

**County of Grande Prairie
Municipal Development Plan**



Phase 3 Public Engagement Summary

July 2025



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Executive Summary

To continue growing in a way that meets the needs of our community in the long-term, the County of Grande Prairie is reviewing and updating the plans, bylaws, strategies, and guidelines that shape local development. The project is called Plan Your County, and it began in 2023 with work on the County's first Hamlet Resiliency Strategy (HRS) and a review of the current Municipal Development Plan (MDP).

In the Spring of 2024, County staff conducted the second phase of consultation for the Municipal Development Plan review. This phase of consultation focused on the criteria used for considering proposals for Country Residential and Rural Industrial Development, as well as the Future Land Use Concept. Residents were able to participate by coming to one of the workshops or completing the workbook.

In the spring of 2025, County staff conducted the third phase of consultation for the Municipal Development Plan review. This phase of consultation asked the public and other participants for feedback on the draft update document. This phase included interviews with Councillors to get input on policy directions related to managing growth. It also included public information sessions where residents could get an overview of the update, ask questions and provide feedback. Lastly, it included engagement with technical participants through a formal circulation process and individual meetings.

Council

All members of Council were engaged in one-on-one interviews to gather feedback on key policy directions in the draft MDP, particularly those related to growth management, agricultural land preservation, and community development. These conversations helped ensure alignment between the revised plan and Council's long-term vision for the County.

Public Participants

Three in-person public information sessions were held in Hythe, La Glace, and Teepee Creek. These sessions were offered in a drop-in format, attendees could leave written comments directly on the boards or send additional feedback by email. Two virtual sessions were also held for those unable to attend in person, offering a live presentation and opportunities for questions and discussion.

Technical Participants

Key internal departments, regional municipalities, provincial agencies, and utility providers were engaged through formal circulation and one-on-one meetings. These technical stakeholders reviewed draft policies and provided feedback on matters such as infrastructure capacity, land use compatibility, and regulatory alignment.

Next Steps

The feedback gathered in this phase will be used to refine the draft and create the final version that will be presented to Council for consideration through a Public Hearing.

Engagement Approach

Project Overview

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is the primary policy document that provides long-term guidelines and policy direction for the future growth and development within the County of Grande Prairie. The MDP guides the policy direction for other planning documents, such as Area Structure Plans, and the Land Use Bylaw.

In the first phase of consultation, participants were asked to provide input on their priorities for the MDP and their thoughts on the Goals and Objectives of the plan.

In the second phase of consultation, participants were asked to provide input on the criteria used to evaluate the suitability of locations for Rural Industrial and Country Residential development, and to provide input on the Future Land Use Concept.

In this phase of consultation, participants were asked to review the draft Municipal Development Plan and provide their comments on the updated policies that were added or changed. This includes reviewing policy directions related to growth management, environmental protection, land use compatibility, infrastructure, and economic development. The County is seeking feedback on how well the revised policies reflect community values and address key issues raised in earlier phases of consultation.

PHASE 1 | The public was engaged on what matters
Spring 2023 most to them in the County.

