

shape our region

Municipal Development Plan

Phase 2 Engagement Summary
April 2021



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**

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Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

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REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**

Executive Summary

What We Did

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



2 Virtual
Open Houses



Online
Survey



Webinar
Videos



Online
Discussion
Forum



Idea Sharing
Platform

STAKEHOLDER & INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT



Virtual
Workshops

Public, Stakeholder, & Indigenous engagement opportunities were held between January 28, 2021 to March 1, 2021, and reached over 1,200 people.

What We Heard

Substantial feedback was gathered during Phase 2 Engagement. The Project Team then analyzed the data and were able to identify consensus opinions on major changes to the MDP direction that should be made.



Including Reconciliation with Indigenous Communities as a 6th MDP Goal



Ensuring the goals are not repetitious, and have clear direction



Revisiting the Vision to better reflect its intention



Emphasizing the Blue & Green Networks in the MDP as a priority



Committing to improved communication and collaboration with rural and Indigenous communities



Aligning with existing economic development initiatives, including the Place Brand Strategy

Next Steps



MAY 2021 - FINALIZE DRAFT PLAN
Visit rmwb.ca/mdp for details.



Introduction

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) is preparing a new Municipal Development Plan (MDP) to reflect changes in the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the region. The new MDP is being created with input from residents throughout Wood Buffalo to ensure it reflects local values, opportunities, and challenges, and sets a clear vision for the Region’s future.

What is the Municipal Development Plan?

The MDP sets out the vision and blueprint for how growth and development will happen in Wood Buffalo over the next 20 years. The MDP will:

- › Provide a comprehensive land use policy framework
- › Outline a strategic path forward to manage growth across the region
- › Guide both short- and long-term decision making by Council and Administration

Why is it important?

The current MDP was completed in 2011, a time when Wood Buffalo was experiencing rapid growth. Projections indicated that Wood Buffalo’s population would more than double by 2030, reaching over 230,000 people. This growth has not happened due to several factors, including the 2013 and 2020 floods, the 2014 global drop in oil prices and the resulting economic downturn, and the 2016 Horse River Wildfire.

In an ever-changing social and economic environment, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo is committed to keeping pace with planning for our future. As a result, the Municipality now has an opportunity to reflect today’s conditions through a new MDP. This phase of engagement was the second of two opportunities for the public to provide feedback into the Wood Buffalo MDP, share thoughts and ideas, and ask questions. The feedback gathered will help to shape the next draft of the plan and formulate the necessary policies to shape the future of the municipality. The first of the two engagement opportunities took place from September 28, 2020, to November 1, 2020, and the second phase of engagement took place from January 28, 2021 to March 8, 2021.



Figure 1. The engagement period timeline indicates the two opportunities for engagement throughout the MDP Project.

How To Use This Document

This document summarizes the key findings and themes that arose from the second engagement opportunity of the MDP project, Phase 2: Draft Plan Components. These findings and themes directly informed revisions to the overall vision, goals, and strategic directions of the MDP, and contributed to the preparation of the final draft MDP, which will be circulated for public review in spring 2021.

MDP DRAFT PLAN COMPONENTS

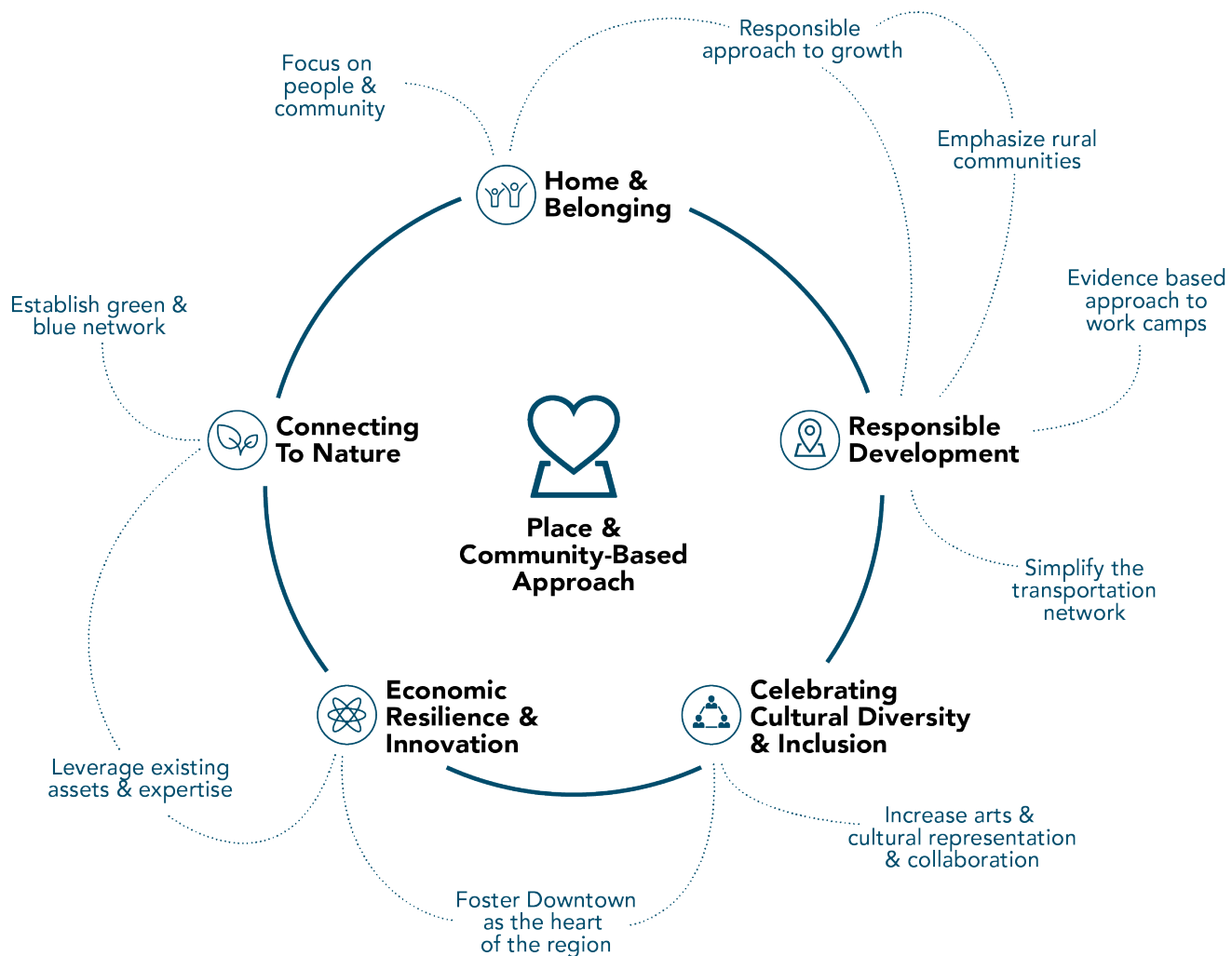


Figure 2. The graphics above overviews the MDP components that were included in Phase 2 Engagement.

Engagement Approach

The intent of Phase 2 Engagement: Draft Plan Components, was to gather feedback on the proposed vision, goals, and major policy shifts that were developed using feedback from Phase 1 engagement. Phase 2 asked participants whether the project team is on the right track with the direction the plan is taking, what was missing, and what should be refined for the draft MDP. The answers to these questions are summarized in this Engagement Summary.

