



WHAT WE HEARD AT THE BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT AND LUNCHEON

*Planning and Development,
Environmental Services, Public Engagement
November 2 – 10, 2023*



CONTENTS

WHAT WE HEARD AT THE BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT AND LUNCHEON	1
CONTENTS	2
ABOUT THE PROJECT.....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
<i>ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANTS</i>	4
<i>COMMUNICATION CHANNELS</i>	4
<i>ENGAGEMENT TACTICS</i>	4
<i>ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS</i>	4
DETAILED ENGAGEMENT REVIEW	5
Solid Waste Management Plan Feedback	5
Key Themes: Solid Waste Management Plan.....	6
Proposed Signage Amendments Feedback	7
Key Themes: Signage Amendment.....	8
Feedback by Sign Type.....	9
General Engagement Feedback.....	11
Downtown Revitalization Incentives Program Feedback.....	11
NEXT STEPS	12



We humbly acknowledge that the land on which we live, learn, work and play is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional and ancestral lands of the Cree, Dene, and unceded territory of the Métis.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Business Engagement and Luncheon was created for the Municipality to connect, present and share multiple projects to the business community in the most convenient way. Through one in-person event, one virtual presentation, and with interactive online tools (surveys, forums), targeted engagement was provided for the business community to share their feedback on active projects.

Projects discussed during this time include the [Solid Waste Management Plan](#), and proposed signage amendments within the [Land Use Bylaw](#). Feedback on each project will be shared to the appropriate department for review – along with other determining factors – for the final decision-making process.

Additional opportunities to engage included the [Downtown Redevelopment Incentives Program](#) (DRIP), [Construction Communication 2023 Survey](#), and general engagement for businesses to share what matters most to them.

Information regarding the current status of the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP), along with opportunities to join the Santa Claus Parade or Snow Angels program were made available as well.

About Solid Waste Management

The Solid Waste Management Plan will guide how waste is managed to reduce waste, expand and enhance services, manage costs over time and extend the life of landfills. It will also align with provincial and federal policies.

Engaging with the business community was important to understand solid waste services currently used, satisfaction with those services and to help identify potential barriers and possible improvements.

About Proposed Signage Amendments

In April 2021, RMWB Council directed Planning and Development to begin reviewing [Land Use Bylaw 99/059](#) in preparation for a new Land Use Bylaw in the near future. In response to current community needs however, Planning and Development is working to bring forward new signage regulations early as an amendment to the current Land Use Bylaw.

By first connecting with the business community, the proposed changes were shared with attendees to better understand how these changes may impact businesses, and whether or not they felt the proposed changes could be improved to benefit the business community while balancing the needs of residents.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two sessions were offered on November 2 and 9, 2023 for members of the business community to join a conversation about amendments to the Land Use Bylaw, and a plan to manage solid waste in the region. In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and with invitations sent to Northern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association, the virtual, and in-person opportunities provided the business community with multiple options to get involved.

In addition, online engagement was made available on the Municipality’s engagement portal for solid waste management and the proposed Land Use Bylaw signage amendments until November 10, 2023.

ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANTS

Sixty-one participants joined the in-person and virtual events representing 33 businesses throughout the region. Members of RMWB’s Council were also in attendance in-person and virtually. Twenty-five Solid Waste Management Plan survey submissions were received, as well as 80 recorded responses to interactive elements including a post-it wall, dotmocracy, and poster boards.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

- MAC Calendar
- Facebook Event
- Email invitations
- RMWB’s engagement portal ([Land Use Bylaw](#) and [Solid Waste Management Plan](#))
- RMWB engagement newsletter

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS

In-person

- Dotmocracy
- Printed surveys
- iPad access to online surveys
- Interactive Post-it walls and boards
- Small group discussions
- Large group discussion

Virtual meetings

- Microsoft Teams Q&A
- Microsoft Teams Chat
- Large group discussion

Online engagement tools

- Solid Waste Management Plan Survey
- Land Use Bylaw forum
- Land Use Bylaw Q&A

ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS





Detailed Engagement Review

This section will report on three topics specifically: the Solid Waste Management Plan, signage amendments to the Land Use Bylaw, and general engagement feedback.

The Snow Angels program and Santa Claus parade were shared as additional resources during the in-person session. Find more information on these and more at rmwb.ca. For reporting on the Construction Communication 2023 survey, please visit rmwb.ca/participate.

About the In-Person Luncheon

An in-person luncheon was held at the Pomeroy Hotel and Conference Rooms on November 2 with a total of 53 attendees representing 27 businesses.