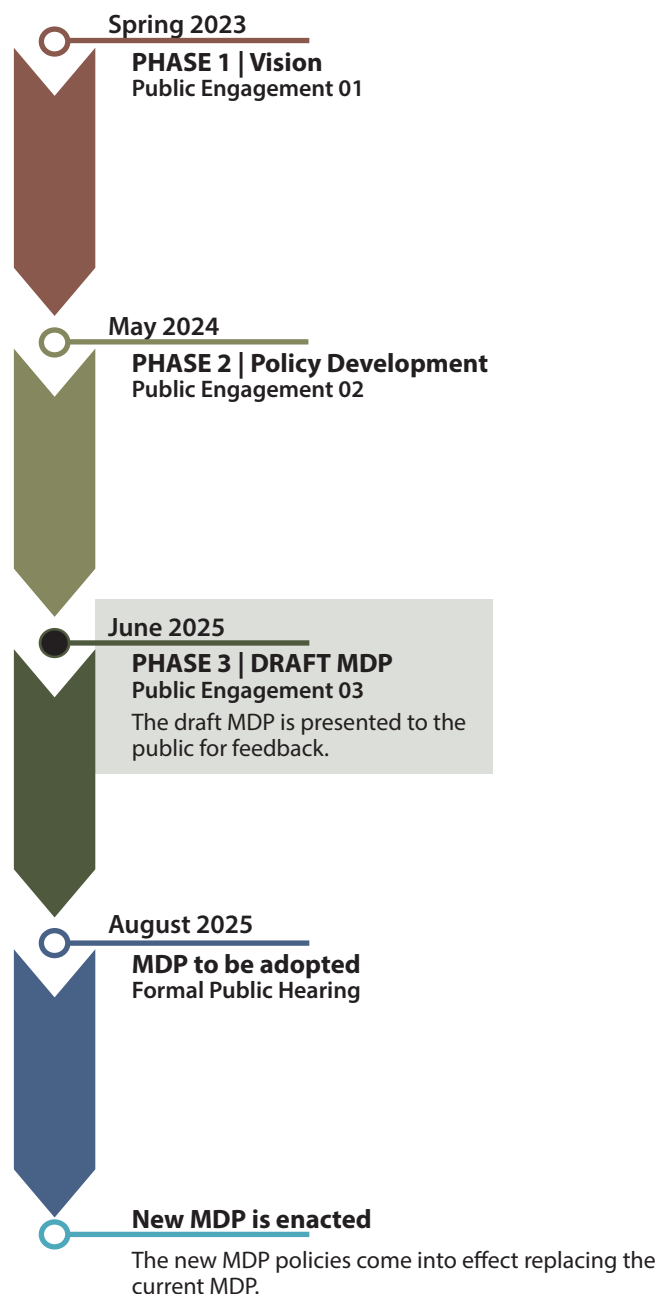
PHASE 2 | The public was engaged on different policy
May 2024 topics in the MDP.

PHASE 3 | Feedback is being used to refine the draft
June 2025 MDP before it goes to Council.

PHASE 3 | A formal Public Hearing will be held where
August 2025 residents can submit comments or speak directly to Council.

Timeline

The project is being conducted in three phases from Spring 2023 to Fall 2024. The first phase focused on the vision, objectives and goals of the plan. The second phase examined policies about where development should be directed. The third phase, covered in this report, focuses on draft updates to the plan.



Who We Engaged

The audiences for engagement included members of the public / residents, technical participants and Council.

How We Engaged

Phase 3 engagement involved both in-person and online feedback options to ensure broad and accessible participation.

Council Interviews were conducted one-on-one with all members of Council to gather input on draft policies related to growth management, agricultural land preservation, and key planning priorities for the County. These interviews provided valuable insight into Council's perspectives and helped ensure alignment between the draft plan and Council's long-term vision. The interviews were semi-structured, using a consistent set of guiding questions to allow for comparable feedback while also providing flexibility for individual concerns and suggestions.

The project team hosted three information sessions across the County, at the following locations:

- Hythe
- La Glace
- Teepe Creek

The information sessions involved a drop-in format where residents could stop by at any time during the scheduled hours. Residents were invited to review display panels highlighting the proposed policy updates, draft maps and key directions in the draft MDP, speak directly with Planning staff, and watch a recorded presentation that provided an overview of the draft document. Participants were encouraged to leave written comments directly on the display boards or submit additional feedback via email after the event.

In addition to in-person engagement, two virtual information sessions were held to reach residents who could not attend in person. These sessions included a live presentation based on the same slides used at the in-person sessions, followed by a question-and-answer period where participants could ask questions and share feedback in real time.

Circulation and meetings with technical stakeholders included internal County departments, regional partners, utility providers, and provincial agencies. These discussions focused on reviewing draft policy language to ensure alignment with technical requirements, intermunicipal agreements, and infrastructure planning.

See Appendix A – Council Interview Questions for the list of questions used to guide consistent discussion across all Councillor interviews.

See Appendix B – Information Session Panels for the full set of display boards used at the public information sessions.

See Appendix C – Information Session Presentation Slides for the presentation used in the recorded video and during the virtual information sessions.

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COUNCILLOR
INTERVIEWS


3
IN-PERSON
INFORMATION
SESSIONS

2
VIRTUAL
INFORMATION
SESSIONS

40
INFORMATION
SESSION
ATTENDEES

How We Communicated

County administration engaged with residents through information sessions focused on sharing project updates, explaining draft policy directions, and inviting input on key planning topics. The County promoted the updates through multiple channels to maximize reach and participation. See the table below for a complete summary.