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Project Team employed a variety of digital engagement tactics for Phase 2 to ensure the safety and comfort of everyone involved, while ensuring maximum opportunity for input and participation. Phase 2 included Public Engagement, Stakeholder and rural and Indigenous partners Engagement, and Council and Administration opportunities for input, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the many perspectives on Wood Buffalo's future were incorporated. All of these voices were provided options online and through "live" virtual meetings for participation.



GOALS:

- › To confirm the vision and goals of the MDP
- › To share the findings of Phase 1 Engagement
- › To gather feedback on the draft Big Moves
- › To confirm the draft MDP components reflect input provided by the community
- › To demonstrate how previous input was used in development of the plan





2 VIRTUAL
OPEN HOUSES



ONLINE
SURVEY



IDEA SHARING
PLATFORM



ONLINE
DISCUSSION
FORUM

Public Engagement

Phase 2 was advertised via Participate Wood Buffalo. This online platform included additional background information about the project, frequently asked questions, and informative videos produced by the Municipality. Public engagement was further promoted via the Municipality's social media platforms including, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Additional promotion included radio advertisements, video advertisements, signage, email and rural mailout RMWB newsletters.



20+
SOCIAL MEDIA
POSTS



3
WEBINAR
VIDEOS



+
NEWSLETTERS
RADIO
SIGNAGE

Public Engagement opportunities were available for four weeks, from February 1, 2021 to February 28, 2021. During this time, two virtual open house and Q & A sessions were held on February 10 and 18, 2021, with a combined 51 people in attendance, and an additional 69 people viewing these open houses online after they concluded.

Participants also provided feedback through the RMWB's online platform, Participate Wood Buffalo, which provided three avenues for engagement:

- › Survey;
- › Discussion forum; and
- › Idea sharing platform.

The online components garnered significant attention, with over 927 participants using the engagement website. Over 35 Q & A questions were posed over the month of February, as well as four distinct forum topics opened, and over 180 survey submissions.

Survey participant age

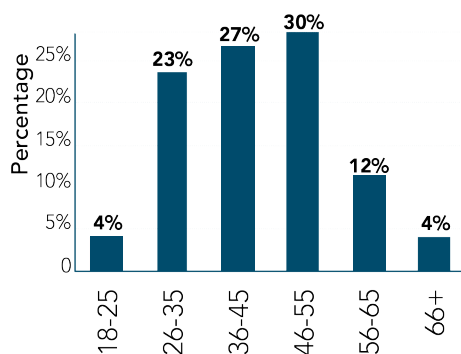


Figure 3. Online survey participants indicated that they were primarily between the ages of 26-55.

Stakeholder & Indigenous Engagement

In addition to these public-facing components of the engagement, the Project Team also conducted over 35 small-group workshops with over 200 individual stakeholders, rural and Indigenous partners, Councillors, and RMWB administration. These conversations helped provide significant feedback from a host of different perspectives, further enriching the findings from this phase of engagement.

Collectively, Phase 2 Engagement reached over 1,200 people, and generated robust discussion around the draft vision, goals, and big moves that will be instrumental in refining the final draft MDP to reflect the interests of all Wood Buffalo residents.

STAKEHOLDER & INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Wood Buffalo Development Advisory Committee	Wood Buffalo Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee	Community Standards Appeal Committee
Advisory Committee on Aging	Assessment Review Board	Regional Advisory Committee on Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality (RACIDE)
Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development & Tourism	Mayor's Advisory Committee on Youth (MACOY)	Public Art Committee
Communities in Bloom Committee	Subdivision and Development Appeal Board	Response & Recovery Advisory Committee
Community Identification Committee	Mayor & Council Members	Oil Sands Community Alliance
Fort McMurray Real Estate Board	Fort McMurray Airport Authority	BILD Wood Buffalo
Fort McMurray Construction Association	Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce	United Way of Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo
Wood Buffalo Food Bank	Arts Council Wood Buffalo	Fort McMurray Catholic School District
Northland School District	Keyano College	McMurray Métis
Willow Lake Métis Nation	Fort McMurray 468 First Nation	Fort McKay Métis Nation
Conklin Resource Development Advisory Committee	Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Planning & Development Department	Project Steering Committee
Fort McMurray Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan Project Team	Civeo	



42
IN-PERSON
& VIRTUAL
MEETINGS



Engagement Summary

The engagement approach yielded considerable feedback on the full range of draft MDP components presented to stakeholders, rural and Indigenous partners, the public, Council, and Administration. Overviews for each individual discussion as well as key findings arising from each group are presented in this section to provide an overarching summary of what was heard during Phase 2 Engagement.

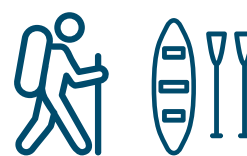
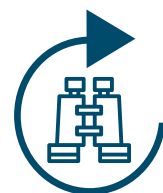
Stakeholders

The Project Team held two industry workshops as well as 12 meetings with RMWB's many Council-appointed committees. These meetings provided significant opportunity to gain insights from a variety of different perspectives and unique areas of focus in the community, such as public art, the oil and gas industry, or the airport authority. The diverse perspectives of these stakeholders led to many robust conversations surrounding the draft vision, goals, and big moves, and through the use of an interactive ranking tool, the following rankings represent the collective perspective of these many groups.

Key themes that emerged from these discussions include:

- › The need to **rework the proposed vision** so that it retains the general intent of the current statement, but reads in a manner that is softer and more open and welcoming.
- › The need to **separate out Indigenous considerations**, including but not limited to reconciliation, as its own distinct goal in the MDP.
- › **Strong support** among stakeholders **for the Blue and Green Network**.
- › Interest in **further clarifying** the meaning behind key terms including **diversity, accessibility, equity, and inclusion**.

Overviews of each individual discussion are provided on the following pages to provide further insight into how the many different opinions and viewpoints from these stakeholders were heard and considered.





Community Identification Committee

JANUARY 28, 2021

Big Moves

The Community Identification Committee provided comments both in relation to the outlined big moves, but also in terms of additional big moves that they believed should also be prioritized. These new big moves included:

- › Connecting Fort Chipewyan to the south by an all-season road; and
- › Focusing on expanding the retail options currently offered throughout Wood Buffalo.

Speaking to the proposed big moves, the Committee was strongly supportive of the proposed Blue and Green Networks, as well as emphasizing the importance of Downtown Fort McMurray and ensuring the DARP is empowered through the new MDP.

Development Advisory Committee

FEBRUARY 3, 2021

Vision

The Committee was strongly supportive of the proposed vision.

Goals

The emphasis on improving the place instead of focusing on growth was well-received by the Committee, but there was a belief that this emphasis needs to extend to the way Wood Buffalo talks about itself to the rest of the world. To this end, there was a recognition that promoting the Place Brand Strategy through the new MDP was a priority.

Big Moves

The Committee raised some concerns about the naming of the Blue and Green Networks, worrying that the title may be misconstrued given the current global understanding of what it means to be “green”. However, they were strongly supportive of the concept.