Following a time of brief presentations for each project, meaningful conversations through table-talk discussions, interactive post-it wall activities, and one-on-ones with subject matter experts provided Planning & Development and Environmental Services departments with valuable feedback on their projects.

The in-person luncheon was structured to allow people to engage in many ways. Four information tables were set up with subject matter experts and interactive information easily accessible for attendees at any time throughout the event. The tables included Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP), Downtown Revitalization Incentives Program (DRIP), Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and a table for general engagement – including information on the Construction Communications 2023 survey, Santa Claus Parade and Snow Angels program.

Presentations on solid waste and signage amendments were conducted by the subject matter experts while attendees enjoyed lunch. Participants took part in small group discussions with subject matter experts, with a large group review of highlighted topics from the discussion following. One-on-one conversations with subject matter experts took place during and following formal engagement as well.

About the Virtual Presentation

The virtual session took place on November 9 with relevant departments sharing presentations on solid waste management and signage amendments proposed to the current Land Use Bylaw. This session included Q&A options and lots of discussion time with subject matter experts. Eight attendees joined from six companies, with a total of 12 questions asked throughout the session.

Solid Waste Management Plan Feedback

The Solid Waste Management Plan will guide how waste is managed across the region and will also align with provincial and federal policies, protect the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions while striving to meet resident composting and recycling expectations.

Regionwide engagement was available Sept. 21 – Nov. 10, 2023. To learn more about the engagement details visit the [Solid Waste Management Plan](#) project page.

With development of the plan underway, engaging the business community was important to capture the full picture of current garbage and recycling options utilized in the region. Feedback received will be considered as the plan is created to help improve the solid waste system in the future.



Key Themes: Solid Waste Management Plan

Based on feedback received during in-person, virtual, and online engagement, businesses are interested in:



**INCREASED
RECYCLING**



COMPOSTING



**EDUCATION AND
AWARENESS**



**CONVENIENT
COLLECTION**

Conversations following the solid waste presentation in both the in-person and virtual engagements included positive feedback on current services along with questions, suggestions, and ideas for change. Business owners shared their thoughts, perspectives, and concerns for the fiscal responsibility of the region as well as big picture environmental issues like greenhouse gas emissions.

At the Solid Waste Management Plan information table at the in-person Business Engagement Luncheon, attendees could take the survey online and interact with two question boards:

- What changes or improvements would you like to see with the solid waste system? Attendees were encouraged to add their thoughts via a post-it note.
- A dotmocracy question asking what items businesses would like to see consistently diverted.



Many business owners are looking for more convenient recycling programs that are accessible for their businesses such as curbside collection. They would like the option to recycle more materials and increase diversion of waste from the landfills.

Composting is mandatory in many other areas and communities – why not here? Many businesses, especially those in the hospitality industry, would welcome the opportunity to recycle food scraps and compostable materials and would recycle food-soiled materials if they were able.



Local businesses encourage the promotion of education of all available recycling options and programs in the region. Participants felt that increased awareness will bring positive change in behaviours and better habits for the disposal of trash.

Attendees of the virtual business engagement asked about user-friendly waste and recycling options for multi-family buildings and businesses, the uses of recycling and deposit money, current usage of curbside recycling and whether there are any waste to energy options are expected in the future.



Proposed Signage Amendments Feedback

In April 2021, Planning and Development brought forward a new, proposed Land Use Bylaw to Council - aimed at replacing the current Land Use Bylaw 99/059 and implementing comprehensive changes to better address the needs of the community. Council directed the Planning and Development department to re-engage with the community on a select number of topics, including signage regulations.

Since then, Planning & Development has engaged with local stakeholders, revising the proposed signage regulations to reflect feedback along the way. The opportunity to engage the business community in-person, online, and virtually from Nov. 2 – 10, 2023 provided participants with an opportunity to review proposed changes to the bylaw and share their feedback on the changes. General updates and updates by sign type that were presented during engagement are listed below.

General Signage Updates

1. The proposed signage amendment will increase flexibility for businesses and provide user-friendly signage regulations.
2. Sign regulations will be the same throughout the entire region.
3. Administration is shifting to a proactive approach to sign compliance and enforcement.
4. Third-party advertising will be allowed in the region but not in residential districts.
5. Digital components will be permitted on more sign types but have regulations for distance and brightness near residential properties.