RESOURCES	DESCRIPTION	STATS	AUDIENCE
Engagement Opportunities			
	In- Person Information Sessions	Three information sessions were held across the County. This was an opportunity to review the draft MDP and ask questions.	40 attendees Public
	Virtual Information Sessions	Two information sessions were held virtually. This was an opportunity to see the presentation and ask questions.	2 attendees Public
Communications Tactics			
	Project Webpage	Project information, news updates and the online versions of the draft MDP were available on the project webpage: countygp.ab.ca/planyourcounty	500+ unique webpage visits 400+ draft MDP download Public
	Social Media	Posts were made on Facebook, Twitter/X, and LinkedIn throughout May and June to promote the public events.	9 posts, 66 likes, 22 shares, 300 interactions, 50k+ views Public
	Email Updates	Six emails were sent to inform subscribers about the draft MDP update and the public events.	115 subscribers Public
	Public Calendar	All scheduled public events were posted on the County website and the Project Webpage event calendar.	5 calendar events Public
	Posters	Posters were placed at various locations across the County to promote the information sessions.	80 posters Public
	Radio Ads	Ads were played on local radio stations publicizing the public events.	143 radio spots Public
	Signs	Portable signs were placed in high traffic locations near where the information sessions were being held to promote the events.	3 portable signs Public
	County Connections Newsletter	Article about the Plan Your County project and the spring engagement opportunities were published in the Spring 2025 County Connection Newsletter. County Connections is a newsletter sent to all County ratepayers.	1 articles in the newsletter to all ratepayers Public
	Media Release	A media release was put out promoting the draft MDP and the information sessions. It was covered by several news outlets including radio and websites.	1 media release Media Outlets
	Town & Country Newspaper	Newspaper Ads ran in the Town and Country Newspaper promoting the draft MDP and the information sessions.	2 newspaper ads Media Outlets

What We Heard

Administration gathered feedback from a range of participants focusing on the draft updated MDP, including both the proposed policies and accompanying draft maps. The following sections summarize key feedback from each participant group.

Council

Council members were individually interviewed to provide input on the draft MDP, including the policy content and how future land uses were represented in the draft maps. A key theme was the importance of planning growth in a fiscally responsible way by encouraging development near existing infrastructure - particularly in and around hamlets and designated industrial nodes such as Clairmont and Dimsdale. Councillors supported the use of Fiscal Impact Analysis to assess the long-term costs of development, though there were differing opinions on using fixed residential-to-non-residential assessment ratios as a growth management tool.

Infrastructure efficiency was also emphasized. Councillors suggested prioritizing subdivisions near paved roads, restricting unserviced development in urban areas like Clairmont and Hythe, and coordinating land use planning with long-term transportation and servicing strategies. Contiguous development was seen as an effective way to improve servicing outcomes and reduce infrastructure gaps.

The revitalization and growth of hamlets and smaller rural communities emerged as a key interest. Many Councillors supported directing more residential development into hamlets to make better use of existing infrastructure and build more cohesive communities. Ideas included allowing multi-lot subdivisions within hamlets, permitting rural estate lots, and creating community-based advisory committees to bring local input into planning decisions.



Image 1: MDP Information Session at the Teepee Creek Community Hall

Agricultural land preservation was widely supported, especially for quarters with high-quality soils. Councillors expressed interest in limiting non-agricultural development in these areas and discussed improving how the Farmland Assessment Rating (FAR) is applied, including updating values or applying more flexible, case-specific evaluations. There was also discussion about adjusting farmstead separation sizes to promote efficient land use while maintaining flexibility for future subdivision potential.

Industrial and commercial growth was seen as a strategic priority. Councillors supported focusing industrial development within designated nodes, particularly along major transportation corridors such as highways and rail lines. They encouraged flexibility to accommodate emerging industries - so long as proposals align with servicing and transportation access. The need for more updated Area Structure Plans (ASPs) to support this type of growth was also noted.

Finally, Councillors highlighted several ways to improve the MDP and its implementation. These included improving landowner notification processes, reducing red tape in planning applications, and making planning documents more user-friendly. While the overall structure of the MDP was seen as functional, many emphasized the need for clearer definitions and more specific policy guidance to support consistent decision-making.



