

JANUARY 2025



TOWN OF  
**DIAMOND  
VALLEY**

**Municipal Development Plan** | What We Heard Report

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 THE PROJECT

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Diamond Valley is working on its first-ever Municipal Development Plan (MDP), a critical statutory document that will guide the community's growth and development over the next 20+ years. This comprehensive plan will serve as a blueprint for the Town's future, reflecting the needs, priorities, and aspirations of those who live, work, play, and contribute to the community.

Writing an MDP is a collaborative and multifaceted process that considers various factors to be robust, inclusive, and forward-thinking. These factors include analyzing current land use patterns, environmental sustainability, infrastructure needs, economic development opportunities, and long-term growth projections. However, the heart of this process is **community**. Informing and listening directly from those who live and work in Diamond Valley provides invaluable perspectives and helps the MDP reflect the unique character and priorities of the community.

## 1.2 THIS REPORT

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This "What We Heard" report summarizes the valuable input from recent engagement efforts collected to develop Diamond Valley's Municipal Development Plan (MDP).

Throughout this process, we seek to foster meaningful dialogue and create opportunities for community members to share their ideas and perspectives while also informing them about the current challenges that the town is facing. From surveys and workshops to public pop-ups, each method was designed to capture a diverse range of voices.

This report highlights the key themes, concerns, and opportunities identified during the engagement process. It provides a foundation for drafting an MDP that aligns with the community's values, the town's fiscal capacity and long-term goals. The feedback summarized in this report plays a key role in shaping the direction of the MDP. Combined with technical expertise, data analysis, and best urban and rural planning practices, these insights will help create a plan that balances growth with preservation, innovation with tradition, and community values with future opportunities within a fiscal framework. Together, we are building a shared vision for Diamond Valley's future.

### 1.3 KEY THEMES

Across all engagement activities conducted in Round 1, several key themes emerged.

<b>GOVERNANCE</b> 	<p>A desire for more transparency from municipal leadership and administration was expressed. Participants would like to be more informed and involved and understand the “why” when decisions are made. Further, stakeholder workshop participants would like the Town to investigate opportunities to streamline development, clarify development requirements, and reduce red tape in the development approval process.</p>
<b>STRATEGIC GROWTH</b> 	<p>Some engagement participants shared that they would not like to see any growth, or very minimal growth, to maintain the status quo, as they value the community’s safe and quiet feel.</p> <p>Conversely, others shared that some growth is needed to support housing affordability, fund community recreation services and amenities, support local businesses, create employment opportunities, and ease the tax burden on current residents.</p> <p>However, most people agreed that growth should occur in a way that does not allow the town to lose its character and charm, which are afforded by its slower pace of life and scenic location.</p>
<b>SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE</b> 	<p>Engagement participants shared that they appreciate the town’s small size, slower pace, and access to nature.</p> <p>Participants also feel that the town is positioned to establish and maintain a built environment that leverages its mountain atmosphere. This identity can be used to encourage tourism and guide development expectations.</p>
<b>HOUSING</b> 	<p>Some engagement participants expressed concern and discomfort about specific housing types, housing inventory (number of homes), and affordable housing being offered in the town. These participants shared that there is frustration with recent approvals of affordable housing development and fear that affordable housing will have negative impact on the town, citing safety concerns.</p> <p>Conversely, other participants desired various housing types for all ages, from young families to seniors. Smaller lots and smaller residences, seniors’ residences, and higher density (duplexes, rowhouses, trailer homes, and tiny homes were cited as examples). The affordability of homes was mentioned by several participants who were concerned that they or their children could not find housing within their budget.</p> <p>Engagement participants also indicated a need for seniors housing, particularly housing that allows pets.</p>

