

What We Heard – Round 1

1.0 SUMMARY

Medicine Hat Regional Airport (YXH) is the aviation hub for Southeast Alberta and supports valuable services to the region, including scheduled passenger air services to Calgary, critical air ambulance missions, professional pilot training, and general aviation. The City of Medicine Hat is working on an Airport Master Plan to guide the future of YXH and establish its long-term vision for the next 20 years based on feedback from stakeholders, community members, and businesses. There are three key phases to this project that will support future implementation.



The first round of consultations engaged 34 key stakeholders connected to the airport and 10 members of the general aviation community.

A second round of consultation more widely targeting residents, businesses, and organizations in the region will be launched in January 2026 and will include in-person and online engagements.

The findings from both the first and second rounds of engagement will be used to inform the preparation of the Strategic Plan and the Social and Economic Impact Study, with the aim to have both complete in March 2026.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report describes the first round of stakeholder engagement, including a summary of the input received. The first round of consultations engaged 34 key stakeholders connected to the airport and 10 members of the general aviation community. Key stakeholders included City of Medicine Hat departments; YXH tenants, service providers, and aircraft operators; government entities; regional economic and social stakeholders; and special interest groups.

Stakeholder input will be used as part of the preparation of the Strategic Plan and the Social and Economic Impact Study.

Findings (described in detail below) address the social and economic value of YXH; perspectives on what success looks like in the future; commentary on the airport’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; and information on the regional context that influences YXH.

3.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Master Plan will lay out a structured approach for how YXH will meet the needs of the region by:

1. Maintaining the facility's infrastructure in a safe and usable condition;
2. Making targeted improvements to infrastructure and services to meet future demand; and
3. Finding new ways to help the economy and the community.

The Airport Master Plan follows a three-phase approach aligned with industry best practices for airport planning. Once adopted, the Airport Master Plan will guide the City's future decision-making for YXH. Stakeholder and community feedback will contribute to the preparation of the Airport Master Plan alongside detailed technical evaluation and planning, the assessment of federal and provincial regulatory standards, and industry best practices.

The Medicine Hat Regional Airport Department in the Development and Infrastructure Division is responsible for the Airport Master Plan, with direct oversight being provided by the Airport Manager. The City has partnered with HM Aero Aviation Consulting, an industry recognized airport subject matter expert, to advance Phase 1. City Council will review and approve strategic directions and project outcomes.

Phase	Engagement Round 1	Engagement Round 2
<p>Phase 1 - Strategic Plan & Impact Study</p> <p>The Strategic Plan will establish what the airport should look like in 20 years. It will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the strengths, opportunities, and challenges of YXH and how it compares to other airports; • Create a Mission and Vision for YXH including its core purpose and aspirations; and • Set strategic goals and objectives for the future. <p>The Social and Economic Impact Study will look at how the airport helps Medicine Hat and nearby areas. It will study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How residents and businesses use airline, private, and charter services; • Emergency services like the provincial air ambulance program operated by CanWest Air, HALO, STARS, and other users; and • Professional flight training, general aviation use, and community events. 	<p>34 stakeholders were interviewed and 10 members of the general aviation community were engaged by surveying (summary below)</p>	<p>Residents, businesses, & organizations in the region will be engaged in-person and online beginning in January 2026</p>

<p>Phase 2 - Infrastructure Assessment</p> <p>The City will work with technical experts to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory the airport's major facilities, buildings, and equipment; • Evaluate the condition of the airport's infrastructure and how long it will last; and • Plan for the repair and replacement of existing infrastructure over 20 years. 	<p>Phase 2 will not require public input as a technical exercise addressing regulatory compliance and lifecycle asset renewal.</p>
<p>Phase 3 - Airport Master Plan</p> <p>This final step will use all the information from the prior phases. It will make a plan for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the airport to meet current and forecasted demands of the facilities; • Using land for new projects; • Addressing the impacts of the airport to the community and environment; and • Attracting new businesses and services. 	<p>Additional opportunities for engagement will be launched as part of Phase 3.</p>

4.0 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Stakeholders were identified by the project team, with additional individuals and organizations identified over the course of engagement activities through referrals by interviewed parties.

A project introduction letter was prepared by the City and distributed by HM Aero to all stakeholders with the invitation to schedule an interview.

Stakeholder interviews followed a structured guide (Appendix A) and were completed in-person; by Microsoft Teams and phone; and by emailed comments over the period of October 22 to December 8, 2025. Follow-ups were provided to stakeholders as required to achieve full response completion. Detailed notes were prepared by HM Aero for all stakeholder interviews.

