

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY PHASE 1

OKOTOKS
MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE



JUNE 27, 2018

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

In Phase 1 of Okotoks' Municipal Development Plan Update process, community members and stakeholder groups were invited to share their ideas and priorities for the future through activities including interviews, an online survey, and a public launch event. The following provides an overview of what we heard. **For further details, read the full Phase 1 Summary of Community Engagement at www.okotoks.ca/MDP.**



10

Stakeholders and staff interviewed



60+

Attended Public Launch Event



149

Online surveys completed



KEY THEMES: A few core ideas summarized from all the feedback received...

- **A stable water supply:** Water supply is the top priority for many Okotokians. Development of new neighbourhoods without additional water supply, and water restrictions during the summer are concerns.
- **Parks and open spaces are priorities:** Residents stressed the importance of conserving key ecosystems, preserving cherished views and landscapes, and improving our fantastic network of parks, pathways, and open spaces.
- **Strengthen the local economy:** A strong local economy with well-paying local jobs is a 'missing ingredient' for many Okotokians. Participants agreed that the Town should focus on supporting existing small businesses and attracting new and diverse businesses to Okotoks.
- **Manage growth carefully:** While opinions on growth were mixed, participants agreed that development must be carefully managed to ensure quality infrastructure and services, and maintain our character and identity.



TOP BIG IDEA:
PROTECT VIEWS & LANDSCAPES



TOP BIG IDEA:
**REUSE
STORMWATER**



TOP BIG IDEA:
**CONSERVE
IMPORTANT LANDS
AND ECOSYSTEMS**

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INTRODUCTION

The Town of Okotoks is updating our Municipal Development Plan (MDP). This important plan will guide long-term growth and development and identify how to achieve our community vision.

A lot has changed since the MDP was last updated. Until recently, growth and development were limited by our land base and supply of fresh water, and the existing 1998 MDP reflected those constraints. In 2012, with increasing pressure in the region (after three years of community consultation), Okotoks switched from a finite growth approach to a managed growth approach and annexed (absorbed) additional lands north and south of the current Town boundary. Okotoks is also working to ensure a secure supply of water. This will help to accommodate expected growth over the next 60 years to a population of 86,000 (from our current population of 29,000).

There will be many opportunities for you to get involved. Over the next year the Town will be asking residents, business owners, stakeholders and community groups to weigh in on how community strengths can be built upon while planning for the future.



- **In Phase 1 (May to June 2018)**, the process began with an interactive public event and questionnaire to explore priorities and big ideas for Okotoks' future.
- **In Phase 2 (July – October 2018)**, we will dive deeper into specific topics and discuss key options and trade-offs.
- **In Phase 3 (November 2018 – February 2019)**, all the feedback received to date will be used to develop a draft of the updated MDP and will be brought back to the community to make sure we are on the right track before it is presented to Council for approval.

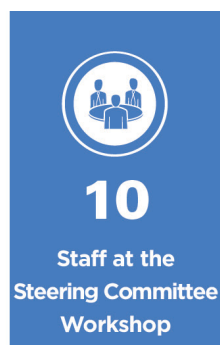
Community member ideas and feedback will directly help to shape the new Municipal Development Plan.

Assessment of current policy and context in Okotoks will help to identify what we have today and what needs updating, as well as bringing best practices and examples from elsewhere in the world for us to learn from. However, it's up to the community to help us decide what our future will look like. The more people we hear from, the better our plan will be!

WHAT WE DID

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

In March and April of 2018, MODUS engaged with Town staff and stakeholders. In May and June of 2018, residents of Okotoks were invited to get involved in Phase 1 of the Municipal Development Plan process. The goal was to identify, share and discuss key issues and priorities for the future. Over 230 people participated in engagement activities during this time period.



STEERING COMMITTEE WORKSHOP

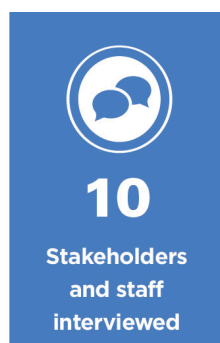
In March, MODUS staff conducted a workshop with the Town's Steering Committee for the Municipal Development Plan, which includes representatives from Planning, Culture and Heritage, Communications, Engineering, Sustainability and Parks.

The goal of the workshop was to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the current MDP and the existing policy framework, as well as assess how engaged the community is on relevant topics. We also completed a stakeholder mapping exercise.



SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM WORKING SESSION

In March, MODUS led a working session with the Town's Senior Leadership Team to explore what a successful MDP would achieve in the community and evaluate the risks for achieving success. We also reviewed the outcomes of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) analysis completed at the Steering Committee Workshop and the Senior Leadership Team provided reaction to those results and also offered their input.



STAFF INTERVIEWS

In March and April, interviews were held with ten stakeholders and Town staff members to understand a range of opportunities and issues in Okotoks, get a better understanding of work completed to date, and help awareness of the project through their networks.



