from the public feedback gathered through the pop-up event and online survey.

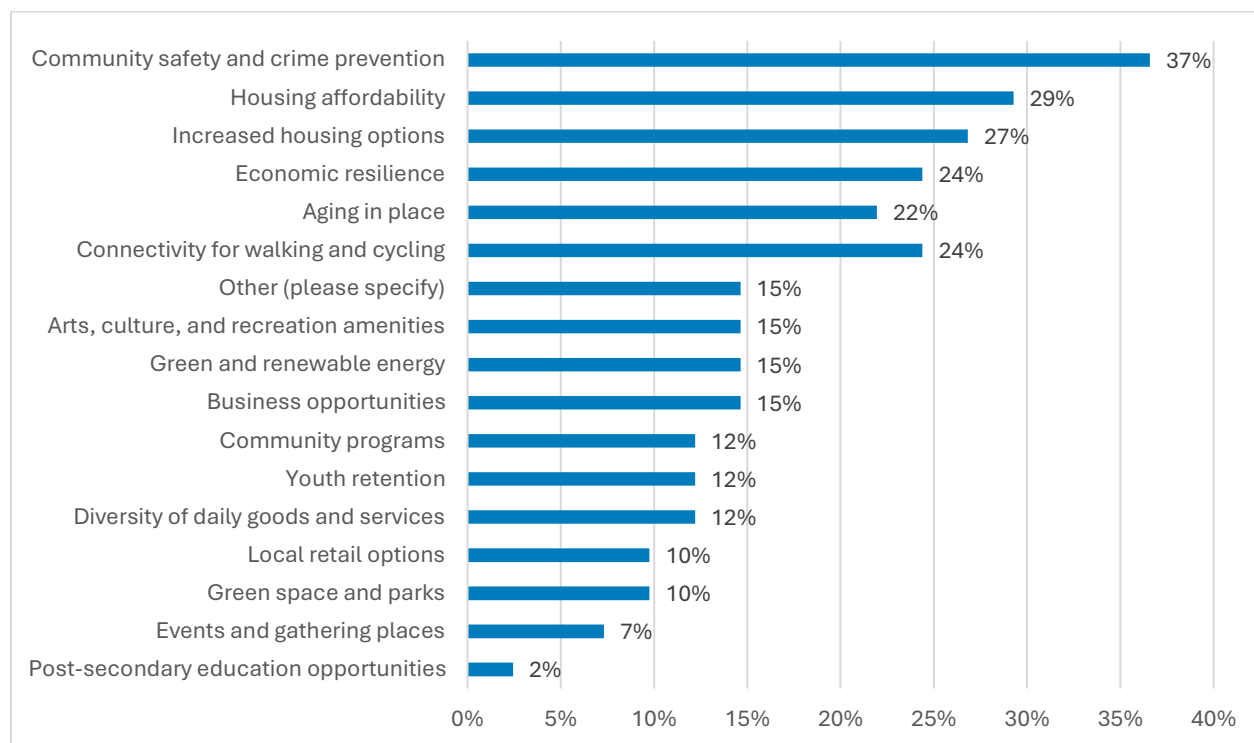
We invited participants to share strengths they see within the town of Athabasca, what is working well, and what makes the town a great place to live, work, spend time, or visit. The majority of responses were positive, with only a few respondents sharing that they are dissatisfied with living in Athabasca.

- **Parks and recreation:** Most people appreciated the parks, trails, and recreation within the community, often citing the beautiful scenery and wildlife. They noted that there are many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, while the Regional Multiplex provides indoor recreation for the town. Many people noted that they enjoyed the quiet and peacefulness of living in the town.
- **Community-oriented:** Several respondents commented that they enjoyed the small-town atmosphere in Athabasca, which is friendly and welcoming. Some noted that they enjoyed the local shops, cafes, and music. Others said that there are generally many community activities to participate in that contribute to community-building, like the farmer's market, churches, library, multiplex, schools, and the university.
- **Amenities and services:** A number of people mentioned that despite being a small town, there are efficient and adequate local services and access to larger retail and grocery options. A few noted that the hospital, emergency services, and public works/infrastructure were adequate.
- **Strong governance:** A few people commented that the Council is very involved in the town and that Council members work together effectively. Some respondents consider the Town to have strong inter-municipal partnerships.