Recognizing the vested interests of airport tenants and the general aviation community regarding the project, an eight-question survey was hosted on SurveyMonkey by HM Aero and distributed by email to tenants (Appendix B). The Gas City Aviators Flying Club also sent the survey to their membership of approximately 40 individuals. Follow-up emails were sent by HM Aero and the Gas City Aviators Flying Club. The online survey was available from November 8 to November 23, 2025. All survey respondents were also offered the opportunity for a follow-up meeting, with no such conversations scheduled.

The approach to engagement was designed collaboratively by the City and HM Aero and aligns with the Consult level of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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5.0 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INPUT

A total of 34 stakeholders were interviewed as part of the first round of engagement, including the 33 entities listed below and one private individual with relevant subject matter expertise. Key stakeholders included City of Medicine Hat (CMH) departments; YXH tenants, service providers, and aircraft operators; government entities; regional economic and social stakeholders; and special interest groups. In addition, a total of 10 responses were received through the survey distributed to airport tenants and the general aviation community.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Emergency Health Services • Canadian Advanced Air Mobility • Canadian Owners and Pilots Association – Gas City Aviators Flying Club • CanWest Air • CMH – Community Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Futures Entre-Corp • Cypress County – Administration • Dave Rozdeba South Alberta Flight Academy • Executive Flight Centre • Family Fun Flight • HALO Air Ambulance • Heritage Resources Working Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicine Hat Tourism • NAV CANADA • Palliser Economic Partnership • Prairies Economic Development Canada • Prairie Rose School Division • Royal Canadian Mounted Police –
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMH – Development and Infrastructure • CMH – Economic Development • CMH – Emergency Management • CMH – Environment, Land & Gas Production • CMH – Airport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest Alberta • MH Aviation Historical Society / Wind Vane Support Group • Medicine Hat College • Medicine Hat Regional Hospital • MH Sport & Event Council 	<p>Edmonton Air Services Section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southeast Alberta Chamber of Commerce • Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service (STARS) • Super T Aviation (Bar XH Sales) • Town of Redcliff – Administration • WestJet
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Analysis of the interviews was conducted by sorting feedback into the categories that will inform the Strategic Plan and the Social and Economic Impact Study, including economic impacts, social value, definition of success, strengths, weaknesses and threats, contextual influences and outlook, and infrastructure and service requirements. Feedback that was brought up consistently or represented new information was recorded as a theme below.

Economic Impacts

- Stakeholders consistently identified ***scheduled passenger air services*** as the most important economic impact of YXH. This prioritization was substantiated through the value of scheduled passenger air services in terms of business connectivity, investment attraction and regional legitimacy, workforce attraction and retention, and facilitating access for the visitor economy, including conferences and sports events. This theme was dominant across interviews with economic development agencies, municipal leaders, industry associations, and business organizations.
- ***Flight training*** and ***aviation workforce development***, encompassing the operations of Super T Aviation and the Dave Rozdeba South Alberta Flight Academy, was also repeatedly cited as part of the economic value of YXH. These perspectives were substantiated in the opportunities for meaningful employment supported through in-region flight training, student spending and economic spinoffs from out-of-region students, and the opportunity to improve youth retention in Southeast Alberta.

Social Value

- The clearest and most recurring aspect of the airport's social value cited by stakeholders is its support of **emergency medical services** 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. This includes the operations of the Alberta Emergency Health Services fixed-wing air ambulance program, HALO, and STARS. Interviews with key healthcare informants provided clear substantiation of the importance of supporting air ambulance services to provide timely access to higher levels of medical care in Calgary and Edmonton when the capabilities and / or capacity of Medicine Hat Regional Hospital and other medical facilities in the region are exceeded. YXH is extensively used for the provincial fixed-wing air ambulance program operated by CanWest Air, is the base of operations for HALO Air Ambulance (one of five airports supporting a helicopter emergency medical services program in Alberta), and supports STARS.
- While less frequent in occurrence than medical-care related air services, YXH facilitates **other emergency management functions** including supporting the evacuation of individuals displaced by natural disasters (e.g., wildfire evacuees), search and rescue, and law enforcement.
- The recreational opportunities and social value of supporting the **general aviation community** were identified, including events that provide free flying experiences to youth and the role of the airport in supporting exposure to aviation through events such as Family Fun Flight.
- Flight training was attributed as having social value in terms of **youth skills development**.
- Scheduled passenger air services were identified as having social value in terms of **resident access to travel** and the associated connectivity provided.
- The **heritage value** of YXH was noted through special interest groups and the role of the facility in providing a tangible connection to the military history of the region.

