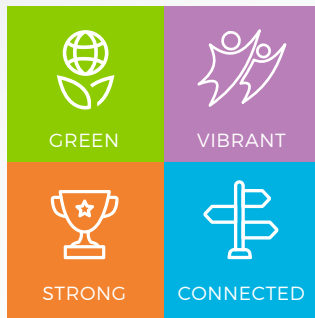


December 2018



**my****mh**  
MEDICINE HAT MASTER PLAN

# Public & stakeholder feedback summary

Summary of feedback from phase one public engagement regarding an updated Municipal Development Plan for Medicine Hat.



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# Introduction

## What is an MDP?

A community plan is about who we are as a city and what we want our common future to be. Officially known as a **Municipal Development Plan (MDP)**, it is a document which outlines a long-range vision for the future development of a city, town or rural municipality.

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) requires every community in Alberta to have an MDP, and due to complex changes which inevitably happen over time, such plans need regular re-visioning.



## A new shared vision

Medicine Hat's current MDP was adopted in 2012. Circumstances in Medicine Hat have changed significantly since then, so it is time for a fresh outlook.

The updated MDP, **myMH**, will result in a new 30-year citywide plan to be adopted in 2019. The goals are to create a plan that reflects the shared vision of the community, and to put in place effective and practical policies to help create a more prosperous, livable and sustainable city.

The Plan will be devised by taking community input and looking for opportunities to incorporate that input into strategies and initiatives. Feedback gathered from Medicine Hat residents, business owners and organizations will be combined with City Council's priorities and staff research to create a shared vision of the future.

## Listening to the community

Building ongoing engagement with the public and stakeholders is essential to ensure that the Plan reflects the concerns and aspirations of the community.

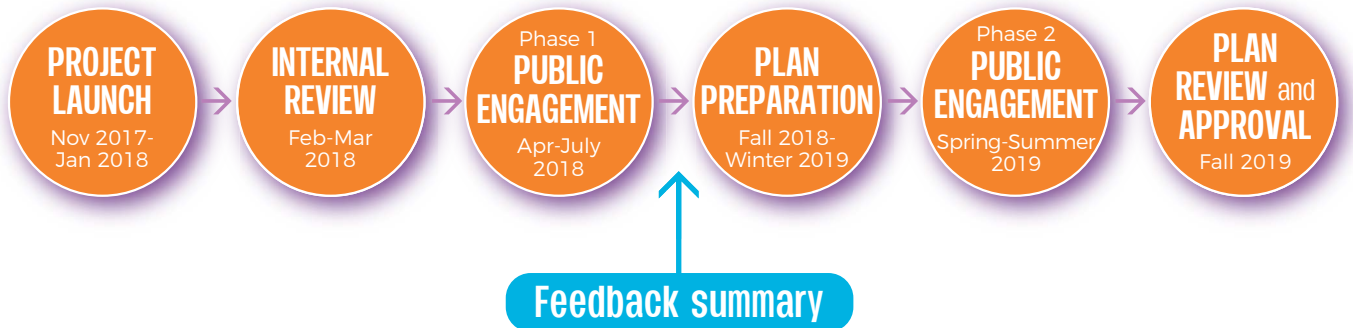
Phase one of engagement with the public began in the fall of 2017 and came to a close in the summer of 2018.

## The intent of this report

This report will:

- Provide a synopsis of the methods which were used to reach out to community;
- Summarize the feedback received;
- Provide some ways of incorporating that feedback into strategies and policies in the updated MDP; and
- Indicate the next steps of the **myMH** project.

## Project schedule



## Public engagement key numbers

**3** Community-lead kitchen table conversations

**7** Stakeholder group sessions

**30** Advisory group forum attendees

**62** Idea tags provided by attendees

**107** Surveys completed

**172** Open house attendees

**200+** Photo contest entries

**400+** Trade show booth attendees

**3000+** Website views



## How participation was encouraged

In order to receive broad and inclusive feedback for the drafting of the Plan, the **myMH** team made significant efforts to reach out to the citizens of Medicine Hat. The **myMH** team is committed to embodying the guidelines of the City's Public Participation Policy in all public engagement endeavours.

Below is a summary of methods used to encourage participation from stakeholders and the general public.