Beyond the Blue and Green Network, the Committee was also interested in seeing some minor changes to the naming of certain big moves, including the way the MDP speaks about new growth areas and project accommodations. Lastly, the Committee expressed belief that there needs to be more of a focus on diversity in the way the MDP approaches Wood Buffalo’s tremendous global diversity.

**“IT IS HARD TO GET
DOWNTOWN AND TO THE
WATER...THERE SHOULD BE
MORE WAYS TO ACCESS THEM.”**

-Development Advisory Committee

Community Standards Appeal Committee

FEBRUARY 4, 2021

Vision

The Committee expressed concerns around the use of the term “forever,” believing that it is perhaps too strong of a term and may carry negative connotations. Recommendations to soften the language were supported by the Committee.

Big Moves

Focusing on improving what the Region already has instead of prioritizing new development and new growth was strongly supported by the Committee. The Committee also appreciated the perceived “realistic-ness” of the new MDP approach, providing a reasonable and achievable foundation for community improvement to be grounded on.

The Committee was very supportive of the renewed emphasis on rural communities but noted that it may be appropriate to also speak more specifically to the individual communities of Fort McMurray as well.

Advisory Committee on Aging

FEBRUARY 11, 2021

Vision

Diversity was a term the Committee challenged the Project Team on, as the definition used by the Municipality is sometimes not as broad as the Committee believes it should be. Ensuring that equity and inclusion are also captured in the new MDP is important to the Committee, as is the emphasis on creating a place where residents want to stay forever.

Goals

Accessibility is a very important term for the Committee, but again, must be contextualized in a way that reflects a broader understanding of the word. The Committee questioned whether the MDP would be focused on accessibility only for those with physical disabilities, or if it would take a wider perspective on accessible for all.

Big Moves

The Committee was supportive of the approach to resetting the conversation on project accommodations with industry stakeholders.

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**“WE NEED TO FOCUS ON
A REALISTIC FOUNDATION
FOR GROWTH RATHER THAN
REACHING FOR THE STARS
WITHOUT THAT FOUNDATION.”**

-Community Standards
Appeal Committee





**"DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
GO BEYOND JUST CULTURE,
AND THE MDP NEEDS TO
REFLECT THIS."**

-Regional Advisory Committee on
Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality



Assessment Review Board

FEBRUARY 11, 2021

Vision

The concept of a "forever home" was supported by the Board, although the connotation of "stay, forever" did not sit as well with all members. The sense of permanence it conveys was not held in a positive light by several respondents, who encouraged the general concept be kept, while rewording the vision to something softer.

Goals

The goals were broadly supported by the Board, although some comments about what accessibility would entail were raised.

Big Moves

The Board saw a great deal of overlap and alignment between the big moves – for example, the Blue Network and Downtown revitalization and flood mitigation in the downtown core are all interconnected and will be collectively realized through an MDP that prioritizes these outcomes. That said, the Board did raise some concerns surrounding the idea of no new growth areas, cautioning that while it makes sense once it was explained to the Board, there is risk longer term that it may be reinterpreted and end up inhibiting future development. Lastly, the Board cautioned that simplifying the transportation network should not come at the expense of those who use public transportation to navigate the region.

Regional Advisory Committee on Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality (RACIDE)

FEBRUARY 17, 2021

Vision

The Committee expressed a desire to see the vision use more inclusive language than what is currently proposed, and for it to do a better job of more clearly reflecting all forms of diversity.

Goals

The emphasis on improving the place instead of focusing on growth was well-received by the Committee, but there was a belief that this emphasis needs to extend to the way Wood Buffalo talks about itself to the rest of the world. To this end, there was a recognition that promoting the Place Brand Strategy through the new MDP was a priority.

Big Moves

There was an interest in seeing the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or Alberta protected classes referenced in the goals or policies of the new MDP, in keeping with a broader discussion around the celebration of diversity and inclusion. The Committee also questioned how the concept of inclusion would be incorporated into the MDP and requested that the Project Team employ the broadest definition possible.

Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development & Tourism

FEBRUARY 22, 2021

Vision

The Corporation challenged the use of “live, work, and play” as a vision for the Region, as it was felt this vision concept is overdone and not distinctive enough to reflect the uniqueness that Wood Buffalo brings to the table. The Corporation did appreciate the inclusion of substantial alignment between the vision’s supporting text and the Place Brand Strategy, but still felt the vision as proposed left quite a bit to be desired. Particular emphasis should be placed on urban planning design, placemaking, developing a robust wayfinding strategy, economic development, creating a welcoming environment for newcomers, public art events, and the outdoor lifestyle. The three elements of the lifestyle emphasized by the Corporation were social offerings, openness, and aesthetics.

The Corporation also identified the use of “RMWB” as a concern, as the Place Brand Strategy heavily emphasizes the use of Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo to the greatest extent possible when speaking about the region.

Goals

The Corporation noted that the inclusion of Indigenous culture tied in directly with the rest of Wood Buffalo’s global diversity was problematic, and recommended that Indigenous culture, concerns, and reconciliation be pulled out as a sixth goal on its own.

Big Moves

Significant discussion surrounding the appropriate terminology to use when speaking about Wood Buffalo, in particular as it relates to economic growth and supports for business development, was had. The Corporation brought forward several alternative wording options for consideration by the project team, including a stronger emphasis on creating a pro-investment environment. At a high level, the Corporation was very supportive of the big moves, but sought assurance that as the draft MDP is prepared, consideration for maximizing alignment between the Place Brand Strategy’s language and wording was had.

Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Youth (MACOY)

FEBRUARY 23, 2021

Vision

The vision was generally supported by the Committee, including the idea behind creating a Region where people stay longer term. However, the Committee also noted that the wording around “forever” could perhaps be reworked.

Big Moves

The Committee appreciated the identification of increasing the post-secondary opportunities in Wood Buffalo as an important component of the economic resilience big move. Ensuring local youth have the option of staying in Wood Buffalo if they so desire was identified as being very important for allowing them to stay in their home to study if they want to.



**“THE MDP MUST HELP FOSTER
OUR COMMUNITY SPIRIT...I’M
AFRAID OF LOSING PEOPLE
FROM TOWN BECAUSE OF THE
ECONOMY AND NO HIGHER
EDUCATION.”**

-Mayor’s Advisory
Committee on Youth





"ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IS SO IMPORTANT FOR LONGEVITY, BUT THIS COMMUNITY IS BUILT ON BELONGING."

-Communities In Bloom



Development & Oil and Gas Industries Meeting

FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Vision

Stakeholders involved in this meeting found the "forever" wording awkward and final in a way that did not sit well with them. Because the vision already used the word "stay" the need for "forever" was questioned.

Goals

There was a perceived gap in the lack of discussion surrounding the low carbon economy transition that is ongoing. Finding ways to position Wood Buffalo within this global paradigm shift and celebrating the successes that industry has already achieved in this regard was identified as an important missing component.

Participants in this meeting also raised the idea of building up a cabin industry in the hinterland of the region as an opportunity to broaden the economic impact of Wood Buffalo's amazing nature while creating more ways for residents and visitors alike to access the wilderness.

Big Moves

The need to identify growth areas was identified by some, but not all, participants as very important due to the slow speed with which the province divests Crown Land. Some participants however felt that the proposed new framework for growth was completely adequate.