<b>SAFE COMMUNITY</b> 	<p>Engagement participants shared that they value feeling safe in the community and expressed a desire to be community-oriented.</p>
<b>BUSINESS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b> 	<p>Some engagement participants want to prioritize small businesses over big box-type commercial developments.</p> <p>Conversely, other participants identified a desire for additional amenities and services, citing examples like a major grocery store, a hotel, and more restaurant and nightlife options.</p> <p>Some participants view tourism as an economic driver in the town. Attracting visitors from the surrounding region to explore the unique offerings of the town is a part of the vision shared by participants.</p>
<b>RECREATION</b> 	<p>Engagement participants shared that an indoor recreation facility and programming for other recreation activities would benefit the community. Examples cited included a gym and pool.</p> <p>Participants also shared the importance of access to nature and appreciation for outdoor recreation opportunities that life in Diamond Valley provides.</p>
<b>FISCAL HEALTH / TAXES</b> 	<p>Engagement participants expressed concern about current property taxes and potential increases in the future due to aging infrastructure and other deferred maintenance costs in the community.</p>
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> 	<p>Engagement participants expressed a desire to address aging infrastructure that needs significant upgrades and maintenance (e.g., sewer, water, stormwater) across town.</p>
<b>WATER RESOURCE</b> 	<p>Engagement participants shared concerns about water capacity and maintaining water quality, including the capacity of current water licenses and how that affects population growth.</p>
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b> 	<p>Engagement participants expressed a desire for transportation options in Diamond Valley, including seniors' transportation and taxi services.</p> <p>Some participants commented on the desire for a bypass road to reduce traffic in the community.</p>
<b>DOWNTOWN</b> 	<p>Engagement participants expressed appreciation for the unique composition of businesses and tourism opportunities downtown and would like to see distinct visions for each previous downtown area of Turner Valley</p>

and Black Diamond. Beautification and walkability of downtown were specifically mentioned.

Key themes identified during community engagement are essential in shaping the Municipal Development Plan (MDP). These themes reflect the values, aspirations, and concerns of the community, and will help guide policy decisions and priorities.

Reflecting on the first round of MDP engagement, it is clear there are areas where the community is aligned, while there are also some opposing views about the vision for Diamond Valley. The Town's decisions and the MDP's direction will not make everyone collectively comfortable. Residents may question why sharing their community aspirations is an important part of the process, even if policies do not directly reflect their responses.


It is critical to remember that the MDP is a 20+ year plan. While the Town's immediate decisions may differ from some perspectives heard during engagement, Council's role is to promote the long-term viability of Diamond Valley. Given the financial challenges the Town is working to address from continued deferral of maintenance and infrastructure upgrades, the MDP will prioritize fiscally responsible decisions.

Recreation facilities, additional town services (garbage collection, funding for town events), town support for small business, additional studies pertaining to brownfield sites, environmental areas, and recreation plans, all have a price tag attached. Some items will not be prioritized until the financial health of the town is secured and major infrastructure challenges are addressed. However, once these priorities are achieved, the Town understands where to refocus future municipal spending that residents envision.

It is important to create a plan that has a realistic context to the current financial infrastructure requirements that extend over a 20 – 30 year period as continued deferral will continue to increase the financial challenge the town is facing, potentially leading to fiscal insolvency or dissolution.

1.4 ADDRESSING KEY THEMES IN THE MDP

The table below discusses at a high level what we heard and how key themes and comments may be addressed, or not addressed, in the MDP.

<div>GOVERNANCE</div> <div></div>	<p>Since amalgamation, it is clear that residents value openness and honesty from their municipal leadership and Council. The Town has faced considerable changes and staff turnover during this time, which has made it challenging to maintain consistent efforts to build trust at Town Hall.</p> <p>The MDP can include policy that promotes government transparency and education for the public on key issues that impact them. While this is a goal, the existing financial challenges may limit its achievement to enable moving forward with addressing the existing infrastructure needs.</p>
<div>STRATEGIC GROWTH</div>	<p>No Growth:</p>





The concept of no more residential growth was mentioned several times during engagement, and it must be acknowledged that no growth is not a feasible option for the town due to the following implications:

- Increasing housing costs due to low supply.
- Exodus of young families, seniors, and young professionals due to lack of housing variety and low supply.
- Exodus of labour to support small businesses.
- Exponential rise in taxes yearly as the existing property tax base must cover increasing infrastructure maintenance costs, risking significant breakdowns (e.g., pipe bursts, no clean water, sewage backups, flooding).