60+

Attended the
Public Launch
Event

PUBLIC LAUNCH EVENT

On May 12, Okotoks hosted a public launch event to officially kick off public engagement for the Municipal Development Plan. An interactive display booth was set up at The Okotoks Spring Fling marketplace at the Foothills Centennial Centre from 10:00am to 2:00pm.

Over 60 people attended and participated in the event.



149

Online surveys
completed

ONLINE SURVEY

A public survey was available online from May 7 to June 7. The survey replicated questions asked at the public launch event. A total of 149 survey responses were received.

Questions from the public launch event were replicated in the on-line survey information from same questions was received through a variety of means.



PROMOTION & OUTREACH

To help raise awareness of the MDP update project and opportunities to get involved, the “Okotoks – Get Involved” brand was created. The branding goal is to be inviting and engaging to encourage people to join the conversation.

Engagement activities were promoted extensively and in advance to reach as many people as possible.

ONLINE PROMOTION

- Dedicated project webpage to promote upcoming engagement events and activities
- Project information on main Okotoks homepage news item and homepage banner
- Project information on Planning webpage banner
- Social media: Facebook posts, paid ads and updates; Twitter posts and updates
- Project information on Okotoks Online website
 - There were 461 unique page views of the project website from May 1 to June 7, 2018 and there were 560 project webpage views total. This means that approximately 100 people came back to view the project website more than once.



PRINT NOTICES & COMMUNITY SIGNAGE

- Newspaper ads in the Western Wheel in both the Town Pages section as well as stand-alone ads
- Posters and postcards distributed at Town facilities and local businesses throughout the community

RADIO ADS

- Paid radio advertisements promoting the public launch event ran from May 6-12 as well as in the Mayor’s May and June radio messages on The Eagle, 100.9 FM.

A grand prize of tickets to the Front Porch Roots Revue concert as part of Alberta Culture Days was offered to encourage participation in the project’s various input activities.



WHO PARTICIPATED

Participants were asked two demographic questions: age and their relationship to Okotoks. While not everyone answered these questions, the following is an overview of those who did.

AGE: A range of people of all different ages participated. People aged 32-45 and 45-60 were the majority of respondents and overrepresented compared to Okotoks' population. Youth (under 18) and people 61 or older were underrepresented compared to Okotoks' population. However, fewer people answered this question than other questions, particularly at the public launch event.

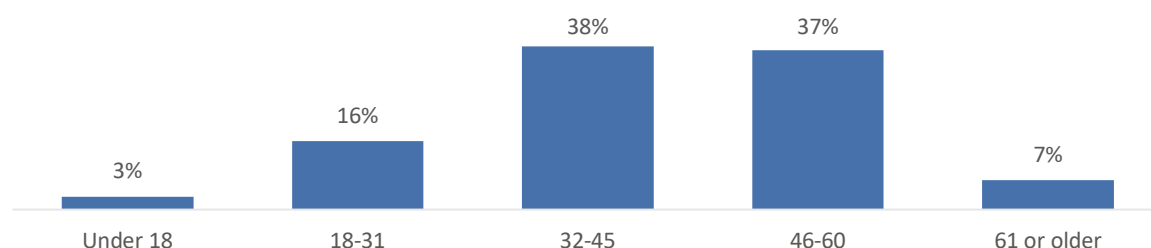


Figure 1: Ages of respondents to online survey and public launch event.

BY RELATIONSHIP TO OKOTOKS: We asked participants to define their relationship to Okotoks. Respondents were encouraged to select all relevant responses. We received 399 responses (many respondents have multiple responses). The majority of respondents live in Okotoks and own a home in Okotoks.

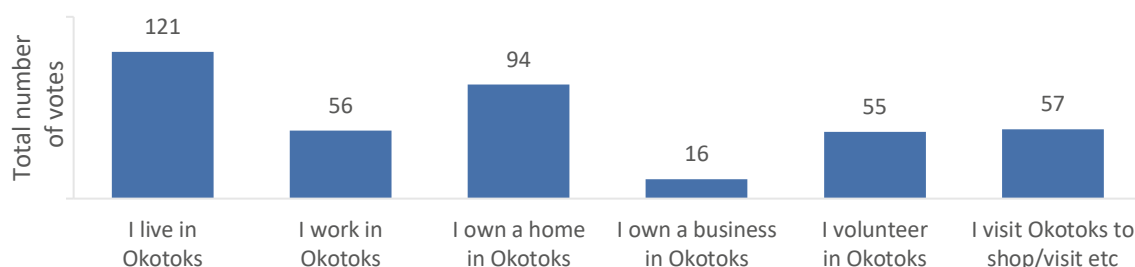


Figure 2: Respondents' relationship to Okotoks. Respondents could select all that apply.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

We ask these questions to better understand who's participating in the Municipal Development Plan Update - who we're hearing from, and importantly, who we haven't heard from. This helps the project team tailor our approach for the next phase to try and reach those who were less represented (like youth) to make sure we hear from all the different groups that live in, work in, and visit Okotoks.