Communities in Bloom

FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Goals

The Committee generally was supportive of the goals but questioned where discussions around community health would live in the MDP. Providing language around building healthier communities and providing residents with opportunities to lead healthy lifestyles was identified as an important goal.

The Committee was also interested in including policy that would require stronger performance in new developments, creating a more attractive community and places where people enjoy being.

Big Moves

Policy throughout the new MDP should focus on bringing people to nature who would not otherwise be there, according to the Committee. To this end, the Committee supported the Blue and Green Network concept, and asked to be included in discussions surrounding the Network to the extent appropriate for inclusion in the MDP.

Subdivision and Development Appeal Board

FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Vision

While the Vision was largely supported by the Board, there were again concerns raised about the overall tone that it takes, as well as the specific wording used. The intent of the vision statement was regarded well, with Board members identifying the sentiment of being a longer-term place as an appropriate focus for the MDP. However, the execution, and particularly the term "forever," was seen to have a negative context. Interest was also expressed by the Board in ensuring that the vision directly relates to the MDP's goals, ensuring a direct linkage between the vision, goals, and ultimately the MDP's policies themselves.

Goals

Board members felt the goals generally supported the vision, but also outlined alternate approaches that could potentially create stronger linkages between the two. In terms of individual goals, those related to arts and culture were seen as areas where the Municipality needs to take more of a leadership role. Finding ways to appropriately support and empower the arts to have a larger presence throughout the Region was identified as an important focus area for Wood Buffalo, as without government support it can be difficult for these things to thrive.

Big Moves

For the blue and green network, Board members were very interested in the concept, but also identified several concerns and risks that could exist. The implementation of the flood mitigation works in downtown Fort McMurray, for example, were an area where Board members questioned how useful such an approach would be. However, other Board members identified this concept as a potential way to better activate flood mitigation infrastructure, and more broadly as a means for better enabling access to Wood Buffalo's natural amenities.

Board members also provided feedback on responsible development and emphasizing rural communities, feeling that while both were appropriate, there were again possible risks associated with each. Relating to responsible development, the Board cautioned against introducing too much red tape that could slow down development or stave development off altogether. For emphasizing rural communities, the Board felt that while this emphasis is important, it must be extended to all communities throughout Wood Buffalo, as all communities are important.



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**"WE HAVE SO MANY LAKES -
HOW DO WE IMPROVE ACCESS
TO THEM?"**

-Subdivision and Development
Appeal Board



Community Organizations & Local Businesses Meeting

FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Overall

The stakeholders present at this meeting generally believed the material presented was well-reasoned and were supportive broadly of the direction the project is taking.

Public Art Committee

FEBRUARY 26, 2021

Vision

The focus on a place and community-based approach expressed through the vision but also the entire plan's proposed framework was celebrated by the Committee as an appropriate new approach for the Region given the current economic conditions. While the Committee questioned the use of the term "forever," they generally agreed with the vision's intent.

Goals

The inclusion of the outdoors and bringing more natural elements into the MDP was appreciated, although the focus on the arts was less comprehensive than the Committee would like to see. Separating the arts out from recreational components in particular was seen as a necessity.

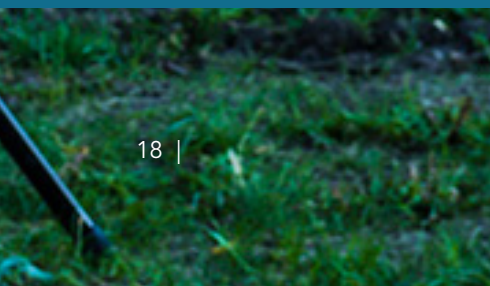
Big Moves

Revitalizing downtown is a great opportunity for public art to play a tremendous role, both outside and in a new dedicated home for the arts.



"HOW ARE WE HELPING RURAL
COMMUNITIES GET AHEAD?
THESE ARE IMPORTANT PARTS
OF WOOD BUFFALO TOO."

-Public Art Committee



Response and Recovery Advisory Committee

FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Vision

The Committee expressed concern that while the vision is intending to be welcoming, it evokes a sense of finality and inability to ever leave. While the statement is generally good in what it is trying to convey, the word choice throughout the vision slide, including “forever” and “resilience” were challenged. That said, Committee members appreciated the inclusion of ideas surrounding wellness and community spirit and were interested in seeing how these themes would be pulled through in the goals, big moves, and policy.

Goals

The Committee raised concerns around diversity and inclusion being lumped together without the addition of equity. Additionally, it was felt that the concept of diversity was potentially being viewed through too narrow of a lens relative to how other municipalities are speaking to it.

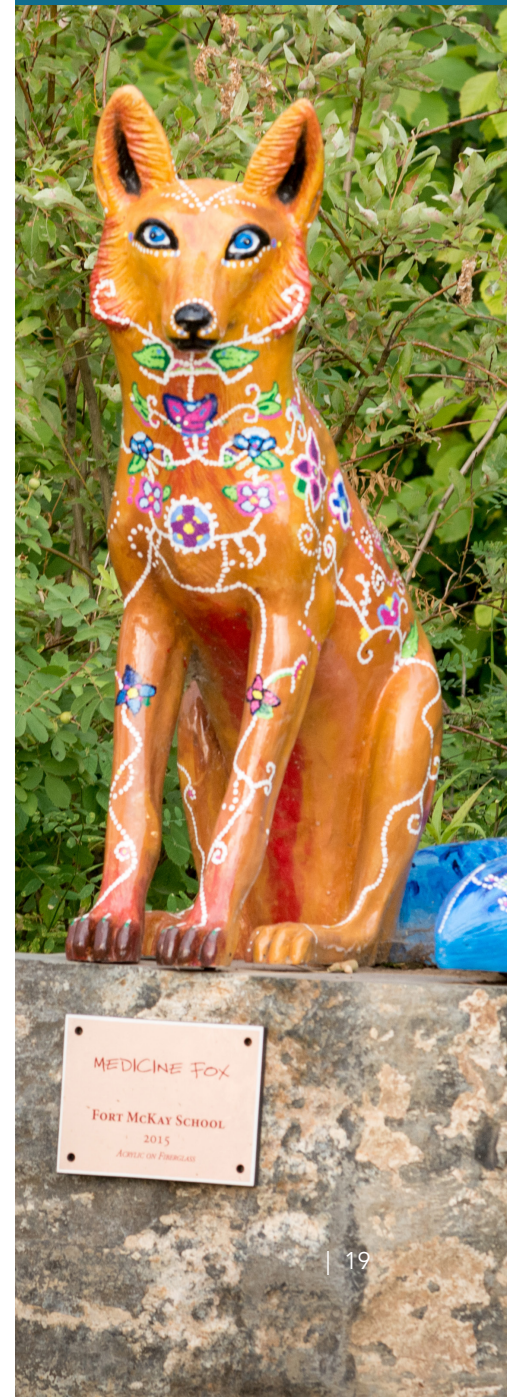
The Committee was also interested in seeing the Indigenous component pulled out into a separate goal on its own, reflecting truth and reconciliation initiatives and obligations that have evolved since the 2011 MDP was approved. Beyond this concern, the Committee was broadly interested in seeing how economic development and responsible development are conveyed through policy. Concerns were raised about how religious accommodations would be made for responsible development, if at all, while economic development comments focused primarily on ensuring the municipality “walks the walk” of the concepts and ideas presented.

