



Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw Update – Round 2

July 2025



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 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 had the opportunity to participate in two rounds of consultation: the first in September/October 2024, and the second in June/July 2025. Feedback received will be used to refine and finalize the updated MDP and LUB.

The second round of public consultation included the following:

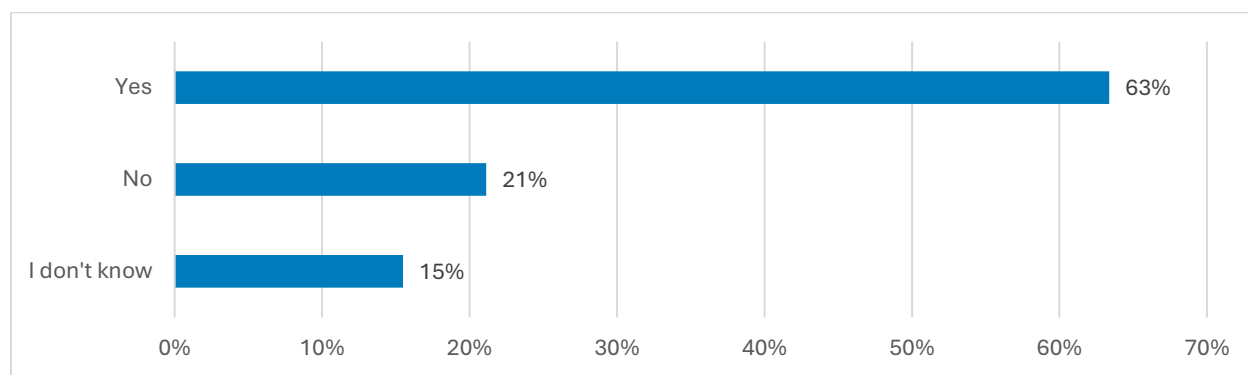
- A virtual workshop held with members of Council on April 23, 2025, to provide an update on the project and discuss proposed updates.
- A public survey was available from June 30 to July 25, 2025. Respondents could complete surveys online or submit paper copies at the pop-up event that was hosted on July 5, 2025, or at the Town Office. In total, 73 survey responses were received.
- A pop-up event was held on July 5, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Riverfront Farmer's Market. In total, approximately 20 people provided feedback at the event.
- A targeted email to inform community agencies, businesses, and other interested parties of the project, key updates proposed, and invite them to provide feedback.

3.0 Summary of What We Heard

The following is a summary of public feedback gathered through the pop-up event and online survey.

3.1 Municipal Development Plan Vision

We invited participants to review the draft MDP vision and share whether they felt the vision statement captured the essence of Athabasca and what they want the community to be like in the future. Of the respondents, 63% agreed that the vision statement captured the essence of the Town and what they want the community to be whereas 21% disagreed.



70 responses

We asked participants to share if there was anything they would like to see added, changed, or removed from the vision statement. The following details were shared:

Topic	Comments
Additions to the vision statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A couple of respondents noted that topics about sustainability and the environment should be more obvious in the vision statement. One respondent noted that education and the University is a key part of the Town's identity, which should be recognized in the vision. Another respondent noted that tourism and Athabasca's unique natural setting could be added into the statement.
Remove from the vision statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some comments noted that the word "unique" should be removed from the statement as the Town's needs are not different from other municipalities. People provided alternative words such as "relevant" or "high quality".
Changes to the vision statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One respondent said that prioritizing people over businesses should be more obvious in the vision. They suggested that the Town retaining and attracting diverse businesses should be at the end of the statement.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few comments were received about the proposed vision statement being too long and uses words that are too big. They encouraged shortening the statement and using simpler words. One respondent mentioned that they would like to see the vision statement mention the Town's tie to the North.
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some comments stated that the vision statement does not reflect the current state of town and improvements are needed to accurately capture the community. Other comments related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A desire for increased accessibility Real estate market concerns Increase in housing with an emphasis on seniors housing and support Concerns with high taxation Concerns with Town residents not being inclusive or friendly

24 responses

3.2 Municipal Development Plan Policy Area

We invited participants to review the draft MDP policy areas and share whether there were any concepts or topics missing from the proposed policy areas and subcategories, and if there is anything that should be changed, removed or added. The following feedback was received:

- Environment Policy Area:**
 - The majority of comments wanted additions to the environmental policy area to include climate change adaptation, emergency preparedness, wildfire resilience, flood resilience, and mental health resilience.
 - One respondent indicated that the energy section is too vague, and other sustainable techniques such as water/wastewater treatment efficiencies and solar offsets be included in the MDP.
 - Another respondent indicated they would like to have all brownfield sites identified and defined as well.
 - One respondent indicated that the north bank of the river needs to be acknowledged as a cultural heritage site.
- Community Development Policy Area:**
 - One respondent shared that technology infrastructure like improved internet access should be a priority in this area.
 - One respondent said that human cultural and social elements should be incorporated into this section.
 - One respondent indicated that they would like to see more policy direction on recreation programming and cultural and social support.
 - One respondent indicated that they would like to see a commitment to helping the unhoused in the Community Development Policy Area.



- **Governance and Leadership Policy Area:** A few respondents noted that government transparency should be prioritized, particularly in regard to Council meetings and minutes.
- The remaining comments in this section reflected residents' calls for action on various concerns, including:
 - Improved municipal services;
 - Maintaining and improving current infrastructure;
 - Encouraging maintenance and upkeep of derelict buildings;
 - Addressing abandoned homes;
 - Cleaning up toxic waste in specific areas of town; and
 - Removing red tape for development.

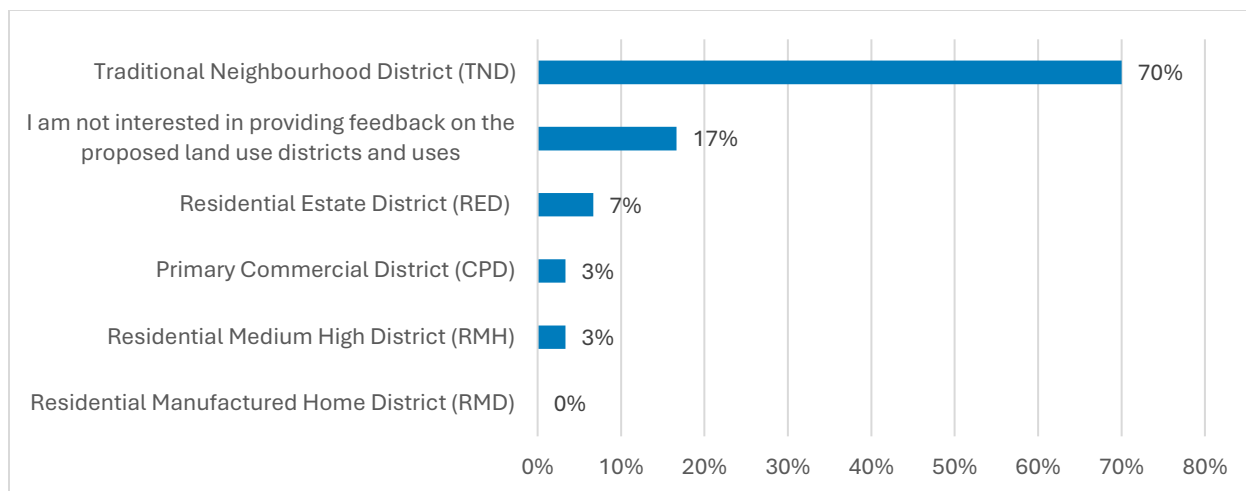
13 responses

3.3 Land Use Bylaw Land Use Districts

We asked people to provide feedback on the land use district or area of Town they live in or are most familiar with. This question focused on five of the proposed 13 districts that allow residential land uses:

- Traditional Neighbourhood District (TND): Accommodate residential neighbourhoods with predominantly single-detached dwellings on a variety of lot sizes.
- Residential Estate District (RED): Accommodate residential development for large lots with and without municipal servicing.
- Residential Medium High District (RMH): Provide for multi-unit developments with minor commercial uses.
- Residential Manufactured Home District (RMD): Accommodate Manufactured Dwelling Subdivisions and Manufactured Dwelling Parks in a manner that is compatible with the character, design and quality of surrounding areas.
- Primary Commercial District (CPD): Provide all residents of the community and trading area with access to a wide variety of retail and service establishments, predominantly in storefront developments in downtown

The majority of respondents indicated that they live in the Traditional Neighborhood District (70%).



29 responses

For each of the five districts, we shared a table of permitted and discretionary uses associated with each area. We then asked people to share if they would like to see any uses added or removed from the proposed districts.

