



Town of Whitecourt

# **Advisory Committee Meeting #1**

MDP, LUB, and North Flats ASP



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## Introduction

The Town of Whitecourt is undertaking a project to update their Municipal Development Plan (MDP), Land Use Bylaw (LUB) and to draft the new North Flats Area Structure Plan (ASP). A project specific Advisory Committee has been established to provide ongoing advice to the project team. The Advisory Committee consists of Council Representatives, members from the Business Community, Local Community Organizations and Members at Large.

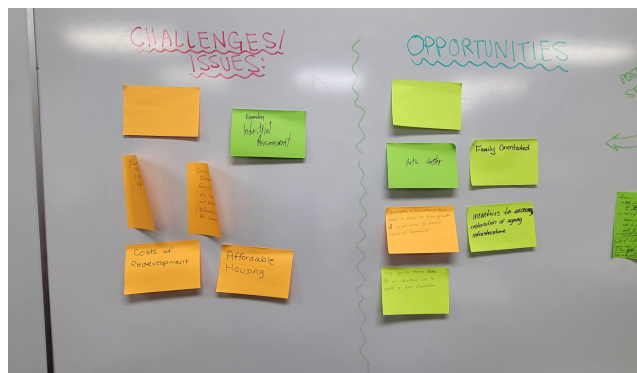
The first Advisory Committee was held on December 6, 2022. The purpose of this meeting was to undertake a high-level review of the issues and opportunities relating to land use and to begin identifying key themes and focus.

## Activity #1 – Issues and Opportunities

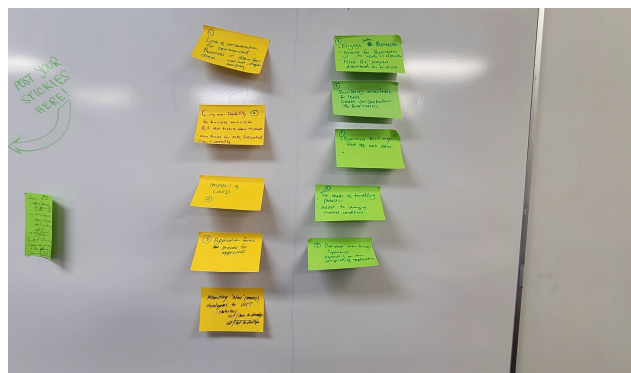
Committee Members were asked to participate in small group discussions where they reviewed their perspectives on Whitecourt's challenges and opportunities. Committee Members were given sticky notes to record their opinion on what are the Town's biggest issues and opportunities. The notes were then posted on a wall for additional review and discussion.

Issues/Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of concentration for commercial business in Downtown and competition from big-box stores at the periphery of Town.</li> <li>High Downtown rents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand incentive programs for businesses Downtown.</li> <li>Locate 'big player' businesses Downtown to act as anchors</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of flexibility in the Land Use Bylaw for business owners to put their businesses where they want</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with businesses</li> <li>Adopt to changing market conditions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application and approval processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop user friendly experience for applications and approvals</li> <li>Adjust Town documents to create a more user friendly experience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracting new developers and investment to Whitecourt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of developable land to allow for future growth</li> <li>Whitecourt is a desirable, family oriented place to live</li> <li>Creating strong town character in the downtown core</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of Affordable Housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with stakeholders to develop local solutions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Costs of redevelopment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incentives to encourage restoration of aging infrastructure</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service demands from Citizens versus available funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanding industrial assessment</li> </ul>





Above: responses recorded from Activity #1



Above: additional responses recorded from Activity #1

## Activity #2 – Citizen Survey Review

An online survey was conducted during November, 2022. 81 responses were collected. As part of this activity, Committee Members were asked to take some time to review the raw data from Citizen Survey #1 in order to familiarize themselves with the survey and the community's feedback. Committee Members were asked to identify key themes from the feedback and to compare these themes to the issues and opportunities identified in Activity #1. After the Committee Members had reviewed the results, the group came together to review the Project Team's summary of the survey results.

### Key findings from Citizen Survey #1:

Municipal Development Plan Priorities	Land Use Bylaw Key Issues	North Flats ASP Issues and Vision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable housing and/or alternative housing options</li> <li>Downtown</li> <li>Residential areas</li> <li>Walkability and connectivity of pathway systems and trails</li> <li>Green spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscaping and site grading</li> <li>Parking</li> <li>Accessory buildings or uses</li> <li>Consistency with Safety Codes</li> <li>Needs more plain language</li> <li>Restrictions and fees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Odor from water treatment plant</li> <li>Flood zone</li> <li>Wildlife preservation and maintaining natural areas</li> </ul> </li> <li>Vision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recreation area</li> <li>Walkways and Trails</li> <li>Access to water</li> <li>Campground</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Conclusions

The Advisory Committee identified a number of issues that can be categorized into the following topics. These topics may be the subject of interest for the upcoming multi-stakeholder workshops.

### **Municipal Development Plan:**

- Downtown revitalization including :
  - o Incentives for downtown businesses
  - o Addressing aging infrastructure
  - o Downtown shopping opportunities, ensuring daily needs can be met downtown
- Aesthetic measures to enhance the Town's character
- Traffic safety
- Incentives and agreements to encourage affordable housing

### **Land Use Bylaw:**

- Highway Commercial vs. Downtown Commercial (permitted and discretionary uses)
- Improving development approval processes
- Red tape reduction/ exploring more flexibility in the Land Use Bylaw
- Landscaping and site grading standards
- Aesthetic measures to enhance the Town's character

The information gathered in this meeting will help to guide the project team's focus for the update of the MDP and LUB projects and for creating the North Flats ASP. Future Advisory Committee meetings will address more specific solutions to these issues.