It is also interesting to see how age affects people's opinions and priorities. For some topics, responses didn't change much; however, for others, there was a big difference. Where there were significant differences, this is noted in the report.

WHAT WE HEARD

KEY ISSUE PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked to select their **top three priorities** for the future of Okotoks from the following:



Water Infrastructure



Parks and Natural Areas



Jobs and Economy



Housing Options



Sustainable Transportation



Neighbourhood Design



Unique Identity and Places



Community Resiliency

By counting total number of votes, respondents prioritized these issues as follows:

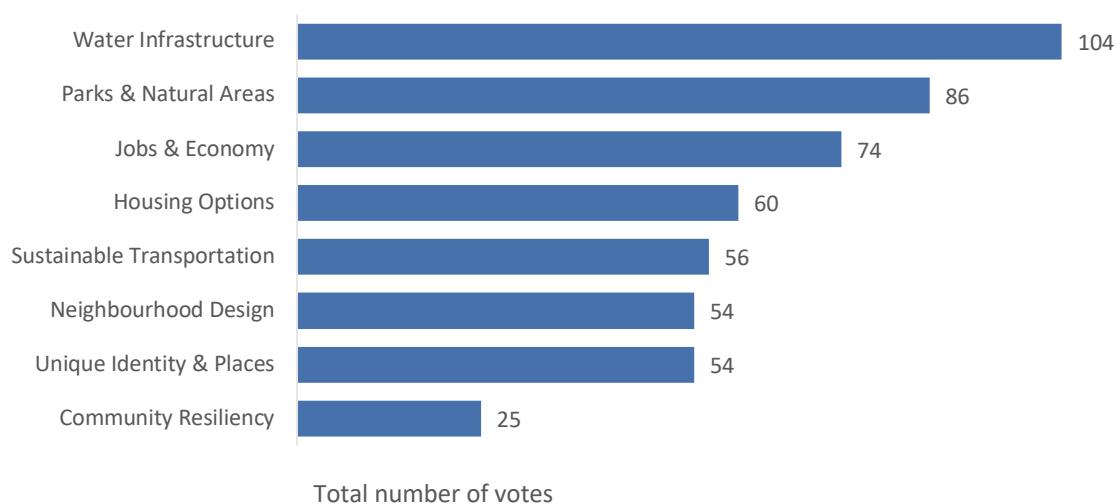


Figure 3: Priorities of respondents. Respondents could select up to three.

We observed different priorities based on people's age:

- People 18-31 years old prioritized housing options, and parks and natural areas more than other respondents.
- People 61 years and older were more concerned with sustainable transportation, and water infrastructure.

Other suggestions for key issues included:

- Greater housing diversity and unique housing options
- Playgrounds in housing areas;
- New recreation centre;
- Making it easier to do business in Okotoks;
- A population cap;
- Materials in public space;
- Pride crosswalk; and
- Better maintenance.

BIG IDEAS

After ranking their top priorities, participants were asked to review and rate a number of 'Big Ideas' for these priority areas. Participants were asked to rate how important they felt these opportunities were for the future of Okotoks and provide comments. They could also add their own ideas.

Note: *in the online survey, respondents were only asked to rate the "Big Ideas" corresponding to their top three priorities while participants at the public launch event could rate 'Big Ideas' under any priority area. As a result, the number of responses may differ for the online survey and the open house, but these results are combined to provide an overall picture of community feedback.*

We have also identified where there were differences in the ratings from the online survey and the public launch event in the description below each chart. Key issues are listed alphabetically.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Okotoks will be impacted by climate change, particularly by things like flooding and droughts. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions locally and globally will help reduce the impacts of climate change and make sure that Okotoks remains a great place to live for many generations.

Participants reviewed the following “Big Ideas” and rated how important they thought the ideas were for the future of Okotoks.



Stormwater management: Restrict the amount of asphalt in new development and use natural methods to manage stormwater.



Flood management: Strengthen flood management policy and restrict development in the floodway and adjacent areas.



Plan for climate change: Continue to plan for climate change action, development regulations, and water conservation.



Renewable energy: Partner with developers or others to explore options for renewable energy to power and heat buildings.



Energy performance: Require new buildings to have “better than code” energy performance.