No new non-residential tax base (commercial or industrial development) was also mentioned, which could result in:


- Further Town service cuts due to insufficient funds to pay for infrastructure upgrades and administrative services. Service cuts would likely result in a defunding of community events, reduced administration and operation services, and closures of public amenities like the library and recreation centers.
- As a result of the above, a decline in tourism would be expected which would significantly affect the viability of small businesses.
- Exponential rise in taxes as existing businesses must cover increasing infrastructure costs.
- Potential dissolution or financial insolvency.




For these reasons, not allowing growth could harm Diamond Valley's future. Instead, the MDP will focus on strategic growth that reflects the Town's existing financial challenges.





#### Strategic Growth:


The intent of the MDP is to manage growth in a way that respects the overall vision of the town while creating opportunities for new investment, building the tax base, and supporting gradual growth within servicing capacity limits. Greenfield residential development results in the town inheriting new infrastructure while not capitalizing on the existing infrastructure, and the tax return is not as great as non-residential development. Therefore, the town needs to increase its non-residential tax base to help support its fiscal capacity.

- Promoting economic development so new businesses can carry some of the tax burden.
- Growing in appropriate places (i.e., do not have significant environmental development constraints) and can be serviced using

	<p>the existing infrastructure network to prevent new infrastructure costs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing in, rather than growing out. This includes conducting reclamation on brownfield properties, identifying vacant land that is already serviced and incentivizing the sale or development of these properties.</li> <li>• Growing in rather than growing up. This includes allowing some gentle residential density in the form of accessory dwelling units, narrow lot development, smaller lot development, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, or row housing that are sensitive to adjacent properties to capitalize on existing infrastructure, where the majority of taxes are directed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE</b></p> 	<p>The Town has the opportunity to encourage incremental growth that preserves its small-town atmosphere through different policy tools. The MDP could address this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring a population cap that responds to land and water capacity.</li> <li>• Implementing regulations that create high-quality development, such as design guidelines in targeted areas and limiting built form (e.g., height, massing and architectural features).</li> <li>• Prioritizing the maintenance and upgrading of existing infrastructure and amenities (e.g., libraries, recreation amenities, pipes, roads) rather than building new infrastructure.</li> </ul> <p>There is a desire to maintain the town’s unique character. The town has the opportunity to solidify its identity as Diamond Valley and require that new developments align with the vision. The MDP could address this theme by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting the exploration of design guidelines with architectural controls.</li> <li>• Exploring vacant land downtown and identifying incentives for attracting development of these areas to fill in gaps in the pedestrian experience.</li> <li>• Revisit its Economic Development Strategy to identify alignment with this vision.</li> <li>• Consider ways to direct resources back towards economic development to enable the implementation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>HOUSING</b> Including seniors housing</p>	<p>Housing variety and inventory are dynamic issues, and housing development can evoke an emotional response based on preconceived notions. Higher-density development is seen as less safe, disruptive to existing patterns (e.g., single-detached neighbourhoods), and creates undesirable growth.</p> <p>When viewed from another perspective, more housing and smaller units create more places for loved ones to live, for children and grandchildren, or</p>