Image 2: MDP Information Session at the La Glace Twilight Centre

Public Participants

During the in-person and virtual public information sessions, residents and landowners had the opportunity to review the draft MDP policies and maps, ask questions, and provide feedback. Overall, participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage and offered thoughtful input based on local knowledge, community values, and development concerns.

Many expressed support for preserving better-quality agricultural land and appreciated that the plan recognized opportunities for agri-tourism and secondary incomes to support farm families. The updated approach to natural areas, with a separate map and accompanying policies, was also well received.

Industrial development prompted mixed responses. While there was support for removing the industrial designation around Demmitt, there were concerns about industrial growth occurring outside designated rural industrial areas.

Feedback on hamlet growth was generally positive. Participants supported the direction provided in the maps and policies, and there were no concerns with expanding hamlet boundaries to accommodate future development. However, some raised concerns about servicing limitations in certain hamlets, particularly those already facing capacity constraints.

Overall, participants appreciated the clarity and direction of the updated MDP and supported its focus on managed, well-serviced growth that respects the County's rural and agricultural character.



Image 2: MDP Information Session at the Hythe Community Centre

Technical Participants

Technical stakeholders, including internal County departments, regional servicing agencies, provincial infrastructure partners, and consulting engineers, provided detailed feedback on both the draft policies and accompanying land use concept maps. Their insights focused on ensuring that the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is both technically sound and practically implementable.

From a servicing perspective, County Utilities emphasized the importance of aligning land use planning with current and future servicing capacity - particularly in hamlets such as Hythe and La Glace, where infrastructure systems like lagoons are already over capacity. They expressed appreciation for the inclusion of stronger policy direction related to hamlet development and servicing strategy and supported the use of future serviced area mapping to guide growth.

They also suggested to include more clear mapping for “serviced” and “future serviced” development areas in the other hamlets. And establishing consistent private servicing standards in areas awaiting municipal tie-in, and incorporating clearer requirements for stormwater infrastructure and utility setbacks.

Aquatera, while not providing detailed written feedback during their meeting, indicated that the updated MDP appears to reflect a stronger integration of servicing considerations into land use planning.

Beirsto & Associates offered extensive planning-related feedback, highlighting potential implementation challenges and also acknowledged improvements in the draft MDP compared to the existing plan. They supported efforts to provide clearer policy direction and noted that simplifying planning documents and reducing ambiguity will make implementation easier for applicants and consultants. At the same time, they raised concerns about potential cost implications and vagueness in certain policies - such as those requiring local ASPs or Conceptual Schemes for major Country Residential subdivisions, and those relating to viewscales, wildfire risk, and setbacks from waterbodies.

They suggested that more flexible, context-sensitive wording would improve clarity and reduce barriers to development. They also recommended re-evaluating how the Farmland Assessment Rating (FAR) is used, advocating for a more field-specific rather than quarter-based approach, allowing more site-specific evaluation to enable subdivision on less productive portions of a parcel.

CN Rail’s feedback focused on safety and land use compatibility adjacent to rail infrastructure. CN expressed strong support for the County’s direction in promoting industrial and commercial growth along key corridors, while discouraging sensitive uses like residential near rail lines. They provided a comprehensive set of recommendations related to building setbacks, berms, fencing, noise and vibration mitigation, and drainage requirements. CN also requested the inclusion of a standard warning clause in agreements for properties located near the railway, and expressed appreciation for the County’s collaboration in incorporating rail safety considerations into long-range planning.

Overall, technical stakeholders were supportive of the draft MDP’s direction, particularly its greater emphasis on servicing, infrastructure coordination, and safety. Their feedback will be used to further refine policy language, improve map clarity, and ensure the final MDP supports both regulatory compliance and practical implementation across the County.

Next Steps

Thank you to everyone who participated in Phase 3!

The feedback gathered in this phase will be used by the project team to help draft the finalized version of the draft MDP.

The finalized draft MDP will be presented at a public hearing, where the public will have another opportunity to voice their perspectives on the finalized draft. The revised draft MDP will be presented to Council for consideration in August 2025

For information about the public hearing and how to participate, information will be available on the County's Your View engagement webpage. Those wanting email updates about the MDP project can sign up via the project webpage using their preferred email address.

To stay up to date on the project, please visit countygp.ab.ca/planyourcounty.

Appendix -

A - Council Interview Questions

B - Information Session Panels

C - Information Session Presentation Slides