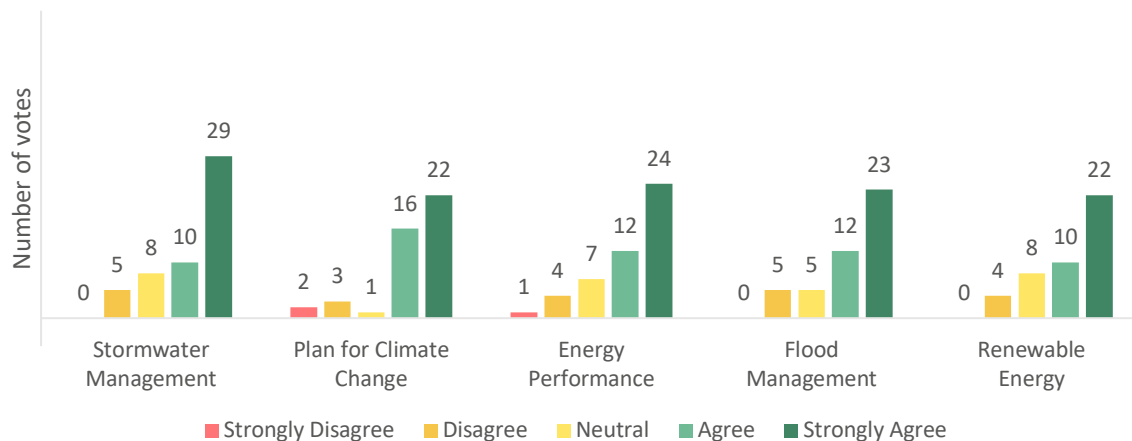


Figure 3: Rating of Community Resiliency “Big Ideas”.

In the online survey, all ideas had a similar rating, with “Energy Performance” having the highest. At the public launch event, “Stormwater Management” was the highest ranked.

HOUSING OPTIONS

Okotoks is growing rapidly; however, the majority of homes are single-family and there are few options for people who want or need different forms of housing – such as young adults moving away from home, seniors who want to downsize, low-income households, and renters.

Participants reviewed the following “Big Ideas” and rated how important they thought the ideas were for the future of Okotoks.



Require diverse housing: Require a mix of housing types and lot sizes in new developments.



Support housing programs: Support emergency shelters or transitional housing with Town land or funding.



Inclusionary housing: Require a proportion of affordable units in new developments.



Density bonusing: Allow more density in exchange for amenities like affordable housing.



Provide incentives: Reduce the costs of developing affordable housing with faster approvals or reduced fees.

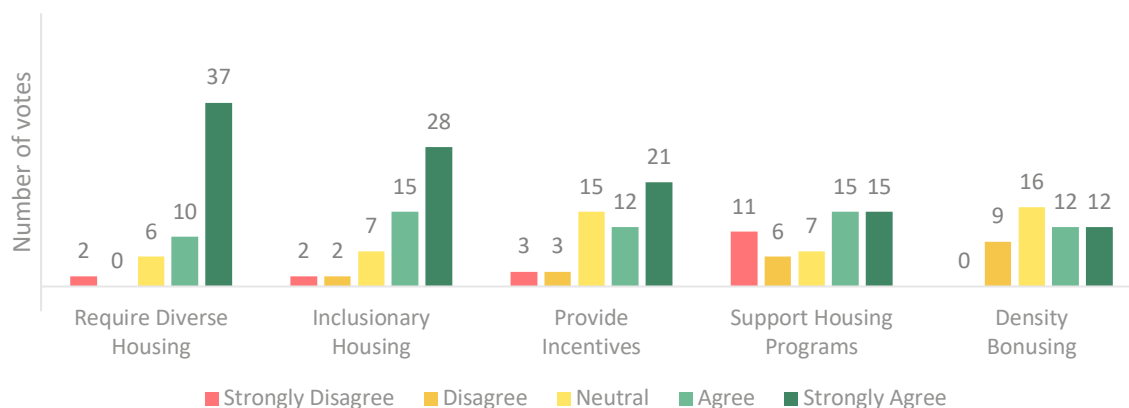


Figure 4: Rating of Housing Options “Big Ideas”.

In the online survey, “Require diverse housing” was the highest rated idea, while “Inclusionary housing” was the highest rated idea at the public launch event. “Support housing programs” had the widest range of responses.

Respondents 18 to 31 years old were less supportive of “support housing programs,” “inclusionary housing,” and “provide incentives.”

JOBS AND ECONOMY

Many people currently work outside of town. This affects our local economy and quality of life as people have less time and money to spend in Okotoks. To become more than just a 'bedroom community,' we need more local jobs and business opportunities for residents.

Participants reviewed the following "Big Ideas" and rated how important they thought the ideas were for the future of Okotoks.



Attract new businesses: Attract and nurture progressive new businesses like technology, education, start-ups, entrepreneurs, green businesses, and outdoor/recreation tourism.



Eco-industrial park: Support an 'eco-industrial park' where businesses cooperate to share resources, reduce energy and water use, improve sustainability, and reduce costs.



Encourage innovation: Support creative projects on vacant lands, shared office spaces for small businesses, or 'maker spaces' for artists.



Mixed-use neighbourhoods: Encourage a mix of housing and business throughout the community rather than commercial-only areas (like strip malls or 'big box' centres).