	<p>for aging grandparents to stay in the community in the face of a supply shortage and rising rents and mortgages. Five bedrooms may be too many, but two or three could be just right. Caring for a large lawn may not be possible for aging or mobility-challenged people. Now more than ever adults are living as individuals, having fewer or no children, or incorporating multi-generational living into their plans.</p> <p>Housing affordability is complex and ever-changing, making it challenging for policymakers to balance community needs and perceptions. The MDP will address density and population growth concerns while considering housing affordability to maintain the town’s financial viability amidst challenges like affordability and low housing supply.</p> <p>Several respondents mentioned senior housing, which, with an aging population, should be considered in future planning. Senior housing can be considered along a spectrum, from care facilities to assisted living, as well as an inventory of smaller unit housing that is more affordable and has fewer maintenance requirements for seniors.</p> <p>The MDP will explore policies that support the provision of this type of housing.</p>
<p><b>SAFE COMMUNITY</b></p> 	<p>The concept of safety is often tied to crime and policing; however, the theme of safety in the MDP should also be considered through the lens of infrastructure maintenance (protecting water quality), land use (directing sensitive land uses away from potentially unsafe developments), or emergency management to prepare for climate events like flooding or fire.</p> <p>The MDP can dive into the multidimensional theme of what comprises a safe community to promote and encourage actions that maintain safety.</p>
<p><b>BUSINESS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b></p> 	<p>Businesses provide critical services to communities and drive tourism. There is a strong sentiment to support and prioritize small businesses, and either prohibit or restrict big box or franchise businesses. The challenge in the MDP is that a policy that restricts some businesses could end up restricting all businesses by adding administrative red tape. Over time, prospective businesses could start to avoid Diamond Valley altogether, even if that type of development is seen as acceptable to the community.</p> <p>Non-residential developments generate higher tax revenues than residential ones, making a balanced tax base essential for keeping residential tax rates in check. Many municipalities now aim for a minimum of 30% of their tax base to come from non-residential sources as part of their responsible growth strategies. Currently, the Town’s non-residential tax base stands at just 11%. Additionally, non-residential developments typically strain infrastructure systems less than residential areas.</p>

	<p>Significant effort has been dedicated to economic development in the past, which should be acknowledged and leveraged. The MDP will explore how to build upon these materials or implement relevant ideas.</p> <p>The MDP will explore how to balance the needs of the community, establish a strong non-residential tax base, and maintain a community that is recognizable and appreciated by its residents.</p>
<b>RECREATION</b> 	<p>Recreation is critical to fostering community, encouraging tourism and supporting well-being in a community.</p> <p>The Town's indoor recreation facilities are aging and need significant investment for upgrades or replacement. The MDP will prioritize conducting asset management planning to determine whether the town should maintain and upgrade existing assets or consider the future construction of new facilities. Policies could explore recreation options through regional or government partnerships or cost sharing. Moving forward, asset management planning will be a key implementation tactic of the MDP to help manage the town's fiscal resilience.</p> <p>Outdoor recreation opportunities are abundant in Diamond Valley, and there are many opportunities to leverage this existing asset. The MDP will explore the next steps in cataloguing these opportunities and access to nature, which could include recommending that a Recreation and Open Space Master Plan be completed.</p>
<b>FISCAL HEALTH/TAXES</b> 	<p>Fiscal health and taxes are directly tied to the previous theme of strategic growth. The MDP will focus on the town growing in a way that creates fiscal resilience without adding additional infrastructure burden.</p>
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> 	<p>Addressing deferred maintenance of key infrastructure (including stormwater, water and sewer) is crucial for the town's safety and the viability of existing and future businesses and homes. The Town is working to catch up on maintenance but faces rising costs and a depleted municipal reserve fund.</p> <p>In 2025, Council's budget aims to address these issues and rebuild the reserve fund for infrastructure needs. Additionally, the Town is preparing an Infrastructure Master Plan to guide priority decisions. The MDP could include a policy that supports asset management planning to further support these efforts.</p>
<b>WATER RESOURCE</b> 	<p>While the town has water licencing that could allow the population to potentially double, and a raw water reservoir to assist with water availability in times of drought, the region is dealing with water capacity limits due to licenses and climate impacts, which could reduce the supply and quality of</p>

	water during periods of drought or flooding. The MDP may include policies to mitigate the impacts on the community.
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b> 	<p>We heard there are limited transportation options in town. Public transportation requires significant population and economies of scale to be financially feasible. Public transportation is often difficult to fund even in large cities with large populations. The current transportation service provided for seniors is being discontinued due to a lack of provincial funding, so the service is no longer viable for the town.</p> <p>However, the town can support businesses offering private transportation services through future amendments to the land use bylaw and could include a policy to support the exploration of public transportation options through regional government partnerships in the MDP. An increase in population is required to make this genuinely viable.</p>

Other notable ideas and comments received that provide insight into community priorities and may be addressed through the MDP or future planning include:

- Urban agriculture: Increasing flexibility on how residents can use properties for food security, sustainability, and environmental benefits.
- Barriers to entry: Reducing the costs of business license fees for downtown development and home-based businesses.
- Downtown parking: Reviewing the effectiveness of parking requirements downtown, as there is a perception of insufficient parking.