We asked people how they would describe the town of Athabasca, in a few words, to someone who has never visited before. Below is a word cloud of responses received, where the size of each word indicates the number of times respondents used that word to describe the town. Most people commented on the beauty and scenic natural landscape of the town.



Providing a list of priorities, we asked people to select their top three priority areas they want the Town to focus on over the next 20 years. In the online survey, respondents indicated their top areas of focus were community safety and crime prevention (37%), housing affordability (29%), and increased housing options (27%). At the pop-up event, the top priorities that emerged were focusing on economic resilience and local retail options.



“Other” responses specified:

- Affordable living for all
- Restaurant/coffee shops on some of the waterfronts, rivers, and lakes
- Better connectivity
- Riverfront development
- It does not appear economic development and attraction of new business is something the town wants. There is no bylaw for loitering. And no bylaw for community standards that will protect the investments of business owners or residents. Allowing the Union Hotel to remain a toxic heap of rubble is not only dangerous to the environment but to the people subjected to this mess. It is a safety hazard and also unattractive to any potential business owners and residents alike.
- New medical clinic/walk-in clinic
- Stop relying on property taxes to pay for municipal government’s poor planning and mistakes. So many surrounding communities have grown and here is Athabasca still stagnant like muskeg.



- Fixing our Main Street buildings or forcing the owner's hands to do so set some standards, don't allow commercial buildings to lie vacant. Teach the police to clean up the streets and not sit in their car looking for people parked wrong.

We asked people to share the challenges they experience in the community and opportunities they see for improvement. This includes sharing what services, amenities, or elements the town needs to better support people now and into the future.

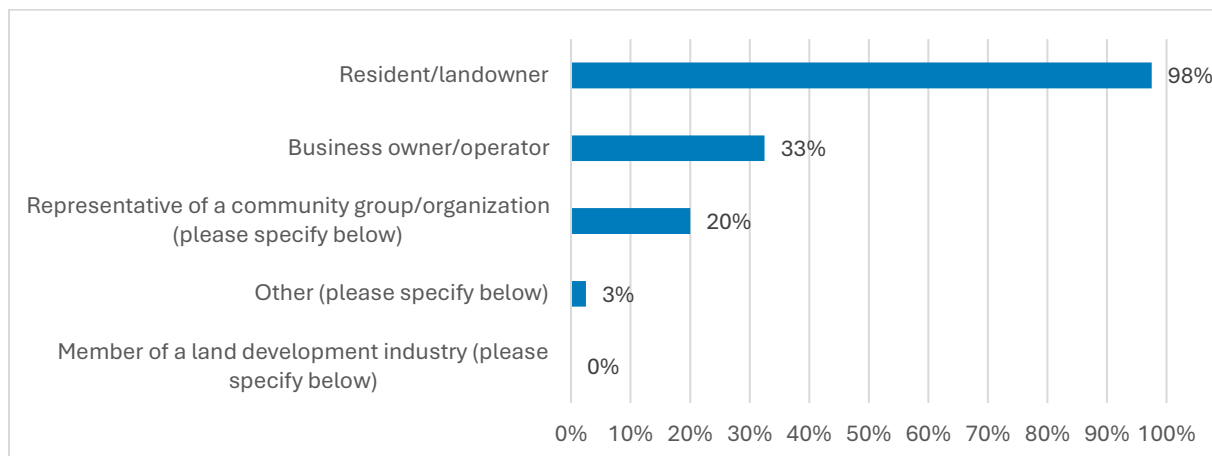
- **Economic development:** Many people were in favour of supporting business and industrial growth, including expanding local retail. Some were concerned about retaining the current residents in town and wanted the Town to focus on attracting young families and young professionals. Tourism was another element of economic development, with a few people wanting increased support for entertainment events and things to do in the town. Some common suggestions include having a bigger movie theatre or family-friendly entertainment options (e.g., mini golf and go-karting).
- **Public and shared spaces:** Many people shared ideas for improving public spaces including developing spaces for community gathering and public art. A few respondents commented that the downtown could also undergo redevelopment, filling vacant retail spaces to improve town optics.
- **Affordability:** Affordability was a priority for many individuals, with increasing housing options (e.g., more rentals, seniors housing, affordable housing, row housing, and apartments) and housing stock in the town. Many people also wanted to see more affordable public services, including making recreation, public transportation, walking paths, and medical care more accessible and affordable. A couple of individuals would like to see decreases in taxation.
- **Amenities, services, and infrastructure:** Although a few people previously shared their satisfaction with current amenities, services, and infrastructure in the town, many people wanted to see continued growth in these areas. Some people were concerned about resources for vulnerable groups (e.g., the unhoused population, people suffering from addictions, and seniors). Suggestions included expanding existing organizations supporting these groups, bringing in more doctors, providing more diverse medical options in the town, and increasing police presence. Other people would like to see more recreational services that are accommodating to all ages and abilities. A few people were concerned about aging water and wastewater infrastructure and wanted to see increased investment in green technology like electric vehicle charging.