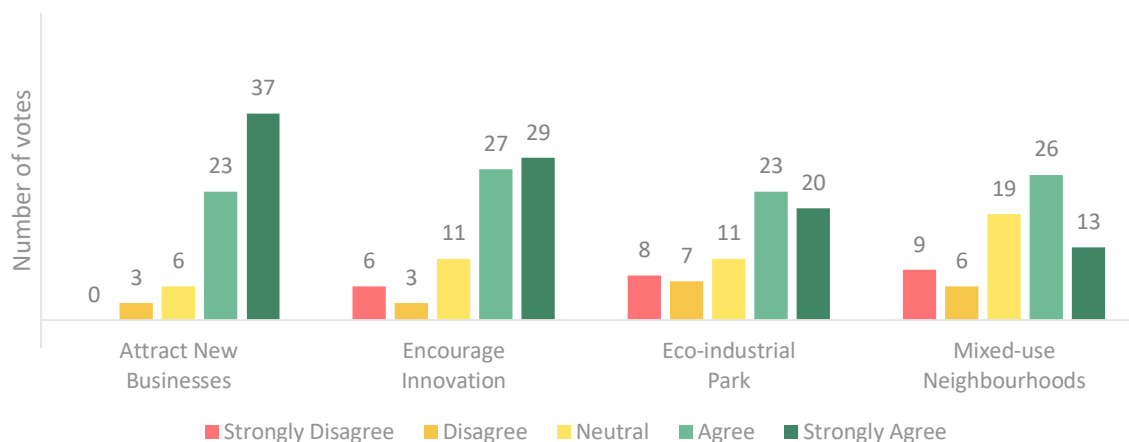


Figure 5: Rating of Local Economy and Jobs "Big Ideas".

"Attract new businesses" in the online survey and "encourage innovation" at the public launch event were the highest rated ideas. "Mixed-use neighbourhoods" had the widest range of responses in the online survey.

NEIGHBOURHOOD DESIGN

Newer neighbourhoods are growing further from the centre of Okotoks. There are connections for walking and cycling, and local amenities, shops, and gathering places. As we continue to grow, it will be important to design new neighbourhoods that are unique, sustainable and support residents' needs.

Participants reviewed the following “Big Ideas” and rated how important they thought the ideas were for the future of Okotoks.



Well-connected streets: Create more street connections to disperse traffic and provide more routes for pedestrians and cyclists.



Suburban-agriculture edge: Help buffer and address potential conflicts between new neighbourhoods and farmlands.



Community hubs: Create ‘community hubs’, or small unique centres to support more complete, walkable neighbourhoods.



Focus density: Concentrate denser housing options in key centres or corridors where future transit is planned.



Design guidelines: Create guidelines that require new development reflects sustainability and quality of life.

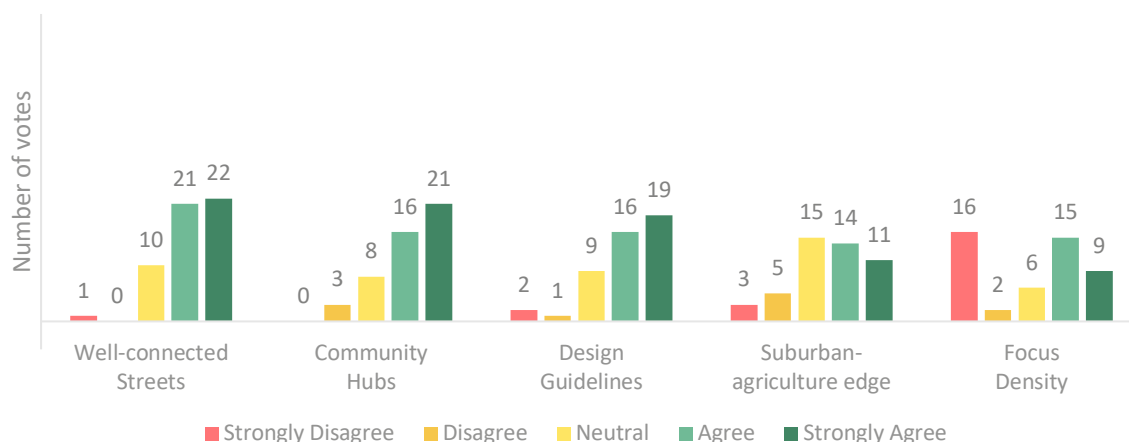


Figure 6: Rating of Neighbourhood Design “Big Ideas”.

“Well-connected streets” was the highest-rated idea and “focus density” was the lowest-rated idea in both the online survey and the public launch event.

PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS

Okotoks' large network of parks, pathways, and open spaces support critical environmental functions and wildlife habitat. These spaces also provide a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities to support the health and well-being of residents.

Participants reviewed the following “Big Ideas” and rated how important they thought the ideas were for the future of Okotoks.



Views and landscapes: Identify our cherished landscapes and views and create guidelines to protect them as we grow.



Protect biodiversity: Create a strategy to protect and enhance biodiversity to support a wide range of species.