Traditional Neighbourhood District (TND)

The following details were shared regarding the addition or removal of uses for the Traditional Neighbourhood District:

Topic	Feedback
Addition of uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Garage suite as a primary dwellingCo-housing and co-op housingSeniors housingSmall multi-person dwellings (e.g. 4-plex or 8 to 10-unit apartments)Boarding houseRetail and restaurantsTruck stopsShow homesCommunity gardens
Removal of uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Short-term rentalsRepairs shopsIndustrial usesSea can container storageWind powerBed and breakfasts

16 responses

Comments for Remaining Districts



The majority of comments received were related to the TND district. One individual noted that community gardens should be permitted in Residential Medium High (RMH) and Residential Manufactured Home (RMD) Districts. Another individual noted that repairs shops should be removed from the Residential Manufactured Home (RMD) District and light industrial removed from the Primary Commercial District (CPD).

2 responses

3.4 Additional Comments

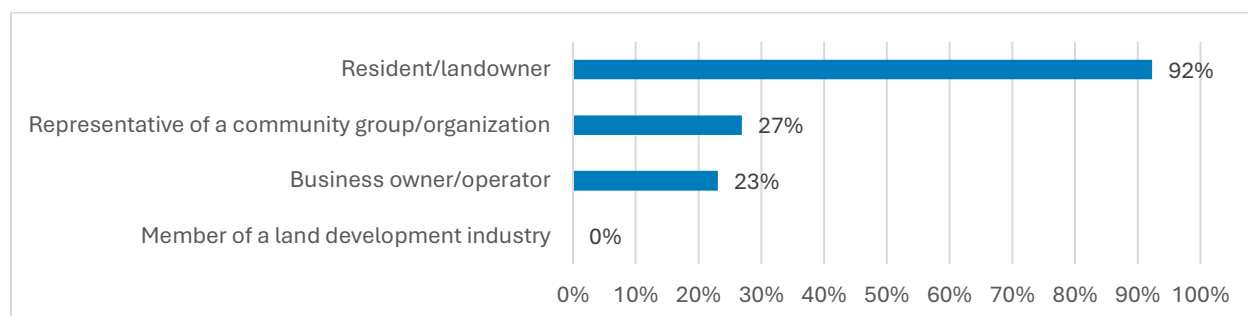
At the end of the survey, there was an opportunity for respondents to provide additional comments related to the Town's MDP and LUB update. The following details were shared:

- The majority of additional comments related to housing in the town.
 - Most people were concerned about affordability, and called for more housing options, seniors housing, and higher density housing with mixed uses (e.g., neighbourhoods with a mixture of single-family, townhomes, apartments and retail/commercial buildings).
 - One individual noted that the Town should make use of existing land for housing instead of trying to expand.
- A few comments stated that the cost of living, taxes and utilities are too high.
- One respondent noted that bylaws need better enforcement to be effective.
- One respondent questioned why sections 7.13 Noise and 7.14 Nuisance were not included in the draft LUB document.
- From agency circulation, comments from ATEC were received to include mention of when a Roadside Development Permit is needed, and when subdivision applications need to be circulated to ATEC as well as to update any mention of Alberta Transportation to Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors.
- Comments from the Town's legal review, Reynolds Mirth Richards & Farmer LLP, were considered and included in the LUB and MDP.

8 responses

4.0 Who We Heard From

Who are we hearing from?