## 2 MDP Awareness Campaign

Before initiating the first official round of engagement on the MDP, the Town undertook an MDP awareness campaign to communicate with the public early on about the project to help inform, build trust, and create transparency throughout the process. Early communications outlined the project schedule, informed the public about the role of the MDP, and emphasized the importance of their input to encourage future participation in engagement events.

The campaign launch utilized the following communication tactics:

- A website landing page dedicated to the project;
- A social media post for Town social media pages;
- A newspaper ad running for two weeks; and
- Posters in strategic locations in Town, such as the Town office, with links to the project webpage.

## 3 Internal Engagement

### 3.1 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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The Steering Committee is tasked with spearheading the development of the new Municipal Development Plan. It was established as a Committee of Council under the Council Committees Bylaw 2023-13, as amended. It comprises all members of Council, two previous members of the Town's dissolved Municipal Planning Commission, and two previous members of the Town's stood-down Economic Development Advisory Committee.

The first of three regular meetings of the Steering Committee was held on November 27, 2024. The Committee participated in a digital polling exercise to identify current community values and priorities and completed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) workshop.

### 3.1.1 Steering Committee Visioning

### 3.1.2 Steering Committee Polling Exercise

**1. What are the Town's most important values? (ranked, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>)**

1. Small town atmosphere
2. Safe living
3. Economic growth
4. Governance
5. Environmental stewardship/respect
6. Heritage preservation/enhancement



## 2. What are the top challenges the MDP should tackle? (open ended)

Responses are presented below, organized by theme:

TOURISM & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	HOUSING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tourism and tourism infrastructure and activity promotion</li><li>• Tourism should be an economic development goal.</li><li>• Remain a day trip destination</li><li>• Business attraction</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage diverse housing</li></ul>
RECREATION AND NATURAL AREAS	INFRASTRUCTURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recreation and culture centre</li><li>• Recreation facilities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor infrastructure</li></ul>
STRATEGIC PLANNING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attracting and retaining suitable and sustainable economic growth (commercial)</li><li>• Identify potential brownfield revitalization lands</li><li>• Gas plant</li><li>• Adding diverse zones</li><li>• Strategic planning, e.g., population cap</li><li>• Growth with balance</li><li>• Develop within the existing footprint</li><li>• Identify potential brownfield revitalization lands</li></ul>	

## 3. What Are Your Preferred Strategies for Commercial/Industrial Growth (ranked, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>)

1. Future growth in both downtown areas
2. Focus growth in existing areas
3. Grow and expand new commercial areas
4. Grow and expand new industrial areas
5. Focus on growth in one downtown area

## 4. What is Your #1 Solution to Keeping Property Taxes Reasonable Strategies for Commercial/Industrial Growth

1. Develop more industrial, commercial & mixed-use land use – selected by 78% of respondents.



### 3.1.3 SWOT Workshop

The Steering Committee engaged in a SWOT workshop. A summary of responses is provided below for each category:

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location near Okotoks, Kananaskis and Calgary</li> <li>• Kind, welcoming people</li> <li>• Local businesses</li> <li>• Safe community</li> <li>• Community feel and spirit</li> <li>• Great scenery</li> <li>• A variety of outdoor activities, such as those tied to the river</li> <li>• Mountain drive – cowboy trail</li> <li>• Outdoor amenities, pool, campground, rink</li> <li>• Hospital</li> <li>• Town character and small size</li> <li>• Town history</li> <li>• Proximity to the airport and other services</li> <li>• Huge amount of highway frontage for businesses</li> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Sunsets</li> <li>• Main streets</li> <li>• Arts and music</li> <li>• Quiet community</li> <li>• Dark sky potential</li> <li>• Housing diversity being promoted by new secondary suite regs</li> <li>• Sewage treatment plant upgrades</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Work completed to date on the Economic Development Strategy and Digital Investment Guide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernization and revitalization of buildings</li> <li>• All-season tourism and activity development</li> <li>• There is potential for a new campground</li> <li>• There is land within the Town’s existing footprint</li> <li>• Brownfield reclamation of non-residential infill sites</li> <li>• Healthcare facilities</li> <li>• Successful existing businesses to attract visitors and service residents</li> <li>• Amalgamation</li> <li>• The town is an attractive place</li> <li>• There is a potential to increase specialized services for seniors and provide housing for retirement</li> <li>• The town has an awesome Council</li> <li>• Professionalism of staff</li> <li>• The town has fibre optic/internet</li> <li>• There is water and sewage capacity for growth</li> <li>• The town is in proximity to the ring road (Calgary)</li> <li>• A downtown beautification program/implementation</li> <li>• The town has lots of land</li> <li>• Connectivity of trail system</li> <li>• Recreation and open space master plan</li> <li>• Lots of school capacity</li> <li>• Healthcare</li> <li>• Increased commercial</li> <li>• Tourism</li> <li>• Downtown vibrancy</li> <li>• Development of “character” bylaws</li> </ul>

WEAKNESSES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conoco Phillips – Contaminated brownfield lands create large swaths of land with fragmented development</li> <li>• Money (to do everything)</li> <li>• It is hard to finance the changes needed to attract big business</li> <li>• There are a limited number of businesses that pay a living wage</li> <li>• Need to travel to a larger community for shopping/medical services</li> <li>• NIMBYs (not in my backyard)</li> <li>• No commercial jobs to employ locals at a sensible rate</li> <li>• Few diverse housing options</li> <li>• Bedroom community mentality</li> <li>• Aging infrastructure that needs to be replaced</li> <li>• Housing affordability</li> <li>• Transportation for seniors</li> <li>• A lack of senior housing</li> <li>• Poor public transportation system and no cab/uber service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Transportation</li> <li>• Natural disaster</li> <li>• Climate change/wildfire/flooding</li> <li>• Knuckle-dragging Council</li> <li>• Random development</li> <li>• Bedroom community mentality</li> <li>• Attitudes of residents</li> <li>• NIMBYs (not in my backyard)</li> <li>• CAVEMAN - Citizens Against Virtually Everything</li> <li>• BANANA - Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone</li> <li>• Bankruptcy</li> <li>• High taxes</li> <li>• Flood mitigation</li> <li>• Losing good staff due to difficult residents/Council</li> <li>• Reclamation of land occurs slowly</li> <li>• Lack of money for the replacement of recreational facilities</li> <li>• The Town is not business-ready</li> </ul>

### 3.1.4 Key Themes from Steering Committee Meeting

Key themes from the Steering Committee meeting are presented below.

<b>STRATEGIC GROWTH</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore a population cap by adopting Okotoks' method of capping growth based on current wastewater treatment and water supply capacity.</li> <li>• Consider a moratorium on residential development in greenfield areas, regardless of developer pressure, to focus on capitalizing on existing infrastructure and resources. The MDP Land Use Plan will need to clearly outline policies surrounding greenfield lands in the town.</li> <li>• Manage brownfield areas and encourage remediation to support growth.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities for sensitive residential infill development to support incremental residential growth utilizing existing infrastructure and providing a tax return without needing new infrastructure.</li> <li>• Intermunicipal collaboration and opportunities for financial support from Foothills County.</li> </ul>
<b>SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize Design Guidelines to create and maintain community character, particularly for new and infill development areas.</li> </ul>
<b>HOUSING</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize non-residential development and identify areas to enable this growth, such as through a Vacant Land Analysis or redistricting greenfield lands. Non-residential development typically places less pressure on infrastructure than residential but generates a higher tax rate return.</li> </ul>
<b>BUSINESS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunities to create policies in the MDP that drive the Town towards being more business-ready, building on the Economic Development Advisory Committee's existing work.</li> <li>• Explore the preservation of heritage as an avenue for tourism.</li> <li>• Leverage the previous efforts of the Economic Development Advisory Committee to guide future action.</li> </ul>
<b>DOWNTOWN</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue equitable development in each downtown core, framing each as a unique experience or destination with distinct offerings. This approach is linked to non-residential development opportunities and aims to create a story that generates an experience.</li> </ul>