### Advisory boards and committees:

#### Presentation at Municipal Planning Commission (MPC)

Open to the public, staff introduced the **myMH** project to the MPC and highlighted some of Medicine Hat's long-term challenges and opportunities. Discussion involved growth projections, potential future climate changes, aging infrastructure and being adaptable to new technologies.

#### Discussion with the Advisory Committee on Disability Issues

A mini-workshop was held with the ACDI, resulting in interesting discussions and well-considered ideas posted by the group on "I imagine" cards.

#### Workshop with Advisory Group Forum

The **myMH** team met with the Youth Advisory Board, the Social Development Advisory Board, Arts & Heritage Advisory Board and the Urban Environment and Recreation Advisory Board in a workshop designed to generate ideas. "Cardstorming" provided everyone with an overview of elements of the Plan, and allowed attendees to focus their thoughts and write down their ideas.

### Stakeholder sessions:

#### Environmental groups

Groups participating: SEAWA (South East Alberta Watershed Alliance) and Grasslands Naturalists. The groups shared initiatives and goals with City staff, and the importance of incorporating policies within the Plan to preserve and protect natural spaces.

## How participation was encouraged, cont.

### Canadian Home Builders Association

Presentation and discussion was held with the Canadian Home Builders Association concerning future demographics and city structure, as well as the potential for significant changes in the types of housing which will be in demand in coming decades.

### Medicine Hat Construction Association

Session topics involved items of importance to the local construction professionals regarding the long-range future of Medicine Hat, including how population and demographics will likely change, and the city's aging infrastructure.



### Business Advocacy Committee

This session with the Chamber of Commerce Business Advocacy Committee introduced the **myMH** project to the local business community. Items discussed included Plan alignment with the IDP, Medicine Hat's future demographic shift, emerging trends and the future sustainability of the retail sector.

### Urban Development Industry Committee

Presentation of the **myMH** project to another Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce Committee, with a focus on the development industry.

## General public events and opportunities:

### Fall Home & Leisure Show booth

With about 400 visitors to the **myMH** booth over the weekend, it was an effective way to launch the project and raise awareness about the need for public input. With about 400 visitors to the booth, it was a good chance for staff to talk to 'Hatters about the project and hear their "big ideas". A free draw was held, with a prize consisting of a "big pack" of locally made items.

### Public survey

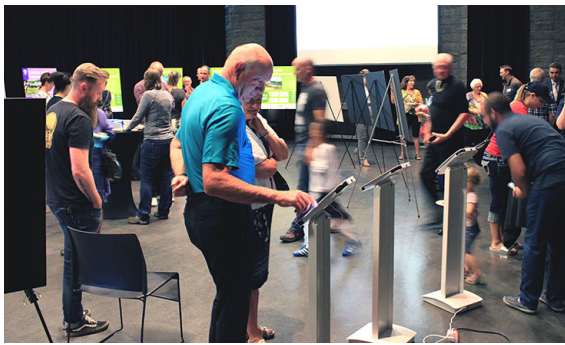
Open from June 12 to July 31, 2018, people could participate online, via hardcopy, or on iPads which were set up at the two sessions below. Additional hardcopies were provided to the Strathcona Centre.

### Community engagement session 1

Open to the public, dozens of 'Hatters (of all ages and interests) dropped by to learn about the **myMH** Plan and talk with the team. The displays were arranged in groups

## How participation was encouraged, cont.

reflecting the key principles: Green city, Strong city, Vibrant city and Connected city. Many people shared their ideas at the "imagine-station", and participated in the public survey. Following the event, the displays were made available for download on the project website.



### Community engagement session 2

Intentionally located at a different venue from the first, crowds of interested people showed up to see the preliminary direction for the **myMH** Plan and to share their thoughts. The imagine-station received plenty of traffic, with plenty of folks posting their visions for the city's long-range future.



### My Big Picture photo contest.

To help raise awareness and to encourage involvement, a photo contest was held from November 2017 to June 2018. Participants were encouraged to share their visions of Medicine Hat. Prizes of City gift cards were awarded for best photo overall, best of month, and best of category, with a special category for entrants 14 and under. Pop-up displays showing the winning photos were set up in public spaces during the summer.

### Kitchen table conversation and cardstorming toolkits

Interested citizens/stakeholders were invited to organize their own small group meetings to discuss their own ideas for Medicine Hat's future vision. A "toolkit" package was created and made available online, providing participants with guidelines and tips. "Cardstorming" is group-based brainstorming with sets of custom-made cards to generate and record ideas. As a tie-in with kitchen table conversations, a toolkit for cardstorming was made available online for interested members of the public.