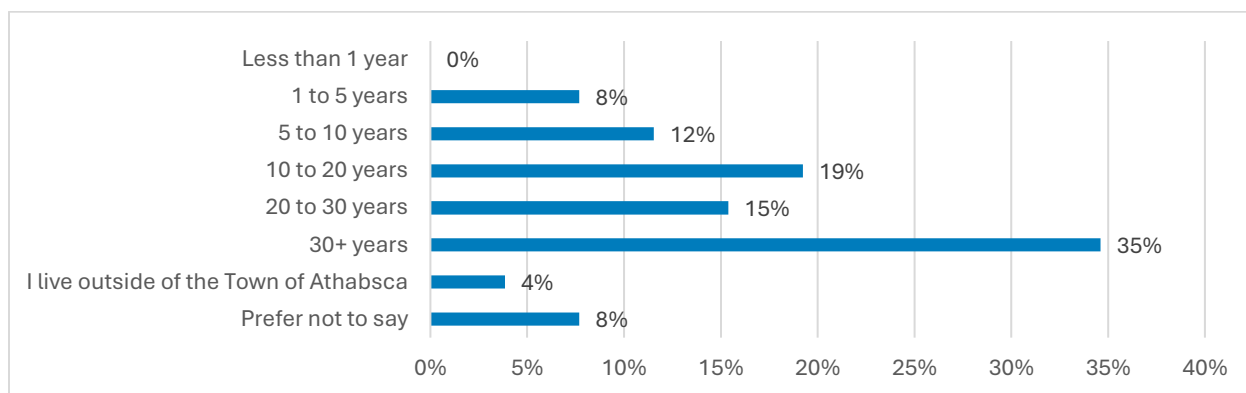


25 responses

Representatives of community groups/organizations

- Athabasca Heritage Society
- Athabasca Fire Department
- River Rats and others

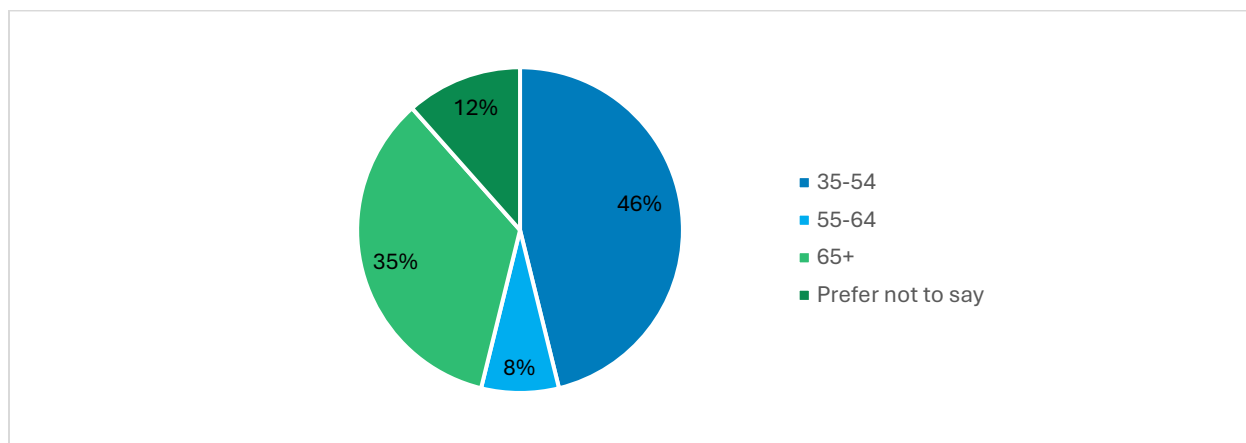
How long have respondents lived in the town of Athabasca?



25 responses

What is the age group of respondents?

No responses were received from people below the age of 35.



25 responses

5.0 What We Did

In response to the feedback that was received during the second round of public consultation, and with direction from administration, the following changes were made to the LUB and MDP:



MDP

- Updated the Vision statement in response to feedback received. We added mention of sustainability, health, education, tourism, connection to the north and natural setting. We removed the word unique and changed the order of the mention of people before businesses.
- In the **Environment Policy Area**, revised policies about climate change adaption, emergency preparedness, wildfire resilience, flood resilience and mental health.
- In the **Community Development Policy Area**, revised policies about improved infrastructure, specifically internet access, and human cultural and social elements.

LUB

- Removed Eating and Drinking Establishment from the Traditional Neighbourhood District (TND).
- Added Multi-unit Dwelling as a Discretionary Use to the TND. This change allows for more housing diversity within the Town.
- Added Community Garden as a Discretionary Use in all Residential, Commercial and Industrial Districts and as a Permitted Use in the Institutional District (ISD) and Urban Reserve District (URD).
- Revised “Section 7.16 Nuisances” to include content pertaining to nuisances that were previously excluded from the LUB because they were deemed more appropriate for the Community Standards Bylaw. However, at the request of Apex Utilities, this content has been included.
- We revised Section 3.7 Referral of Applications to describe when a Roadside Development Permit is required and subdivisions are circulated to Transportation and Economic Corridors (TEC). This request was made by TEC based feedback that was received from agency circulation.
- We revised any mention Alberta Transportation to the updated name of Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors based on feedback that was received from agency circulation.

6.0 Next Steps

Thank you to all community members who participated in the first and second round of engagement. Feedback from the public and interest holders gathered throughout the consultation opportunities will be used to inform and refine the final updates to the MDP and LUB. To stay up to date on the project, please visit www.athabasca.ca/p/mdp-lub