# 4 Public Engagement

Round 1 engagement activities used various methods, including pop-up events, a survey, and a stakeholder workshop targeting local businesses and those that conduct business in the community.

The engagement launch was communicated using the following tactics:

- An informational update for the Town’s webpage;
- An email invitation to businesses to attend the targeted workshop;
- Social media post for Town social media pages; and
- Five newspaper ads advertising the project launch and engagement ran:
  - October 2
  - November 6
  - November 20
  - November 27
  - December 4

The intent of Round 1 engagement was to engage in community visioning and solicit feedback about community values and what residents would like to see for Diamond Valley's future.

## 4.1 PUBLIC POP-UPS

The Town conducted two 2.5-hour pop-up events across the town during the busy holiday activities on December 7th. A pop-up meets people where they are, removing the barrier of requiring attendance at a public meeting. To maximize engagement potential, the pop-ups took place on a weekend day and evening.


The pop-ups took place at the following locations:

- The SPCA Christmas Market from 1:00 pm – 3:30 pm
- The Diamond Valley Light Up Event from 5:30 pm – 8:00 pm

The project team spoke with approximately 70 residents throughout the two events.

### 4.1.1 Key Themes from Public Pop-Ups

Key themes from the public pop-ups are presented below.

<b>GOVERNANCE</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase transparency in government and decision-making processes.</li><li>• Commit to the new plan and push through challenges to implement it.</li></ul>
<b>STRATEGIC GROWTH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilize Design Guidelines to create and maintain community character, particularly for new infill development areas.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit the Okalta Flats ARP to address concerns about its alignment with the current situation and local interests.</li> <li>• There is a “No growth” sentiment existing in the town.</li> <li>• Encourage slow growth to share the taxpayer burden.</li> <li>• Concerns about water supply related to growth and improving communication on why growth is being considered despite water restrictions.</li> <li>• Consider long-term plans for servicing the southwest area of town, particularly for acreage owners paying town taxes without receiving services (Okalta Flats).</li> <li>• Preserve agricultural land as-is, as desired by some participants.</li> <li>• Consider the need and capacity of police and fire services as growth and development occur.</li> <li>• Concerns about the strain on healthcare and schools with anticipated growth.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a desire to preserve Diamond Valley’s small-town character and lifestyle.</li> <li>• Diamond Valley has lacked an identity since amalgamation – previous town signs were taken down, and there has been no clear identity.</li> <li>• The Town needs to determine how to refer to the two former towns and build awareness around common names (one example was referring to “east and west neighbourhoods”).</li> <li>• There is a desire to find ways to connect the Town physically to support community cohesion, such as through river activities.</li> </ul> <p>Inclusivity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some participants shared that issues related to immigration in Calgary and other metropolitan areas are a concern, including housing, unemployment, and lack of resources to support immigrants.</li> <li>• One participant shared that affordable housing is not welcome in the community and is seen as detrimental to people’s quality of life.</li> </ul>
<p><b>HOUSING</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns about the lack of housing options in Diamond Valley, making it challenging for residents to downsize or find housing that meets their budget and preferences.</li> <li>• Support for thoughtfully designed and located higher-density housing with parking to avoid sprawl.</li> <li>• There is a desire for new housing options that are accessible for seniors and those with disabilities.</li> <li>• Plan residential land near schools for housing that is suitable and attractive to families.</li> </ul> <p>Seniors Housing:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several seniors expressed struggles finding housing and amenities, wanting to downsize from large lots but having nowhere to go. Support for seniors' duplexes and apartments was expressed.</li> <li>• Senior housing that allows pets is needed, as some seniors are required to give up their pets in exchange for housing.</li> <li>• There is a desire for a seniors' home or housing for seniors in various forms, such as independent living and supportive living.</li> </ul>