Big Moves

The Committee emphasized that Indigenous culture needs to be separated from the multicultural discussions that the big moves focus on. Specifying the difference between Wood Buffalo’s global diversity as opposed to its Indigenous culture requires a deeper dive and must be explored independently. Beyond these concerns, the Committee was supportive of the rural community and downtown emphasis, as these communities are equally important parts of the region to those suburban communities of Fort McMurray where the majority of the Municipality’s population resides.

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“MULTICULTURALISM AND
INDIGENOUS CULTURE ARE
BOTH SO IMPORTANT, BUT
CAN’T BE LUMPED TOGETHER
IN THIS PLAN”

-Response and Recovery
Advisory Committee



Rural and Indigenous Partners

The Project Team held 7 meetings with 5 distinct rural and Indigenous partners throughout the region. These meetings brought many distinct issues and challenges to the Project Team's attention, and highlighted the unique challenges and opportunities facing each group that was engaged with.

Key themes that emerged from these discussions include:

- › The need to **separate out Indigenous considerations**, including but not limited to reconciliation, **as its own distinct goal** in the MDP.
- › A renewed **focus on building relationships and improving communication** between rural and Indigenous partners and the Municipality.
- › Ensuring the **Blue and Green Networks** are implemented in a **respectful and collaborative manner**.

Overviews of each individual discussion are provided on the following pages to provide further insight into how the many different opinions and viewpoints from these rural and Indigenous partners were heard and considered.



McMurray Métis

FEBRUARY 9, 2021

Goals

The McMurray Métis clearly articulated to the Project Team that the goals must be reworked to show Indigenous as separate and distinct from the broader “Culture” goal. A separate Indigenous section could focus on refreshing the relationship between rural and Indigenous partners and the municipality, recognize formally the Métis, include UNDRIP, speak to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action, and include other policies related to the relationship commitments Wood Buffalo is prepared to make to the Nations.

Big Moves

The Blue and Green Networks are good ideas but must be carefully implemented in collaboration with rural and Indigenous partners to ensure that they do not infringe on land rights, and do not promote over-use of the waterfronts. The importance of connecting people to the water and nature was stressed by the McMurray Métis, but that the risk of loving the waterfronts to death is real and must be considered.

Willow Lake Métis Nation

FEBRUARY 10, 2021

Overall

While the general direction proposed for the MDP components seems reasonable, how will it be actioned? The Municipality can say many things, but it is the implementation that really matters. While the Nation is supportive of the proposed content, there were several areas that could be strengthened. Focusing on land access and land swaps should be front and centre in rightsholding community discussions, and a commitment to cultural awareness should be woven throughout the MDP. Additionally, ongoing engagement is an imperative for long-term successful relationships with the Nation, and all Nations throughout Wood Buffalo. Seeing how this is proposed in the MDP implementation framework will be very important.

Fort McMurray 468 First Nation

FEBRUARY 16, 2021

Overall

The MDP needs to be a document that capitalizes on the tremendous opportunities that exist throughout Wood Buffalo, but that also recognizes how important it is to change mindsets about the region and encourage investment and support of this place we all call home. Finding new and unique opportunities for recreational, economic, and social development are important, and the Municipality needs to be at the fore of promoting and supporting these opportunities.



**“TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION
HAVE TO STAND ON THEIR
OWN IN THIS DOCUMENT, AND
THE MUNICIPALITY NEEDS TO
BACK THOSE WORDS UP WITH
ACTION.”**

-Willow Lake Métis Nation





**"HOW IS THE MUNICIPALITY
GOING TO CLOSE THE GAP
BETWEEN RURAL COMMUNITIES
AND FORT McMURRAY WITH
THIS PLAN?"**

-Fort McKay Métis Nation



Fort McKay Métis Nation

FEBRUARY 23, 2021

Vision

The vision seems to check the right boxes but needs to ensure it emphasizes the needs of everyone in the region, and not just those who live in Fort McMurray.

Goals

The Fort McKay Métis Nation was clear that safety needs to be considered throughout the entire MDP. Beyond this, it is imperative that the new MDP focus its energies on identifying where the gaps and disparities between communities throughout Wood Buffalo exist, so that steps can be made to ensure all residents have equal access to opportunities.

More broadly, the Nation also outlined the need for sustained engagement with the Municipality, and continuous improvement in the ways the Municipality communicates with the Nation. Including reconciliation as a goal of the MDP was seen as a good place for this to rest and could set a framework for how the Municipality will ultimately determine the ways it engages with and communicates with all First Nations and Métis partners throughout Wood Buffalo.

Conklin Resource Development Advisory Committee

FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Overall

The needs of Conklin are largely reflected in the previous successes of the 2011 MDP. While the new MDP should be updated to include changes relevant from the newest Area Structure Plan for Conklin, the existing policies and development direction remain predominantly intact. Recognizing that the community looks south to Lac La Biche for most of its services is important, as well as accurately reflecting its relationship with industry and industrial development surrounding the community. The idea of identifying and preserving a five-kilometre wide "greenbelt" ring of natural space around all of Conklin was proposed and should be considered for inclusion in the new MDP. Above and beyond this policy, future development in Conklin must ensure protection of water sources and areas deemed significant to the community. These include places such as Christina Lake, the Jackfish River, and Wassassi Park. Development along these watercourses must not be permitted.

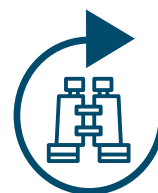
RMWB Council & Administration

Six councillors and the Mayor responded to invitations to participate in workshops on the draft MDP components, and their feedback covered a broad range of ideas, perspectives, and initiatives for the Project Team to consider as they finalize the MDP.

Additionally, an internal Steering Committee comprised of senior-level staff from across the various departments and agencies of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo as well as the Municipality's Planning and Development team were engaged in workshops to discuss the draft MDP components.

Key themes emerging from the RMWB Council & Administration engagements include:

- › The vision needs to be revisited to **amend the focus on "forever"**.
- › Additional opportunities for **leveraging the natural environment as an economic opportunity need to be explored** in the new MDP (such as cabins, lakefront retreats, etc.).
- › **Reconciliation requires a larger focus** than what is currently presented.
- › The way the **arts** are placed and discussed within the big moves **requires a rethinking**.





RMWB Council

FEBRUARY 19 & 22, 2021

Vision

The use of the word “forever” was deemed to come across more as a threat than as an aspirational statement and was generally felt to not be appropriate. Despite this, the overall intent of the statement was supported, while respondents strongly supported the additional contextual statements associated with the vision.

Some Councillors indicated a desire to see the economy, businesses, and the reduction of red tape incorporated in some manner into the vision or its supporting text, while others mentioned they would appreciate seeing more visionary language as to what the Wood Buffalo of tomorrow looks like. Broadly though the vision was supported, “forever” notwithstanding.

Goals

All of Council was interested in seeing reconciliation play a larger role in the MDP, and in the goals in particular, and it was also mentioned that there was a need to ensure both First Nations and Métis are included in this MDP. The concept of Connecting to Nature was strongly supported, while there were significant concerns raised by several councillors that arts, culture, and recreation are largely lost due to the way the goals are currently organized.