Definition of Success for YXH

- The **overarching themes** provided by stakeholders for what constitutes success for YXH focused on the facility being a reliable, well-connected regional airport with strong passenger service, thriving flight training, appropriately maintained and potentially expanded infrastructure, active general aviation, and a clear, well-supported strategic vision that positions YXH as a regional economic and aviation hub.
- The continued provision of **scheduled passenger air services** and their improvement in terms of perceived flight reliability, the number of flights per day, and service to new destinations was the single largest priority identified, having been cited by almost every stakeholder. Clear and unequivocal statements were made regarding the importance of the availability of scheduled passenger air services but these perspectives were caveated with the view that services require improvement.

- Favourable views were provided for the broader growth of the **aviation ecosystem** at YXH, anchored in the growth of flight training operations, the development of aviation-related businesses, private hangar construction, and the exploration of potential operations for diversification, such as Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems development, testing, and training, and increased support to CFB Suffield.
- The **financial position** of YXH did not feature prominently in discussions with stakeholders beyond those internal to the City. The financial position of the airport drew varying perspectives, ranging from individuals accepting that taxpayer resources will be required to those that prioritize it transitioning to a model of financial self-sustainment. A more broadly noted perspective was that any investments in YXH will require a defensible business case.
- The continued availability and improvement of **critical airport infrastructure and services**, including the ongoing maintenance of core airfield infrastructure, NAV CANADA’s provision of advisory services to pilots, and the City conducting operations in a manner that is well resourced, safe, and regulatorily compliant.
- A recurring theme was the **interrelationship** between the success of YXH and Medicine Hat / Southeast Alberta as a whole. Several stakeholders noted that a successful region will be reflected in growth at YXH, and that YXH can contribute to this vision of regional prosperity.
- A **clearly defined strategic direction** is required that provides a focused approach to future investments in YXH.

Strengths of YXH

- With respect to the **administration and operation** of the airport by the City, consulted tenants, aircraft operators, and service providers identified strengths that include:
 - The **positive operating service levels** achieved in the year-round maintenance of YXH. Parties within the City with a detailed knowledge of airport operations cited that staffing levels are now appropriate relative to the requirements of the facility.
 - A strong **operational safety culture** that prevails across the Airport Department and YXH.
 - The development of effective modes of **communication and collaboration** between the City, airport tenants and users, and service providers, such as NAV CANADA.
 - Consultations within the City suggested that positive **interdepartmental working relationships** within the City Organization are being progressed, with examples including Fleet Maintenance handling the equipment of YXH and Economic Development’s shared goals and support of the airport.
- Regarding the airport’s infrastructure, services, and other aviation-related considerations, identified strengths included:

- The **well-maintained network of core infrastructure**, including the recently rehabilitated primary runway, upgraded approach lighting, instrument approach procedures, and weather system.
- Specific to flight training, the **lack of airport and airspace congestion and proximity to practice areas** were raised as a competitive advantage relative to other airports in the Calgary and Edmonton metropolitan regions. The region's **prevailing good weather** is especially conducive to flight training.
- NAV CANADA's operation of a **Flight Service Station** to deconflict traffic and provide an added level of situational awareness and safety for aircraft operators.
- From a passenger experience perspective, the value proposition of YXH is defined by its **ease of access and convenience** for travellers.
- A **significant land base** is available at the airport that can be leveraged for aviation and non-aviation development to provide economic value and assist in revenue growth and diversification.
- There is an **active and enthusiastic base of established tenants** that yield economic and social value and have developed internal and external partnerships.

Weaknesses and Threats

- As noted previously, scheduled passenger air services are the greatest economic role of YXH identified by stakeholders. However, **air service concerns** were also the single most frequently cited weakness of the airport, including the limited daily frequencies, challenges with delays, dependency on a single airline, and lack of direct service to destinations other than Calgary.
 - Stakeholders suggest that **public perception of YXH** is closely tied to their experience with the scheduled passenger air service; the above-noted challenges therefore influence broader public perception of YXH.
 - Despite the challenges noted with the service, stakeholders repeatedly identified **concern about the vulnerability and potential loss** of scheduled passenger air services.
- Stakeholders with an interest in **aviation land development** identified concerns regarding the lack of suitable leasehold lots, particularly for smaller private hangars (e.g., 40 ft. x 30 ft. pole frame buildings); and a lack of clarity regarding the development approvals process. General aviation stakeholders suggested that building standards for private hangars are onerous and disincentivize development.
- Aviation stakeholders suggested that several **factors may limit aircraft operations and future growth in aircraft and passenger activity**, including the lack of a parallel taxiway network limiting runway capacity, the deteriorating condition of the secondary runway, and lack of CBSA Airport of Entry services. The length of the primary runway was cited by select stakeholders as being insufficient in the context of objectives for scheduled passenger air services.