## How participation was encouraged, cont.

### Media:

#### Internet

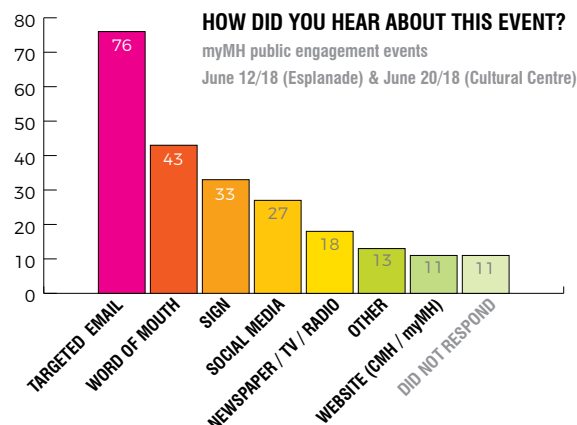
To reach a wider range of people, a separate **myMH** website was created and regularly updated, in addition to a webpage created for the City's website. The City's home page regularly featured **myMH** promo banners, encouraging visitors to attend an event, enter the photo contest, do the online survey, or host their own kitchen table conversation.

#### Targeted email

To connect with the broad spectrum of local community groups and associations, invitations were emailed directly to coordinators and members prior to both **myMH** community engagement sessions. Approximately 800 individuals were contacted via email, and the types of groups included recreational, sports, First Nations, faith-based, educational, arts, cultural, professional, environmental, science, service clubs, social support organizations, and previous **myMH** event attendees who gave their consent.

#### City media release

The City's Corporate Communications Department prepared a media release which was posted to the City's website and distributed via the City's online "e-notification" system. All local media receive these releases, as well as hundreds of individual subscribers. This release occurred in June 2018, prior to the community engagement sessions.



#### Social media

A Twitter account was launched by staff in conjunction with the **myMH** website, to which updates and interesting bits of information were posted. A number of YouTube videos were posted to the **myMH** website, offering varying perspectives on creating better cities. In addition, The City's Corporate Communications Department prepared dozens of posts to both the City's Twitter and Facebook accounts, including notices regarding the online survey, upcoming events, and photo contest.

#### Outdoor signage

Several weeks prior to the community engagement events, portable signs were positioned in five high-traffic locations throughout the city, to encourage people to attend a public event.

#### Local radio, TV and newspaper

Media outlets interviewed City staff on three separate occasions, which resulted in additional awareness of the **myMH** project and the need for public input.





# What we heard

## What we heard about the Plan's general direction:

### 1 - We are generally on the right track.

- The major challenges that were identified (infrastructure renewal, climate change, and disruptive technology) resonate with the majority of people to some degree.
- The "Triple Bottom Line" approach to achieving a resilient and sustainable community (i.e. is it good for people, the economy, and the environment?) that was outlined in the Plan vision to deal with these challenges was well received.

### 2 - Everything looks and sounds great, but...

- *How does this impact me personally?* Because of the high level nature of the Plan vision and guiding principles, the personal impact was not always apparent.
- *How much is that going to cost me?* There was concern about the ability of the city to accomplish the goals identified within its financial means. The goals were typically viewed as new costs, when in reality many are intended as cost-saving measures.
- *Too many goals?* There was skepticism that we can accomplish all of the goals identified. Some people also felt that we should be focusing more effort on goals that are geared towards a municipality.

# So what now?

## Ways to consider this feedback:

- 1 - **Continue to use Triple Bottom Line approach** – This approach was well received and is an effective tool for evaluating all aspects of the Plan to ensure the vision is achieved
- 2 - **Planning within our means** – The Plan will try to prioritize pragmatic approaches to identified issues. Recognizing that we are within a *Financially Fit* environment will be reflected within the policies.
- 3 - **Stay focused on core city activities** - The Plan will narrow the focus to issues that are within the typical jurisdiction of a municipality.
- 4 - **Target the short term** - The Plan will place more emphasis on short-term, practical and cost-effective measures, while retaining the long-term vision.