Proposed Updates by Sign Type

BILLBOARD SIGNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Billboard signs will be permitted throughout the region with increased size and digital components, but with a buffer distance from residential uses.
FREESTANDING SIGNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Freestanding signs will be permitted on all commercial properties.
FASCIA SIGNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fascia signs can now have digital components.
PORTABLE SIGNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider Portable signs being approved for up to 6 months and allowing for third-party advertising.• Portable signage on municipal land will only be available for non-profit organizations.

Key Themes: Signage Amendment

During both the virtual and in-person engagements, participants were open to sharing their thoughts on the proposed amendments shown in the general and sign-type updates above. During this time, the following topics were brought up consistently – based on the updates shared by Planning and Development – creating themes for review by the project team.



ENFORCEMENT



EASING RESTRICTIONS



CLARIFYING BYLAW DETAILS

Enforcement

Participants shared their perspectives on proposed changes to the Land Use Bylaw, with a particular interest in enforcing the rules set out within the bylaw. Some participants felt all signs should be approved by the Municipality, though others felt that the Municipality shouldn't be so involved in the approval process.

Instead, participants thought the Municipality should focus on enforcing signs that do not follow the rules set out by the bylaw. There was interest in having more enforcement on visual appeal while others asked that the Municipality not over-police the process so businesses can make the right or appropriate decision for their property.

Easing Restrictions

Throughout engagement, participants shared a spectrum of opinions on easing restrictions within the bylaw. Whether talking about freestanding signs or fascia, some participants felt that owners or operators should be able to make decisions that work best for their business without Municipality interference.

This appears to be especially true for fascia on property owned by the business which can be seen within the questions asked below.



Participants also asked multiple times how the Municipality benchmarked some of these changes against larger cities such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, or Lethbridge, sharing that they would like to see updates to the RMWB's Land Use Bylaw that is more reflective of these larger cities.

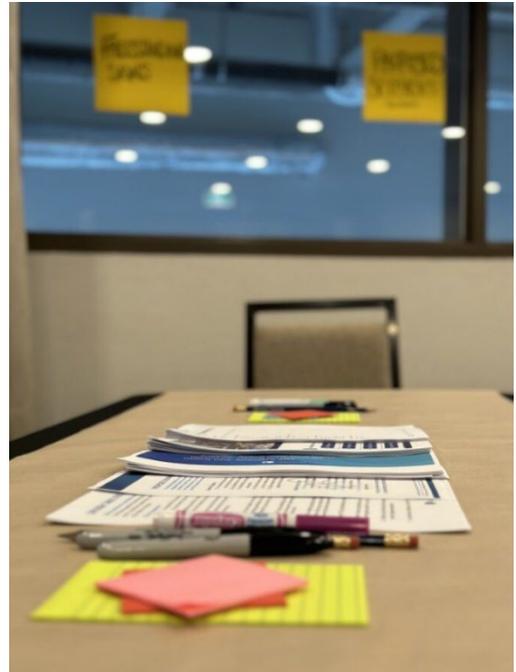
Another participant focused on the need for the RMWB to allow for-profit businesses and non-profit organizations to utilize public property for advertising to ensure fair competition, rather than only allowing non-profits this access.

Clarifying Bylaw Details

Many questions were asked in-person and virtually regarding signage. What happens to the bylaw in instances of mixed-use buildings (residential and commercial)? Are business rooftops viable for signage? Are windows included as a part of fascia, and is glass exterior included as part of total square footage of the exterior? Participants wondered about rules for signage on fences, bus stops, and benches, or if portable signs can stay up longer than six months if the contents are changed.

In addition to the questions above, following is a list of other participant questions recorded throughout the engagement:

- Are election signs allowed on residential fences?
- Can glass have sticker signage?
- What is the definition of 'exterior'? Does it include wall space?
- If content changes on portable signs, can the permit be longer than six months?
- Are rooftops allowed to have signage?
- What are the rules for fence signage?
- Can we allow signage on business rooftops?
- What is the impact on mixed-use buildings (residential and commercial)? How does this work for those spaces?
- Should bus stops and buses be for local business only?



Feedback by Sign Type

During engagement, participants focused on billboards, fascia, freestanding, portable, third-party, and digital signs. Below are direct comments from participants which were collected during engagement for consideration and input into decision making:

Billboards

- Digital billboards should not be restricted to a 200 m radius; instead, the focus should be on controlling the illumination and the size of the board.
- Billboard lighting should not be projected onto residential areas.
- Billboards should be allowed as a standard across arterials and major transportation routes (e.g. Confederation Way, Thickwood Boulevard and Parsons Creek Highway).