- Challenges associated with the *operation of YXH as a tax-supported municipal department* were raised, including competition for limited operating and capital financial resources versus other City priorities, challenges with realizing aviation land development revenues due to inter-departmental accounting practices, and delays with decision-making due to the governance model.
- External partnerships and targeted advocacy with the provincial and / or federal levels of government will likely be required to advance major capital investments, such as improvements to the airfield infrastructure. However, stakeholders with a detailed knowledge of the governmental landscape suggested that insufficient resources and expertise are available locally and regionally to advance *government relations efforts and advocacy*.

Contextual Influences and Outlook

- Stakeholders emphasized that the future of YXH is tied to the *broader economic and demographic evolution* of Southeast Alberta. Stakeholders suggested that the region has historically underperformed relative to the rest of Alberta from a population growth and economic development perspective. However, positive indicators were cited that included the Highway 3 twinning project and expansion of irrigation boosting the agricultural sector; modest population growth in recent years; the possibility of federal investment in the defense sector regionally (e.g., at CFB Suffield); and the Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems sector.
- The role of YXH in supporting *time-effective patient access to care* through the provincial air ambulance program operated by CanWest Air, STARS, and HALO was identified by medical stakeholders as likely being stable.
- The *growth of flight training* at YXH was assessed as having a high likelihood, contextualized by national and international demand for professional pilot training and the ongoing success being experienced by Super T Aviation and the Dave Rozdeba South Alberta Flight Academy. YXH is well positioned to support additional flight training activity, although broader industry pressures such as labour shortages may become a challenge in the future.
- The outlook for *activity in the aerospace and defense sector* being realized at YXH drew mixed perspectives. While regional strength in Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems research, development, and testing was widely noted by stakeholders, a clear tie-in to YXH was not defined. Similarly, the relationship between YXH and *CFB Suffield* was repeatedly noted but did not culminate in clearly defined opportunities, necessitating further engagement.
- Medicine Hat *competes both provincially and nationally* for the attraction of high economic impact forms of aviation activity, such as Original Equipment Manufacturing; Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul; and Remotely Pilot Aircraft Systems. In the Albertan context, the Calgary and Edmonton metropolitan regions present numerous strengths for the attraction of end users that may be contemplated for YXH.

Airport Infrastructure and Services

- While the stakeholder engagement questions raised at this phase of the Airport Master Plan were not focused on the infrastructure and services of YXH, numerous aviation stakeholders raised priorities for various parts of the airfield environment, including:
 - The consideration of whether the **extension of the primary runway** (Runway 03-21) is warranted based on a viable business case (i.e., whether the extension of the runway is required for air service development).
 - The development of **additional taxiway infrastructure** to increase the aircraft operating capacity of the airfield, including a new parallel taxiway system serving the primary runway (Runway 03-21) and new taxiways serving the secondary runway (Runway 09-27).
 - The need to comprehensively **rehabilitate the secondary runway** (Runway 09-27) on account of its deteriorating condition.
 - Miscellaneous other improvements, including aircraft run-up areas, a helicopter landing area, and clarifying the manner in which aviation fuel services are provided at YXH.
- Beyond airfield-related infrastructure and services, more limited perspectives were shared in terms of areas for improvement – additional **passenger-oriented services**, including car rentals, were identified by a subset of consulted stakeholders.

The full stakeholder records are intended for confidential use by City Administration and City Council. This protocol reflects that all interviewed stakeholders were informed that their views would remain confidential and, unless otherwise agreed, would not be directly attributed to their organization if the information provided was commercially confidential or of a sensitive nature.

6.0 WHAT'S NEXT

This report summarizes the first round of engagement with 34 key stakeholders directly connected to the airport and perspectives shared by 10 members of the general aviation community.

A second round of consultation more widely targeting residents, businesses, and organizations in the region will be launched in January 2026 and will include in-person and online engagement.