# What we heard

## What we heard about City design and land use:

- 1 - **It is necessary that our neighbourhoods evolve.**
  - Many people value the benefits that come with an increasingly dense city (e.g. lower taxes, better services, increased opportunities).
  - People still want the opportunity to have a larger lot within the city to build a single family home.
  - A diverse spectrum of housing opportunities will be needed, including accessible and affordable options.
- 2 - **A dense, vibrant, and mixed use City Centre is very important.**
  - People feel the river front is an underutilized asset and is an advantage of the Downtown.
  - The arts and cultural scene should be further encouraged and concentrated within the Downtown.
  - An increase in the housing opportunities is needed in the Downtown and surrounding neighbourhoods.
  - The railway is a significant barrier and has a negative impact.
- 3 - **Preserving natural areas is important.**
  - People enjoy our natural areas, especially when they can explore them on trails.
  - Protection of the local wildlife was a key concern of many people.

# So what now?

## Ways to consider this feedback:

- 1 - **Focus on increased density in key locations** – The city's main roadways and select commercial areas can accommodate an increase in density due to the existing infrastructure and services in place. Population increases in strategic locations can dramatically improve our operational efficiency and financial position as a city.
- 2 - **Increase the diversity of housing opportunities** – A diverse range of housing opportunities improves the desirability of our community. Housing availability and affordability is a major consideration in the quality of life of our residents. It is also a Medicine Hat advantage that we can offer reasonable lot sizes for single family homes.
- 3 - **Capitalize on existing advantages of the City Centre** – The city's success depends largely on the success of the City Centre. It is ideally situated and can benefit from improvements to the river frontage, further concentration of major community facilities, and increased focus as a cultural hub.
- 4 - **Increase the population of the City Centre** – An increase in the population density of the City Centre will create a critical mass of people that will support key services, cultural life, and encourage businesses Downtown.
- 5 - **Improve our protection of natural areas** – By focusing on the protection of the river valley and coulee network, we can achieve many goals such as protecting wildlife habitat, reducing risk to development, and creating an expansive low-impact and affordable recreational trail network.



# What we heard

## What we heard about City infrastructure and services:

- 1 - Use responsible and transparent fiscal planning, especially on major projects
- 2 - People want to see more opportunities for healthy and active forms of transportation (walking, cycling).
- 3 - Maintain the transit system, but encourage innovation.
  - The public views the City's transit system as critical to mobility.
  - More innovative measures are needed to improve the user experience.
  - Be aware of, and open to future changes in technology, e.g. automated vehicles, ride-sharing, etc.
- 4 - More indoor recreational facilities, to offer year-round activities to get people "off the couch".
- 5 - Continued expansion of leisure trail network (increased connectivity of green spaces & other destinations).
- 6 - Protect and conserve the water supply.
  - People are concerned about the security of our long-term water supply.
  - Many would prefer more native and drought-resistant vegetation in parks.
- 7 - Encourage support programs for vulnerable community members.
  - Many people feel that the support programs have a substantial benefit to the community.
- 8 - Increase solid waste diversion.
  - Increase public awareness of the City's recycling program.
  - Many people suggested the addition of a City composting program to further reduce household waste.

## So what now?

### Ways to integrate this feedback:

- 1 - **Pedestrian-priority network** - Adjust standards to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists are considered first in the design of roadways, parks and neighbourhoods.
- 2 - **Optimize the transit system** - Look for methods to optimize the user experience while reducing costs.
- 3 - **Consolidate recreation facilities into multi-use centres** - Improve the efficiency and quality of recreational facilities, while considering access to all residents.
- 4 - **Modify "passive park" standards** - Reduce the number of costly small manicured parks; transition to naturalized corridors.
- 5 - **Adapt the City's fostering of external social support entities** - Look for opportunities to raise local awareness and encourage philanthropy towards social support entities, while allowing the groups operational autonomy.
- 6 - **Continue moving forward with expanded waste diversion** - Build on the success of the recycling bins and explore the option of residential compostable waste bins and other waste diversion opportunities.