Facia Signs

- No third-party advertising on facia signs.
- Allow third-party on facia.
- If signage is allowed on fence, maybe it should be maxed out based on 25 per cent of facia so that we don't have clutter. Considering increasing higher than 25 per cent.
- Signs that are inward facing to a property (and not visible by roads) should be permitted.
- Twenty-five per cent might be too low if allowing third-party, can it be increased? (multiple responses).
- Who should facia third-party advertising dollars go to? (Suggests whoever is operating the property at the time).
- Separate windows from the definition of facia.
(Please note: windows are separated within the current Land Use Bylaw)

Freestanding Signs

- No third-party advertising on freestanding signs (multiple responses).
- For billboard heights, consider topography where sites along the highway are lower than the highway elevation. Consider measuring from the highway.

Portable Signs

- Can there be separate portable signs or freestanding for small and local businesses?
- Can permits be longer than 6 months if content changes?
- Portable signs in roads (deferred).
- First-party advertising should be allowed for longer than six months if content is changed (multiple responses).
- Allow digital on portable signs.

Digital Signs

- Limit brightness on digital signs.

Proposed Setbacks (200 metres)

- Treat these case by case for setbacks or consider 50 metres (limit brightness).

Enforcement

- We need enforcement on signs not approved by RMWB.
- All signs must be approved by the RMWB.

Third-party Advertising

- There were mixed feelings on third-party advertising; it should be allowed if promoting local things.
- No third-party advertising.
- Open up all third-party advertising.
- Allow third-party for businesses along access points/boulevards.
- Allow third-party fascia (consider aesthetic upkeep).



Other Signage Feedback

- Desire to have signage bylaws similar to large cities – Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver (multiple responses).
 - When presenting to council, include a chart that shows what other cities allow (benchmarking).
- Open up advertising opportunities on RMWB properties.
- Do not discourage density of signage. Reign-in portable use. (e.g. Evert business may have freestanding and portable signs).
- Balance open regulations.
- DRIP Phase 3 could focus on small business signage.
- Bound by condo rules. Landlord restricts advertising on property. Need flexibility to advertise in other locations.

General Engagement Feedback

Attendees of the in-person session had a chance to participate in an open-ended question by sharing what mattered most to them as a business owner. At this table people could also find information on current engagement opportunities like float registration for the Santa Clause Parade, recruitment for the Snow Angels Program, or complete the Construction Communications 2023 Survey.

General engagement feedback focused on concerns for business safety, better lighting required around businesses, and a suggestion to have a small-business platform for engagement.

Downtown Revitalization Incentives Program Feedback

Businesses took the opportunity during the in-person luncheon to connect with Planning & Development staff and share their thoughts on ways to improve the program for the next phase. The following comments were received by the Planning & Development department:

- “I like it!” have heard from others that there’s some paperwork required.
- How can a tenant achieve Inclusion Charter gold status if the parking lot at their business is the owner’s responsibility?
- Requirements to provide property owner permission can be a barrier to applying.
- Grants per business (not building), especially for the interior improvement grant. No funding was available when we inquired.
- Ask “where do you think funding would best be spent to help ensure business survival”!
- Patio upgrades to try to extend the outdoor use in Fall/Winter haven’t been used as much as hoped. Other improvements, like patio glass graphics and wind barriers may have helped more.
- Restaurants RMWB-wide have not recovered from COVID. Residents are not visiting restaurants at 2019 levels. Need: More support from the community. Subsidy – like Federal COVID supports?
 - Beautification: Don’t think extra business beautification would address challenges faced by restaurants.



Next Steps

Thank you to participants who have taken the time to participate in this engagement with the Municipality. Each project shared during this engagement has different actions required. Subcategories are listed below with the next steps outlined.

Solid Waste Management Plan

The Environmental Services department will take the feedback received in this development phase and use it to help identify priorities needed to improve garbage and recycling systems and services for the region. Subscribe to participate.rmwb.ca/swmp to receive updates and follow this project as it moves forward.

Land Use Bylaw

The Planning & Development department will review feedback received during this engagement, along with other determining factors, to finalize proposed amendments before presenting them to Council. To receive updates on when these amendments will be presented to Council, please subscribe to participate.rmwb.ca/LUB.

General Engagement

Public engagement has reviewed the feedback provided by participants. No further action is required at this time. To receive updates on all public engagement opportunities and projects, subscribe to participate.rmwb.ca.

The Construction Communications 2023 survey is now closed. For updates on this project, please visit rmwb.ca/participate.

Downtown Revitalization Incentives Program

Feedback provided regarding this program will be reviewed by Planning & Development as part of a larger review process on the program. For more information please visit rmwb.ca/incentives.

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