The findings from both the first and second rounds of engagement will contribute to the preparation of the Strategic Plan and the Social and Economic Impact Study.



There several ways the public can influence the Airport Master Plan:

- Identify what value YXH provides to you
- Share your priorities to help shape the airport's vision and mission
- Provide your view on what success is for YXH in the future

Project updates are available on Shape Your City at medicinehat.ca/yxhplan

The Strategic Plan and Social and Economic Impact Study reports are expected to be completed in March 2026.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information regarding the project, please visit the Shape Your City project page, or contact Logan Boyd, Airport Manager: logboy@medicinehat.ca

APPENDIX A – STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Please provide an overview of your business / organization:
2. How does the availability of YXH influence or enable the operations of your business / organization?
3. How does YXH enable your business / organization to yield economic, social, and / or other value to the region?
4. In your opinion, what aspects of YXH's value resonate most strongly with:
 - a. Residents / community members
 - b. Businesses / economic stakeholders
 - c. Communities beyond Medicine Hat in the surrounding region
 - d. Other parties (if identified by the stakeholder)
5. *Airport Tenants / Businesses*: Provide an overview of desired economic impact input variables (e.g., employee counts, labour earnings, operational metrics) and establish next steps for their provision.
6. How would you describe success for YXH in five to ten years?
7. What are the current strengths of YXH that should be solidified and built upon?
8. What are the greatest weaknesses that, if not resolved, will negatively impact the future viability of YXH?
9. Are there evolving priorities or values in the community / region that may become increasingly influential to YXH?
10. How may demographic, economic, and other changes in the regional context affect YXH?
11. What opportunities do you foresee for increasing the airport's social / economic impacts?
12. What competitive forces does YXH face? What comparative strengths does it have in the competitive landscape?
13. What factors are of greatest importance to ensure YXH maintains broad public support for its operations and development?
14. What investments in the airport's facilities, services, and / or operations are required to contribute to the interviewee's priorities for its future?

APPENDIX B – GENERAL AVIATION COMMUNITY SURVEY

As the owner and operator of **Medicine Hat Regional Airport**, the **City of Medicine Hat** is committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of this regional transportation asset and maximizing its economic and social impact. As part of a multi-phase Airport Master Plan, the City has initiated the preparation of a **Strategic Plan** for Medicine Hat Regional Airport with HM Aero Aviation Consulting to evaluate options regarding the airport's future and establish a preferred path that will guide subsequent planning. The Strategic Plan will answer the question of where the City, stakeholders, and community members envision Medicine Hat Regional Airport over a 20-year period. This work is a continuation of efforts initiated in the summer of 2024, with a refreshed approach focused on more widespread stakeholder and community engagement.

In parallel with the Strategic Plan, the City has commissioned the preparation of a **Social and Economic Impact Study** to quantify the value of Medicine Hat Regional Airport to the region. This process will equip the City with tangible information to communicate the importance of the airport, contribute to the development of external partnerships, and maximize community knowledge and support of Medicine Hat Regional Airport.

Your feedback will be used to help articulate the social and economic value of Medicine Hat Regional Airport and will be assessed as part of the Strategic Plan to identify the airport's strengths and opportunities, priorities for future development to enhance its regional value, and opportunities for strategic partnerships. Responses will be accepted until **Sunday, November 23**.

1. Please provide your name:
2. Which option(s) best describe your interest in Medicine Hat Regional Airport:
 - a. I am a hangar land lease holder at Medicine Hat Regional Airport
 - b. I am an aircraft owner based at Medicine Hat Regional Airport
 - c. I am a current, former, or aspiring pilot based at Medicine Hat Regional Airport
 - d. Other (please specify)
3. Please provide an overview of your use of Medicine Hat Regional Airport:

4. How does Medicine Hat Regional Airport yield economic, social, and / or other value to the region:
5. How would you describe success for Medicine Hat Regional Airport in five to ten years:
6. What are the current strengths of Medicine Hat Regional Airport that should be solidified and built upon:
7. What are the greatest weaknesses that, if not resolved, will negatively impact the future viability of Medicine Hat Regional Airport:
8. What investments in the airport's facilities, services, and / or operations are required in the future:
9. If you would like to be contacted by HM Aero for a short follow-up discussion by phone, please provide your email:

Thank you for your support of this critical initiative for the future of Medicine Hat Regional Airport. Any questions about the project and the work being completed by HM Aero on behalf of the City may be directed to:

Logan Boyd

Airport Manager

logboy@medicinehat.ca