11 of 13



# What we heard

## What we heard about **economic development**:

- 1 - **Be a business-friendly city; explore targeted incentives for private business. *Jobs, jobs, jobs!***
  - Be aggressive in encouraging businesses and corporations to locate in the city.
  - Offer incentives to encourage existing businesses to stay.
- 2 - **Have programs at Medicine Hat College that are well-suited to needs of local industries.**
  - Many people feel this is effective in keeping young people in the city after their post-secondary education.
- 3 - **Encourage tourism proactively and rigorously.**
  - Many people feel that a thriving arts and cultural scene would boost the local economy and draw tourists, especially to the Downtown core.
  - Capitalize on the historic elements of the area to attract more tourism.
- 4 - **Deter vacant buildings and absentee landlords by taking tough punitive action against the property owners.**

# So what now?

## Ways to integrate this feedback:

- 1 - **Local business retention and expansion** - Fostering a more competitive business environment that serves the needs of existing business and industry by attracting and retaining labour and investment. Retaining and Expanding our local businesses is the most important lever for economic growth.
- 2 - **Engage Cluster industries** - Investing in development of the region's industry clusters, engines that drive economic growth and create a value proposition for investment attraction.
- 3 - **Collaborating for a competitive growth economy** - Nurturing a multifaceted, holistic approach that includes a multitude of stakeholders and agencies engaged in collaborative bottom-up planning. Focused on creating competitive business environments that grow local industry clusters and spur investment from within.
- 4 - **Fostered collaboration** - City-sponsored events which connect college faculty and students with local corporate and industry leaders could be a powerful way to "bring all players to the table" and establish collaboration and alliances.
- 5 - **Visitor services** - Local councils play an important role in determining the level and quality of visitor services and infrastructure availability, the events that take place and the public money that is invested in destination promotion, all of which support local tourism.
- 6 - **Building the experience** - City government may also support local experiences which attract visitors, such as events, festivals, museums and art galleries, benefitting both visitors and residents. Enhanced local amenities which help attract visitors can also make the host city a great place to live, benefitting industries other than tourism.





## Major take-aways

What does a future vision of Medicine Hat look like to our participants?

- A healthy and active city, with expanded trails and lots of incentive to get “off the couch”.
- An inclusive community with a focus on safety and wellness for all of its citizens.
- Progressive, business-friendly atmosphere with good job opportunities.
- City government that is focused on responsible and transparent fiscal planning.
- Diversity of housing, with options for all choices, ages and income levels.
- Attractive features to entice young residents and strengthen tourism.
- Vibrant Downtown core with business, housing, arts and well-integrated river recreation.
- Density in developable areas to reduce overall taxes.
- Protection of natural areas, water supply and wildlife.
- Efficient, innovative transit system.
- Robust City recycling programs.
- Commitment to triple bottom line: Good for people, the economy and the environment.

## Next steps

### Growth management strategy

Categorize all areas of the city into distinct zones, ranging from rural to city core. This will establish built elements, amenities and service levels which are appropriate and most cost-effective for each zone. An external planning consultant will be retained to assist. This will be a key feature in the preparation of the draft MDP, which will continue through the winter of 2019.

### Check in with public: how are we doing?

Additional public/stakeholder engagement will occur during spring and summer of 2019 to ensure that the draft MDP is aligning with the community's collective vision.

### Finalizing the Plan

Final version of the MDP will be drafted and reviewed internally during the fall of 2019, with the goal of reaching Plan approval and adoption by the end of the year.

# ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY p.1

(2020 only)