Big Moves

The focus on people who are already living in Wood Buffalo was very well received, as was the emphasis on improving the places, amenities, and job opportunities for those within the Region. Councillors also believed the renewed emphasis on rural communities is more important than ever, to ensure inequalities between communities are recognized and addressed, and to reflect the local hopes and aspirations of each of these places.

The Blue and Green Network were another big move that received almost unanimous support, with some councillors raising the question of whether this big move should actually be split into “local” and “regional” networks. This topic also led to substantial discussion around additional ways to leverage the natural amenities and assets of the region, including the development of a more robust vacation property industry that could foster a stronger local construction industry as well as help support rural communities as “gateways to the wilderness”.

Finally, the arts were raised as an outstanding issue for several councillors, as it was expressed that the arts is often forgotten behind recreation initiatives. The need to find a home for the arts to call their own in Wood Buffalo was expressed by a number of councillors, while it was also recognized that rural communities are often left out of conversations around the arts entirely, particularly when it comes to larger investments in public art.

Land Use Concepts

Councillors provided detailed feedback related to mapping amendments and tweaking that would improve the legibility and accuracy of the proposed land use concepts, in addition to several overarching opinions on how the Regional Growth Concept should most appropriately convey concepts such as highway expansion, rail expansion, the Blue and Green Network, and Indigenous communities.

“THE IDEA OF WHAT OUR
‘TOMORROW’ MEANS
IS IMPORTANT. HOW
ARE WE BUILDING A
WOOD BUFFALO WHERE
PEOPLE WANT TO STAY?”

-RMWB Council



RMWB Internal Administration

FEBRUARY 12 & 18, 2021

Vision

The word “forever” was again polarizing across respondents, with most supportive of the concept the vision is trying to convey, but hesitant to support the specific wording. The idea of people wanting to stay forever was largely believed to be something the plan should cause as a result of its success – it doesn’t need to be articulated in the vision to be true. More broadly, individuals also challenged the originality of the vision, and whether or not Wood Buffalo should be trying for a more unique or distinct vision to reflect its own uniqueness.

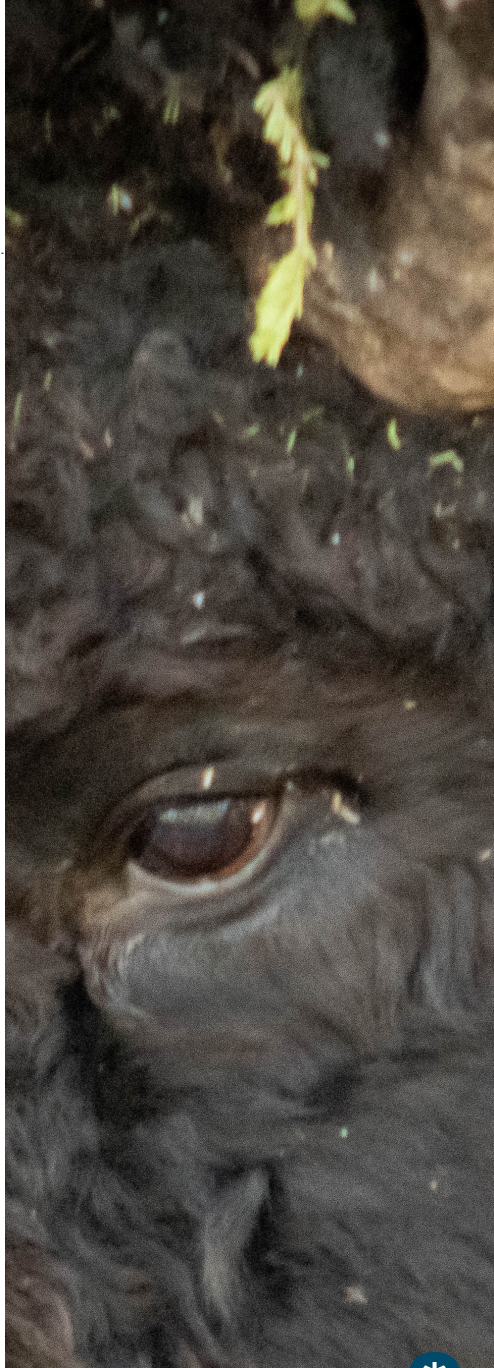
Some respondents also questioned why there was not more language surrounding topics such as the economy and the history of Wood Buffalo, while there were additional concerns surrounding overuse of words such as resilient, community, thrive, connect, and sustainability.

Goals

Respondents to the goals were largely supportive of the overall direction but called into question the absence of some previous directions that were included in the 2011 MDP. These included the removal of “working together” and perceived lack of inclusion of history. Ensuring that a broader definition of diversity is employed was also raised by several members of the Steering Committee concerned that the draft goals do not address aspects of diversity such as sexual orientation, disability, or other elements. The need for reconciliation and Indigenous relations to be pulled out was also identified in both meetings as something that needed to be revised in the final MDP.

Big Moves

Some respondents questioned the wisdom behind confirming downtown as the heart of Wood Buffalo, while others were wholly supportive of this initiative. Again, the strategic alignment between the Blue and Green Networks and the Downtown revitalization were noticed and appreciated, although some respondents also cautioned against creating waterfronts that residents unwittingly “love to death” due to how popular they may become.



*
“FOCUSING ON PEOPLE AND
COMMUNITY IS INTERESTING -
IT MAKES SO SENSE,
BUT IS SUCH A BIG MOVE FOR
THIS PLAN.”

-Steering Committee

Public Engagement

The Project Team held two virtual open houses as well as maintaining an online survey, discussion forum, and Q&A platform. These platforms for public participation yielded a considerable array of perspectives from Wood Buffalo residents young and old, allowing anyone in the Region to review the draft MDP components in detail, learn about them through informative webinar videos, and provide their opinions to the Project Team.

The virtual open houses had a combined 51 people in attendance, with an additional 69 people viewing these open houses online after they completed. The online components garnered significant attention, with over 927 participants engaging with the engagement website. Over 35 Q & A questions were posed over the month of February, as well as four distinct forum topics opened, and over 180 surveys initiated.

Key themes emerging from this public engagement included:

- › Significant **support for the Blue and Green Network**, particularly along the waterfront in downtown Fort McMurray.
- › Appreciation for shifting the MDP from accommodating growth to **focusing on people and the community**.
- › **Questioning the use of "forever"** in the vision statement.
- › Support for **economic diversification**, but a desire to see more details.
- › Support for the **inclusion of Indigenous considerations** in the proposed components.