Protect and conserve: Identify and map important lands and ecosystems to conserve and broadly quantify their financial value as assets.



Environmental assessments: Require environmental inventory and assessments for new developments to reduce any potential impacts to soil, water, green space, and habitat.



Plan for annexed land: Continue to build our parks and pathway system along with new development in the annexed lands.

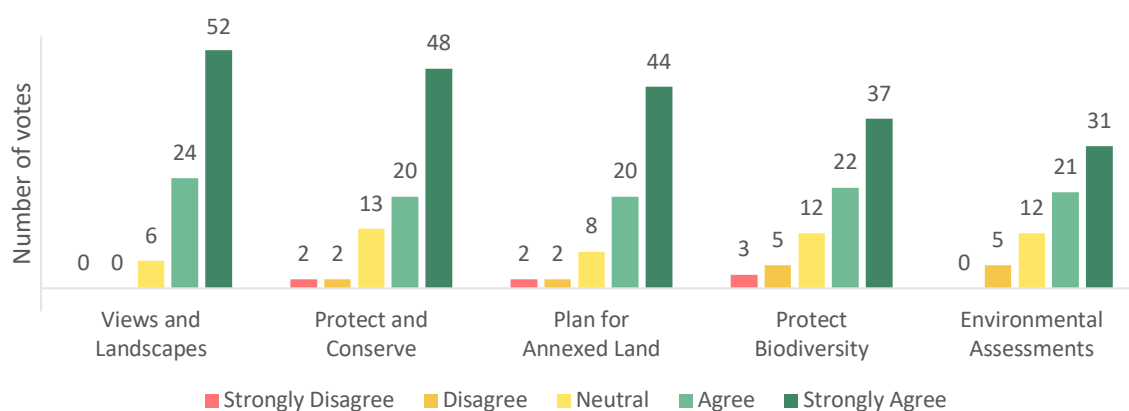


Figure 7: Rating of Parks and Natural Areas “Big Ideas”.

Planning for “views and landscapes” was the highest rated idea in the online survey, and “protect and conserve” was the highest rated idea at the public launch event. Each idea for parks and natural areas had a relatively high rating.

Respondents aged 18 to 31 were more supportive of “protect biodiversity”.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Most people in Okotoks currently drive to get around. By providing more sustainable options like transit, and safe walking and cycling routes and exploring new options like ride-sharing or autonomous transit vehicles, we can support a more sustainable and accessible community for everyone.

Participants reviewed the following “Big Ideas” and rated how important they thought the ideas were for the future of Okotoks.



Safe walking & cycling: Support walking and cycling with better pathway connections, maintenance, and traffic calming.



Active kids: Partner with school boards to promote walking and cycling and expand the ‘safe routes to schools’ program.



Smart design: Design neighbourhoods with jobs, shops, and services close to where people live to support walking and cycling.



Local transit: Support or partner to provide local public transit service in Okotoks.

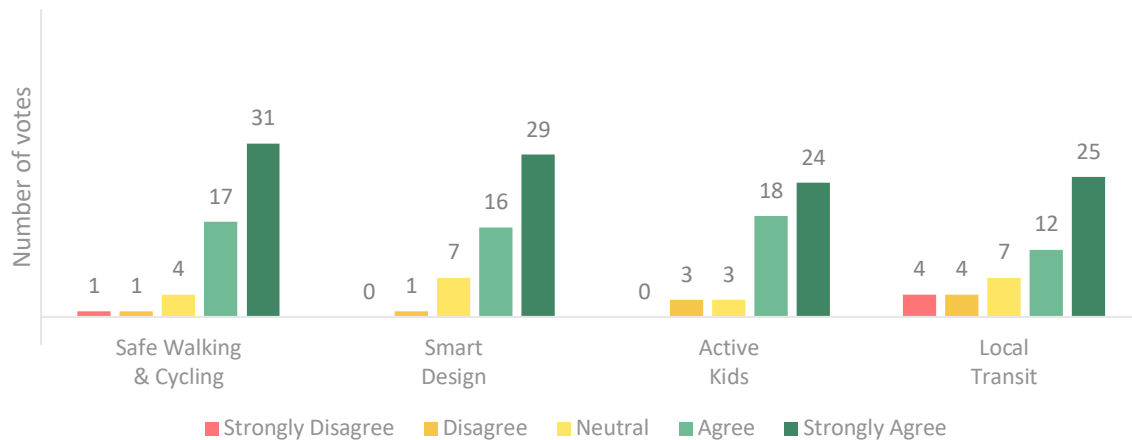


Figure 8: Rating of Sustainable Transportation “Big Ideas”.

The highest rated idea was “safe walking and cycling” in both the online survey and public launch event.

Respondents aged 45 to 60 were less supportive of “active kids” and more supportive of “local transit”, while respondents aged over 61 were less supportive of “local transit” and “smart design”.