We asked people to share if they have any additional comments related to the Town's MDP and LUB updates. The majority of comments were similar to what was said in the previous questions and has already been summarized in the sections above.



4.0 Who We Heard From

Who are we hearing from?

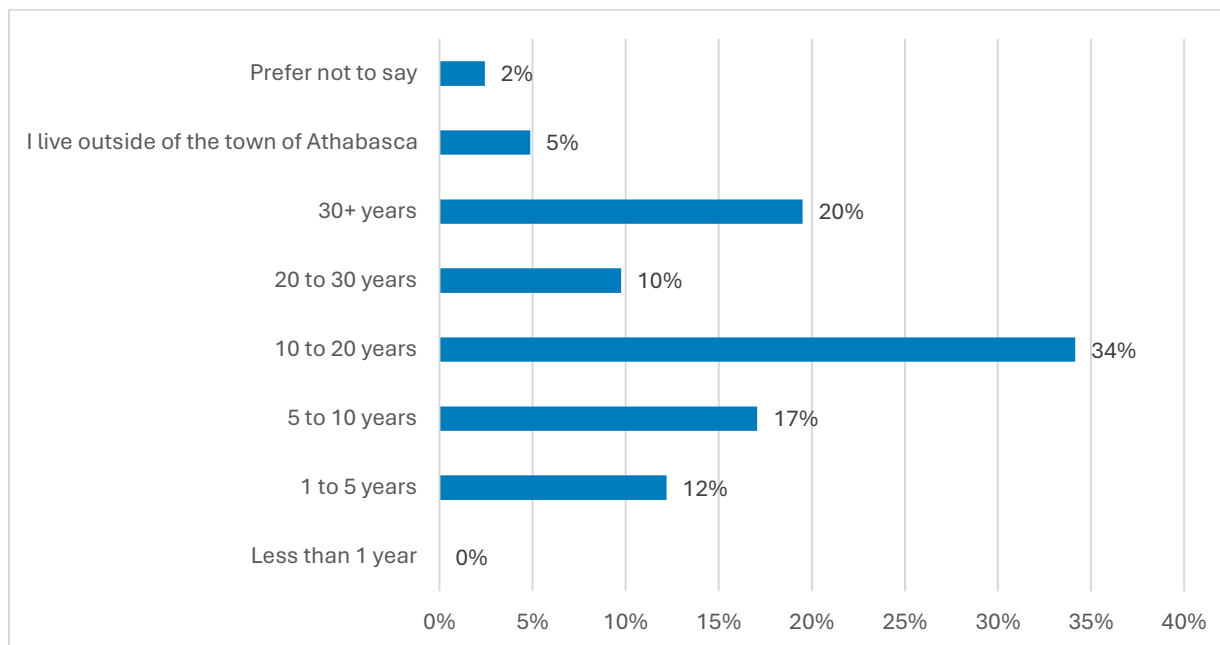


Representatives of community groups/organizations and other responses:

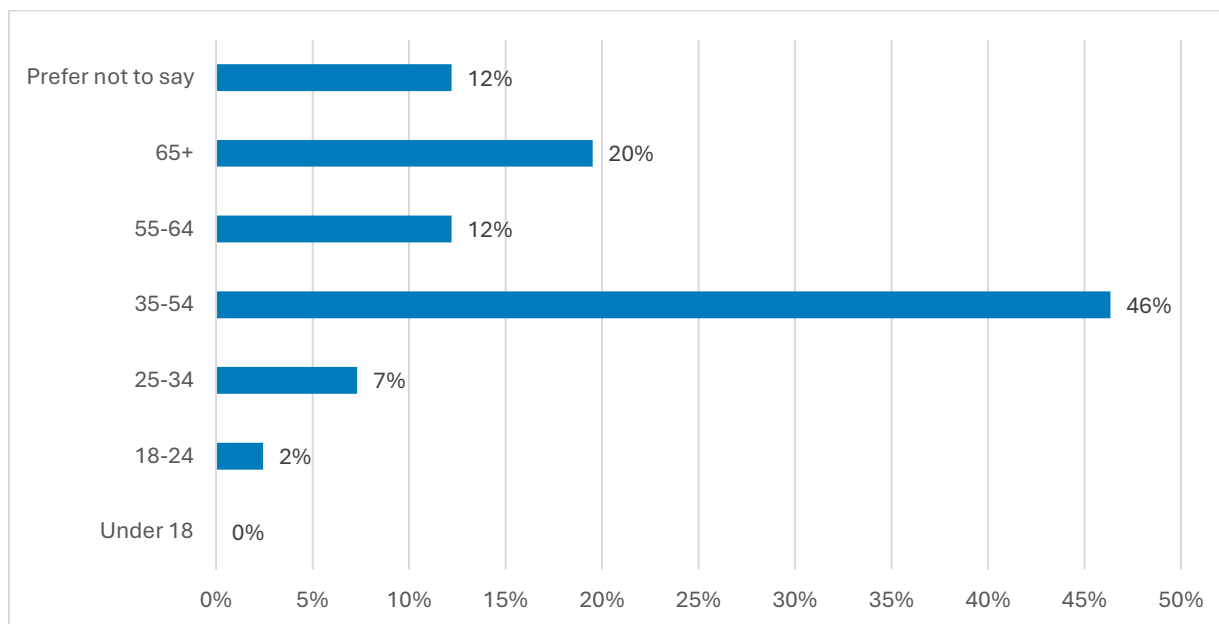
- Athabasca Landing Metis Community Association
- I own a house in town and I volunteer my time to help support the Town.
- River rats, Athabasca Arts group
- Rep of Rotary Club, Words Work Literacy, and a working professional
- Church
- I own a couple small business, and help out with river rats / hockey / cross country skiing & winter trail maintenance
- Overly taxed payer



How long have respondents lived in the town of Athabasca?



What is the age group of respondents?





5.0 Next Steps

Feedback from the public and interest holders gathered in the first round of consultation will be used to inform the development of the draft LUB and MDP updates. In the second round of consultation, the Town will share the draft LUB and MDP with the public and gather feedback to help finalize the documents.

To stay up to date on the project and learn more about upcoming consultation opportunities, please visit: www.athabasca.ca/p/mdp-lub