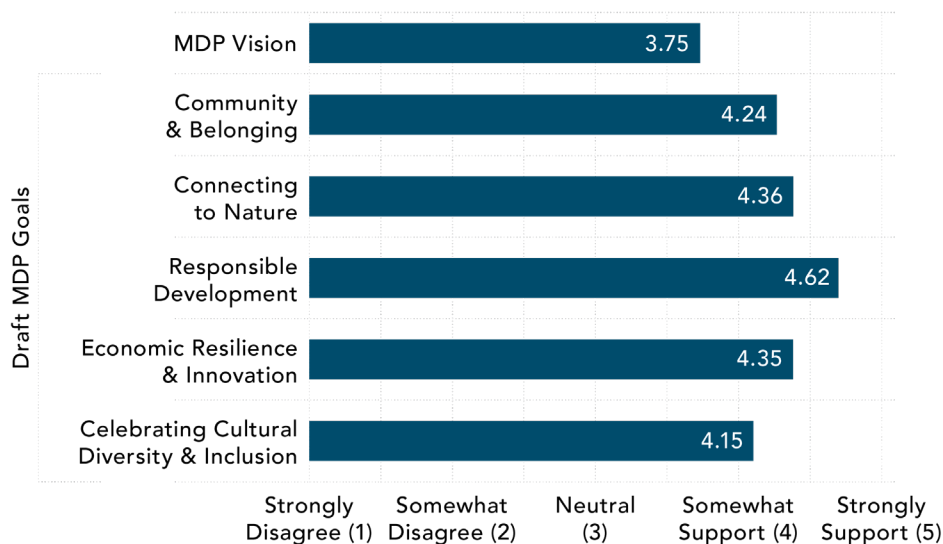
Online Survey

FEBRUARY 1 TO 28, 2021

Vision

The word “forever” was strongly rebuffed, with respondents indicating the word “stay” already implies people remaining in Wood Buffalo, and stating that “forever” implies something far more sinister than the vision was actually trying to convey. Some respondents also argued that the proposed vision is somewhat stale or overused, and should be rewritten with a focus on emphasizing a unique Wood Buffalo perspective.

Figure 4. Online survey results for the draft Vision and Goals.



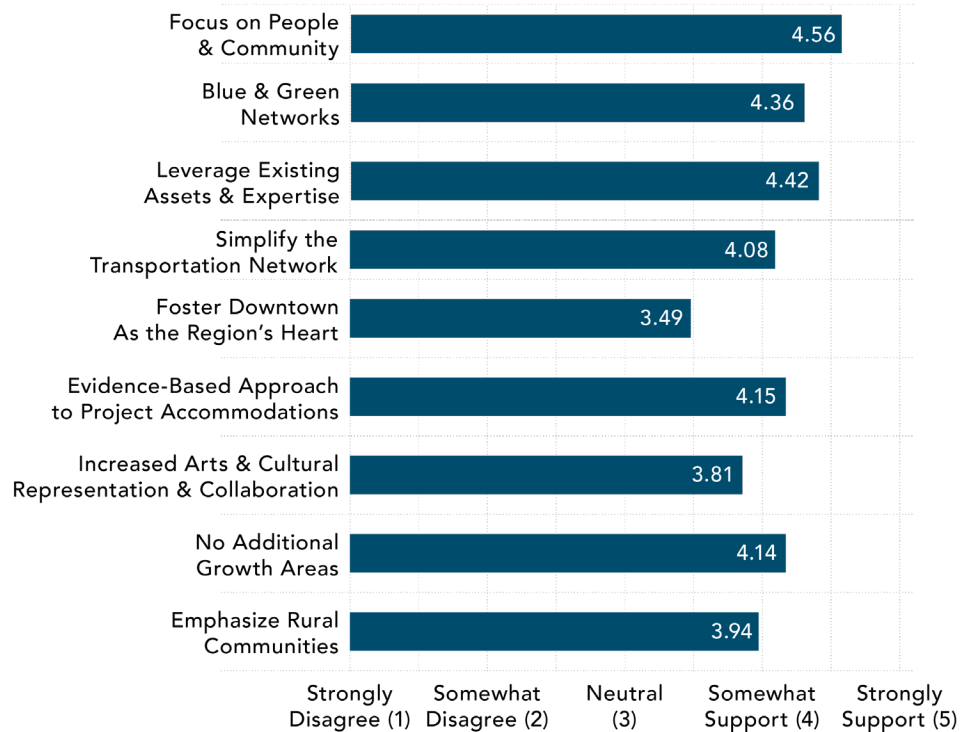
Goals

Diversification was the most frequently raised point when responding to the goals, as respondents were keen to see direct policies and actions that would help provide a broader economic base for the region. Ensuring the Municipality is coordinated in its efforts to attract new jobs, create new employment sectors, and support its existing industries was identified as significantly important in the goals section.

Connecting to Nature was identified by many respondents as a natural home for some of this economic diversification. An expanded ability to access and benefit from Wood Buffalo’s wilderness was seen as a means to both improve the quality of life for locals while also providing more reasons for outsiders to visit and experience all that Wood Buffalo has to offer.



Figure 5. Online survey results for the draft Big Moves.



Big Moves

Respondents to the big moves section of the survey placed considerable emphasis on needing to address flooding issues first and foremost as part of supporting downtown and developing a blue and green network. Consistent with findings from Stakeholders and Rural and Indigenous partners, the Blue and Green Network were again heavily supported by respondents, although some commenters raised concerns related to safety when human-wildlife conflict invariably occurs on trails.

Arts and culture were contentious issues, as some respondents challenged the notion that these were areas worthy of investment. However, the majority of respondents viewed increasing arts and cultural representation and collaboration favourably.

Transportation issues throughout the Region were also consistently raised, with respondents interested in seeing expansion to the transportation network, an alternate highway around downtown, and more options for accessing industrial sites north of Fort McMurray.

Land Use Concepts

All land use concepts were generally well supported by respondents. Beyond minor mapping amendments, most comments received related to the provision of additional lands for parks, residential development, and business development, while floods and environmental concerns were also raised for most waterfront communities. The need to ensure First Nations and Métis partners are engaged and involved in the finalization of these concepts was also clearly articulated.

The following provides more detailed summaries for those land use concepts that received substantial comments.

Fort McMurray

Respondents to the Fort McMurray land use map were overwhelmingly supportive of the proposed concept, albeit some concerns related to the perceived lack of park space and oversupply of residential lands were raised. A need for greater transportation connectivity throughout Fort McMurray was also noted.



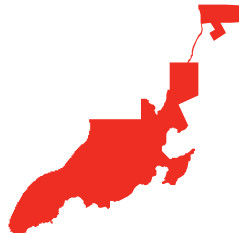
Conklin

Most respondents were supportive of the proposed Conklin land use concept. Outstanding concerns included a perceived lack of industrial lands and readily available land for development.



Fort Chipewyan

Respondents were supportive of the Fort Chipewyan land use concept, although the need for the Municipality to play a stronger role in providing serviced and developable lots was raised by several individuals.



Fort McKay

Respondents to the Fort McKay land use concept identified concerns with the ability of the community to support such a large community core area, as well as perceived challenges that may arise from developing all lands identified for development in the land use concept without engaging with the Municipality.





Rural and Urban Virtual Open Houses

FEBRUARY 10 & 18, 2021

Overall

The rural and urban virtual open houses garnered substantial feedback from the participating audience members, with most questions seeking clarification to certain components. Questions surrounding approaches to nature and how the MDP will consider protecting and preserving natural assets while expanding access to the wilderness were common. There was also a focus on ensuring the arts are recognized and supported independent of the Region's many recreational assets.

There were limited questions specific to the urban area asked in the Urban Open House, but the Rural Open House saw several questions posed asking for clarifications to policy approaches to various communities. The development intent for Draper, all-season access and economic development in Fort Chipewyan, and empowering economic development and population growth in Anzac were all raised during this open house.