UNIQUE IDENTITY AND PLACES

Okotoks is fortunate to have a charming, walkable downtown and strong sense of community. As we grow it will be important to create unique neighbourhoods, vibrant places and great events for people to gather, socialize, and celebrate year-round.

Participants reviewed the following “Big Ideas” and rated how important they thought the ideas were for the future of Okotoks.



Retrofit spaces: Creative re-use of existing buildings and spaces (like the Heartland Cafe in the former Baptist church).



Winter strategy: A plan to support winter safety, comfort, maintenance, and events and activities to celebrate winter.



Pilot projects: Test new ideas for public spaces to see how people like them (temporary bike-lanes or sidewalk patios).



Design competitions: Challenge community members to create amazing spaces (like designing spaces to celebrate winter).

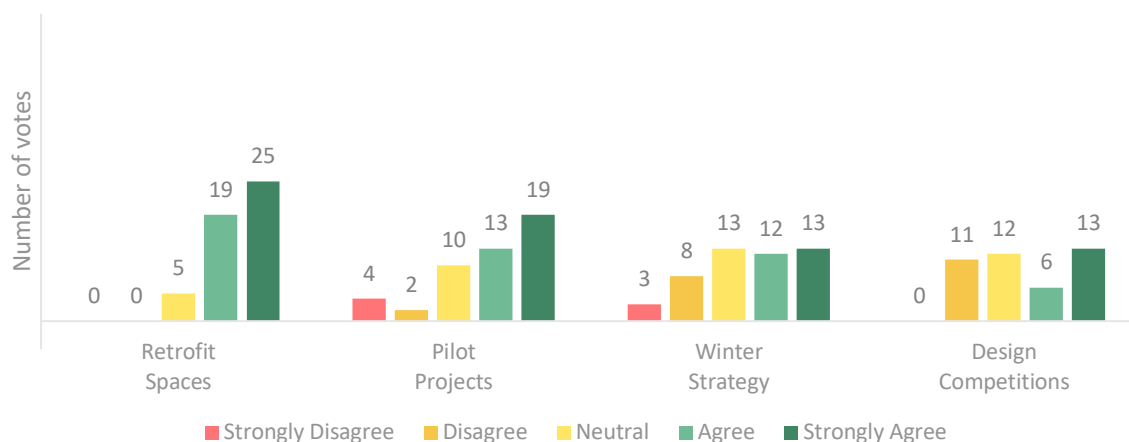


Figure 9: Rating of Unique Identity and Places “Big Ideas”.

“Retrofit spaces” had the highest rating in both the online survey and public launch event.
“Design competitions” had a low rating in the public launch event.

Respondents aged 45 to 60 were less supportive of “design competitions”.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Water use along the Sheep River is limited due to growing demands. Okotoks has struggled with water shortages, especially during peak demand periods in the summer and during droughts. We must manage our water, practice conservation, and increase our supply to continue to meet our needs.

Participants reviewed the following “Big Ideas” and rated how important they thought the ideas were for the future of Okotoks.



Re-use stormwater: Encourage new developments to capture stormwater to reuse for things like lawn watering.



Pilot water projects: Partner or support new developments to include their own water re-use treatment facilities.



Use reclaimed water: Work with the province to resolve regulatory barriers to using reclaimed water (e.g., from household sinks) for things like toilet flushing and lawn watering.

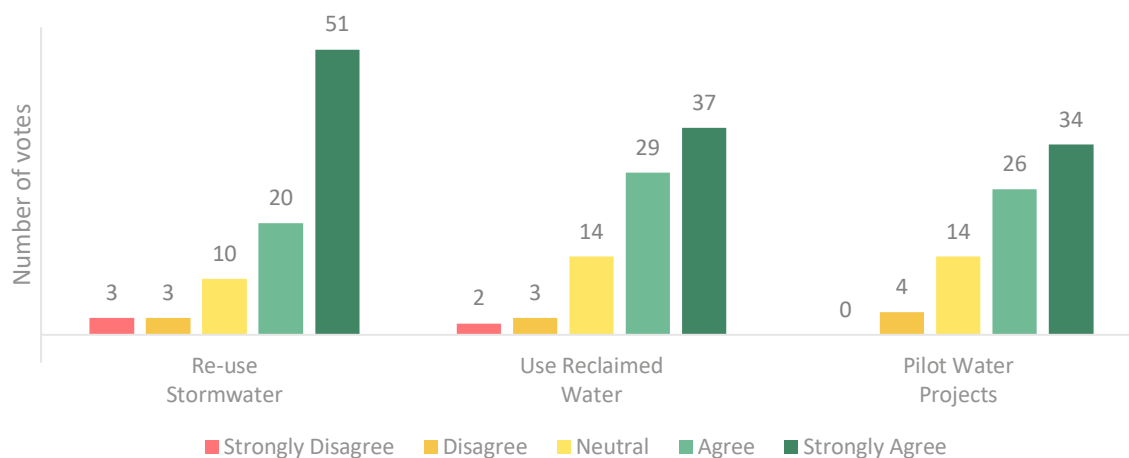


Figure 10: Rating of Water Infrastructure “Big Ideas”.