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT



**2900+**

TOTAL WEBSITE  
VISITS



**1400+**

VIDEO VIEWS



**50**

DOWNLOADS OF  
DRAFT PLAN



**19**

EMAILED QUESTIONS  
& TEAM RESPONSES



**112**

SURVEY RESPONSES



**10**

Q&A's WITH STAKEHOLDER  
GROUPS & ADVISORY BOARDS



**32**

DOWNLOADS OF PUBLIC  
ENGAGEMENT DISPLAYS



**1500+**

SOCIAL MEDIA DRIVEN  
WEBSITE VISITS

## OTHER ENGAGEMENT



**SURVEY  
RESULTS**

in brief



**4**

MEDIA STORIES &  
COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS



**3**

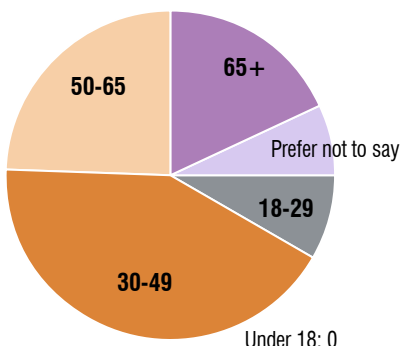
NEWSPAPER ADS  
PUBLISHED



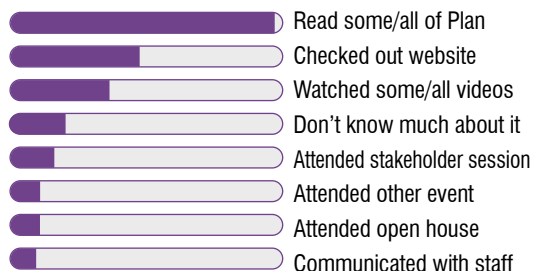
**3**

PAPER DRAFT PLANS &  
SURVEYS DELIVERED

**What is your age?**



**How familiar are you with the Plan?**



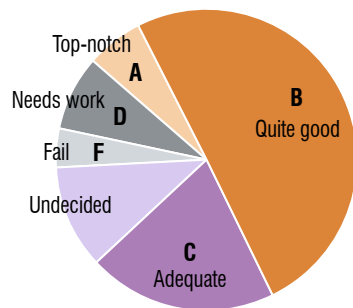
**Rank the importance  
of the five strategic  
goals of the Plan.**

- 1** Strong Economy
- 2** Livable Neighbourhoods
- 3** Efficient Public Services
- 4** Vibrant Downtown
- 5** Environmental Stewardship

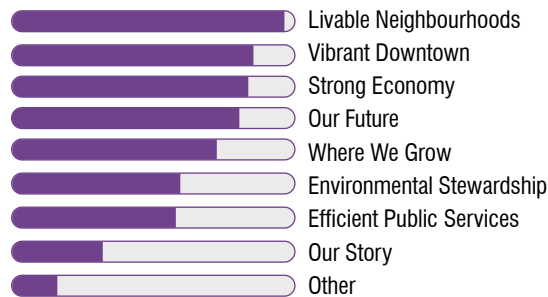
# ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY p.2

(2020 only)

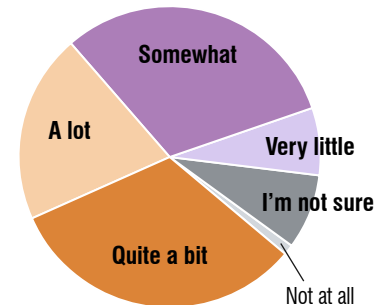
**If you were to give the Plan an overall grade, what would it be?**



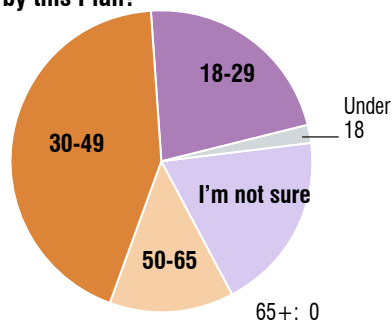
**Which part(s) of the Plan interested you the most?**



**How much will the goals, priorities and policies of this Plan affect you personally, or your business/organization?**



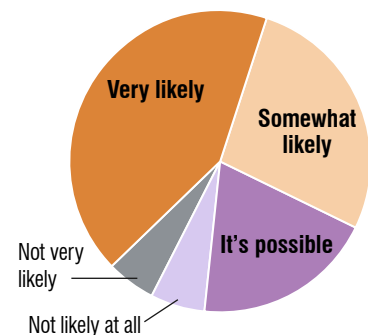
**Of current citizens, which age group do you think will be most affected by this Plan?**



**What is the one aspect of the Plan that City Council should prioritize over the next few years?**

- 1 Strong economy / jobs
- 2 Vibrant Downtown
- 3 Waterfront development
- 4 Environment
- 5 Public services / transit
- 6 Livable neighbourhoods

**How likely are you to tell others about the myMH Plan?**



## RECOMMENDED PLAN MODIFICATIONS based on feedback



**Facilitate enhanced internet connectivity within our city as an economic driver.**

- incorporate Smart City Technology into city operations;
- coordinate with service providers for next generation information technology infrastructure (e.g. 5G, fibre);
- minimize visual impact of infrastructure (e.g. cell towers).



**Addition of policy regarding creation of a Social and Cultural Plan**

(similar to Parks & Recreation Plan p. 45 and Transportation Plan pg. 26).



**Addition of policy to enhance protection of the top and bottom of slopes.**

- create additional setbacks from coulees based on biophysical, geotechnical, and public access;
- create single loaded streets on edges of coulees where feasible (e.g. McCutcheon Drive).