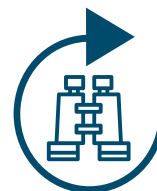
The open houses also provided an opportunity for the Project Team to clarify the role of the MDP and how it inter-relates with other municipal plans and policy documents. There were many questions asked in relation to the ongoing Land Use Bylaw update project and Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan project, and participants were clear that they expected to see strong alignment and agreement with all of these documents moving forward.



Key Findings

Overall, there were several central themes that emerged consistently across public, stakeholder, Council, Administration, and Indigenous community engagements. These themes can be broadly grouped by the draft components they respond to (i.e. the draft vision, goals, big moves, and land use concepts). While each component had clear themes emerge across all groups, there were also sometimes tensions between various stakeholders, rural and Indigenous partners, the public, or Council and Administration. This section summarizes these findings by component, identifying areas of general consensus that will be incorporated into the new draft MDP, while also discussing the areas of disagreement that must be contemplated as the draft MDP is prepared.

The most consistent themes revolved around greater inclusion of reconciliation with Indigenous communities, a need to rethink the way the draft vision is conveyed and articulating a clear path forward for each goal identified in the plan. Beyond these core themes, there were several other key findings that arose from the many different discussions that occurred throughout Phase 2 engagement.



Vision

The draft vision was controversial, as its spirit and intent were broadly supported, but the language used to convey it was almost universally questioned. Going forward, it will be important for the revised vision to capture the idea of “forever” without coming across in an unbecoming manner.

There was also considerable support for the supporting text included with the draft vision, although there were some considerations that could be added, such as references to the history and economy of Wood Buffalo.

Goals

A sixth goal for reconciliation with Indigenous communities was consistently raised as a necessary course of action given the Municipality’s ongoing commitment to reconciliation and building stronger relationships with the Region’s First Nations and Métis communities. This goal could further define the ongoing relationship the Municipality will commit to, as well as laying a framework for addressing the calls to action identified by the Municipality.

Many respondents also raised concerns about excessive overlap and ambiguity between how the culture and belonging components of the goals were presented. Ensuring the goals are refined and presented in a way that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of each in the final MDP is necessary so that they will both come through clearly. By better framing how each goal operates, the MDP will ultimately provide a stronger base for each to be implemented in full.

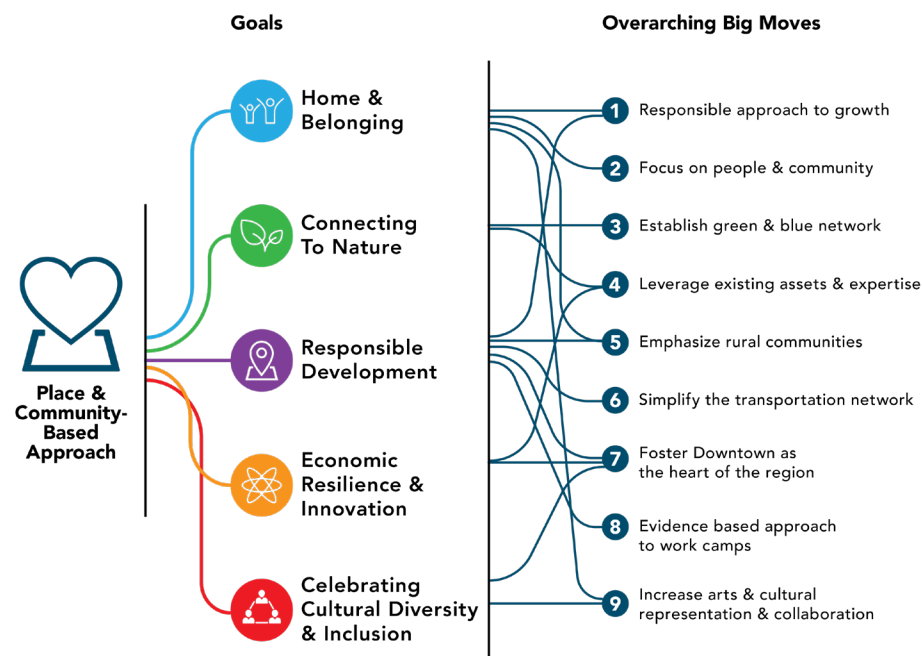


Figure 6. The draft Goals must be refined to include reconciliation with Indigenous communities, as well as for greater overall clarity.



Big Moves

The big moves represent the largest area where changes to the final MDP will arise. The overwhelming support for the Blue and Green Network expressed across almost all engaged groups indicates that this policy directive should take on a larger role in the new MDP and be viewed as a catalyst for several other plan objectives. These could include the incorporation of language surrounding support for exploring new tourism development opportunities on Crown Land such as lakefront resort developments and private hinterland cabins, and waterfront improvement and flood mitigation efforts in the downtown of Fort McMurray and throughout the region.



More broadly, there is a necessary impetus to ensure the new MDP is closely aligned with the Place Brand Strategy and reflects the language and messaging introduced by this Strategy to the greatest extent possible while still fulfilling its role as a guiding document of the Municipality. This is particularly relevant and pressing as it relates to economic development matters but extends to the very look and feel of the MDP itself.



Lastly, it is important for the MDP to clearly articulate its intentions for improving communications between the Municipality and stakeholders, rural communities, and rural and Indigenous partners throughout Wood Buffalo. The Municipality has made great strides since 2011, but it is imperative that the new MDP re-affirm these commitments and improve upon the work already being done.



Land Use Concepts

While not all engaged groups directly provided comments on the land use concepts, substantial feedback was garnered over the course of Phase 2 engagement. This feedback has provided a clear way forward for the land use concepts that includes:

- › Adding certain aspirational highway projects, understanding that they will require senior levels of government to help fund and support.
- › Including First Nation reserve and Indigenous-owned or leased lands on separate maps from the Regional Growth Concept.
- › Adding additional neighbourhood cores to Fort McMurray.
- › Revising the colour and symbology choices used in the draft maps.
- › Cleaning up minor issues and outliers identified by various stakeholders throughout engagement.



Next Steps

The feedback received during Phase 2 has provided the Project Team with invaluable perspectives on the draft vision, goals, and big policy moves proposed for the draft MDP. The insights shared by the residents of Wood Buffalo have helped identify key findings that should be incorporated into the final draft MDP, including:

- › Refining the vision statement to capture the essence of “staying forever” in a more inclusive and welcoming manner.
- › Introducing a sixth goal for reconciliation with Indigenous communities.
- › Ensuring goals are not repetitious, and have clear directions associated with them.
- › Highlighting the blue and green network more clearly as a defining big move of the new MDP.
- › Emphasizing the need for continued and improved communication between the RMWB and rural and Indigenous communities.
- › Ensuring alignment between various other economic development initiatives in the Region, and the new Place Brand Strategy as appropriate.
- › Starting conversations with the Province around opening up Crown Land for cabin development.



Thank you for your participation!

Your feedback is essential for the creation and refinement of the new RMWB Municipal Development Plan. The findings from this round of engagement will directly inform the development of the new MDP.

The MDP is scheduled to be finalized May 2021, when the public and stakeholders will be invited to review the document and provide feedback prior to consideration by Council.

Stay informed

Visit rmwb.ca/mdp to sign up for email project updates and learn about future project milestones and opportunities to engage.



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**