The highest rated ideas were “use reclaimed water” in the online survey and “re-use stormwater” in the public launch event.

ACHIEVING OUR VISION

Okotoks' community vision is:

The Town of Okotoks is resilient, where people, businesses, ideas and sense of community thrive. Grounded by the Sheep River valley and supported by thoughtful planning and design, a strong local economy and a vibrant civic culture, Okotoks offers exceptional quality of life at every stage of life. Respect for each other and the natural environment makes Okotoks home.

The online survey asked the following open-ended questions:

“How can we achieve our community vision? What are the biggest challenges or opportunities you see for our future?”

A total of 45 people, or 30% of respondents, answered this question. The responses were coded and summarized. Results are below.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

The top three themes were: having a stable water supply; being careful about growth; and strengthening the local economy. Further details are provided below.

A stable water supply (31% of respondents who answered this question or 14 comments). A summary of comments indicates:

- Water supply is a concern and considered the top priority for many Okotokians.
- Development of new neighbourhoods without additional water supply is a concern.
- Water restrictions during the summer is a concern.

Manage growth carefully (31% of respondents who answered this question or 14 comments). A summary of comments indicates:

- Okotokians are split on their support for growth.
- New developments should be managed carefully in order to deliver the infrastructure and services required, and to maintain the character of Okotoks.
- A small-town or rural feel is important to some.
- Others disliked typical suburban neighbourhood design.

Strengthen the local economy (29% of respondents who answered this question or 13 comments). A summary of comments indicates:

- A strong local economy is one of the key “missing ingredients” for many Okotokians.
- There is support for existing small local businesses in Okotoks.
- There is appetite to attract new and diverse businesses to Okotoks.
- Respondents believe a diverse economy contributes to a complete community, a vibrant downtown, an increase the number of well-paid jobs in Okotoks, and may keep young adults in Okotoks.

Other themes and comments included:

Transportation (18%; 8 comments)

- Increase active transportation.
- Have public transit throughout the day.
- Have mixed-use neighbourhoods with good connections.
- Traffic and traffic control can be a challenge.

Housing (16%; 7 comments)

- More affordable and diverse housing for all life stages is needed.

Parks (13%; 6 comments)

- Okotoks already has a fantastic parks and pathway system.
- Protect, maintain, and improve existing parks and open spaces.

Age-Friendly (13%; 6 comments)

- Okotoks should plan for and be welcoming to all ages.
- Increase services for seniors, youth initiatives, and school capacity.

Sustainability (11%; 5 comments)

- Most placed a priority on environmental sustainability.
- One respondent indicated that sustainability should not be a priority.

Culture (11%; 5 comments)

- Encourage and support growth of the cultural sector.
- Build a great performing arts centre.

Process (11%; 5 comments)

- Okotoks must listen to its citizens.
- Many wrote that there should be input on final decisions by experts in planning.
- One challenge may be ensuring residents and prospective residents understand Okotoks' vision of sustainability.

Unique Okotoks (11%; 5 comments)

- Build a distinct economy and communities.
- Be unique in the region in order to remain competitive and attract visitors.

A vibrant downtown (11%; 5 comments)

- A more lively and consistent atmosphere downtown.
- More restaurants, cafes, patios, and shops.

Safety and enforcement (11%; 5 comments)

- Maintain the safety of Okotoks and enforce bylaws.

Community events and spaces (9%; 4 comments)

- Build specific community gathering and activity spaces.
- Bring together residents at community events, including events for more than just young families.

Infrastructure (7%; 3 comments)

- Providing services and infrastructure can be a challenge.

Character (4%; 2 comments)

- Beautify Okotoks and maintain a small-town character.

Inclusivity (4%; 2 comments)

- Okotoks must be inclusive. Actions could include a rainbow crosswalk.

Education (4%; 2 comments)

- Become self-sufficient for educational institutions, include a regional post-secondary campus.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE AN OKOTOKIAN?

At the public launch event, an open-ended question asked: "What does it mean to you to be an Okotokian?" Some key themes included

- Family Friendly.
- Safe & Wonderful.
- Love Okotoks.
- Small town feel even with growth!
- Nice retirement place.
- Friendly people, great service.
- A place where I see lots of smiles.
- Things for everyone of all ages and interests.
- Safe environment and community!
- A real sense of community. "It takes a village" attitude.
- Commitment to environmentalism.
- Wheelchair and scooter friendly.



NEXT STEPS

Phase 2 engagement will be a deeper dive where specific topics and options are examined in more detail to build a shared understanding of issues, trade-offs, and implications. To dive deeper into key topics for the Municipal Development Plan, we will host a series of theme-based workshops. These dialogue-based workshops will bring together diverse participants to learn from each other and discuss the issues that matter most to them. We expect these to happen in early September.