<p><b>BUSINESS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize locally owned shops and smaller businesses; there is less desire for big box stores and franchises.</li> <li>• More businesses would create more employment opportunities so residents could live and work in the community.</li> <li>• Concerns about the high cost of commercial rent, making it challenging to start a business in town.</li> <li>• Provide more flexibility for and promote home-based businesses by changing the Land Use Bylaw to include more flexible rules for home businesses.</li> <li>• Support for short-stay, vacation home rental, or other home-based accommodation businesses as a tourism opportunity.</li> <li>• Attract industry and promote economic development to expand the tax base.</li> <li>• Use identity-building businesses to draw tourists, like MacKay's Ice Cream in Cochrane.</li> <li>• There is a desire for expanded dining options and enhanced nightlife.</li> <li>• Avoid strange land use mixes in town, such as towing and storage businesses, which can create an eyesore.</li> </ul>
<p><b>RECREATION</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leveraging the river as an asset. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier/improved access to the river, stating there are boulders, private properties, dog parks, and other barriers creating accessibility issues.</li> <li>• Create additional opportunities for recreation through access to the river, such as floating or kayaking. Referenced Harvie Passage in Calgary as an example.</li> <li>• Recommendation for programmable/rentable space by the river (gazebo/BBQ area).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Interest in leveraging the river for tourism and recreation, with the example of a river rafting launch pad.</li> <li>• Appreciation for existing walking paths.</li> <li>• Desire for more fitness facilities, including a gym for exercise, providing additional health/recreation options for all ages.</li> <li>• Shared that the existing outdoor rink should stay.</li> <li>• Additional indoor recreation opportunities are wanted.</li> <li>• Desire for more hockey rinks.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire for more sports programming for adults.</li> <li>• Recommended indoor walking tracks, specifically mentioning the aging population.</li> <li>• Shared that community centres are very busy with limited space for additional programming.</li> <li>• Recommended the development of a larger community centre with ample parking.</li> <li>• Expand the library to provide more space for programming – specifically for teens.</li> <li>• Protect the existing parks and green spaces.</li> <li>• Opportunities to leverage a partnership with Kananaskis for year-round tourism and recreation should be sought.</li> <li>• Shared appreciation for the amount of seniors programming and activities available in town.</li> </ul>
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no public transit and few other transportation options outside personal vehicle ownership, leading to inequity. Senior's transit was being provided but has been defunded (or is underfunded) by the provincial government.</li> <li>• A lack of Uber or taxi services prevents some residents from enjoying the nightlife in various areas of town. Suggestion for a transportation option to get around town.</li> <li>• Recommend the Turner Valley bike path connects Edward Avenue to Country Meadows.</li> <li>• Concern that a future bypass will deter traffic from stopping in town, impacting businesses.</li> <li>• There are safety concerns related to anticipated increases in traffic.</li> <li>• Recommendation to not allow gravel trucks on Main Street.</li> </ul>
<b>DOWNTOWN</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the downtown street interface with stores along Centre Avenue in the former Diamond Valley.</li> <li>• Suggestion for two-storey buildings along Centre Avenue.</li> <li>• Create distinct downtown identities for each area of the Town that can be promoted for tourism.</li> </ul>

## 4.2 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS RECEIVED

Upon the closure of the Round 1 Engagement phase, a letter was received requesting that the Town explore land use planning solutions to reduce the competitiveness of existing businesses in regulated industries. Further correspondence also asked that the Town explore land use planning solutions to restrict or prohibit franchise or “big box” stores from coming to Town. However, the Town does not regulate



business competition, limit the number of individual uses unless it is required to comply with provincial or federal regulations, or make decisions based on ownership or funding models through planning mechanisms.

### 4.3 STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

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A stakeholder workshop was held with representatives from local businesses and those who conduct business in Town.

#### 4.3.1 Stakeholder Workshop Visioning

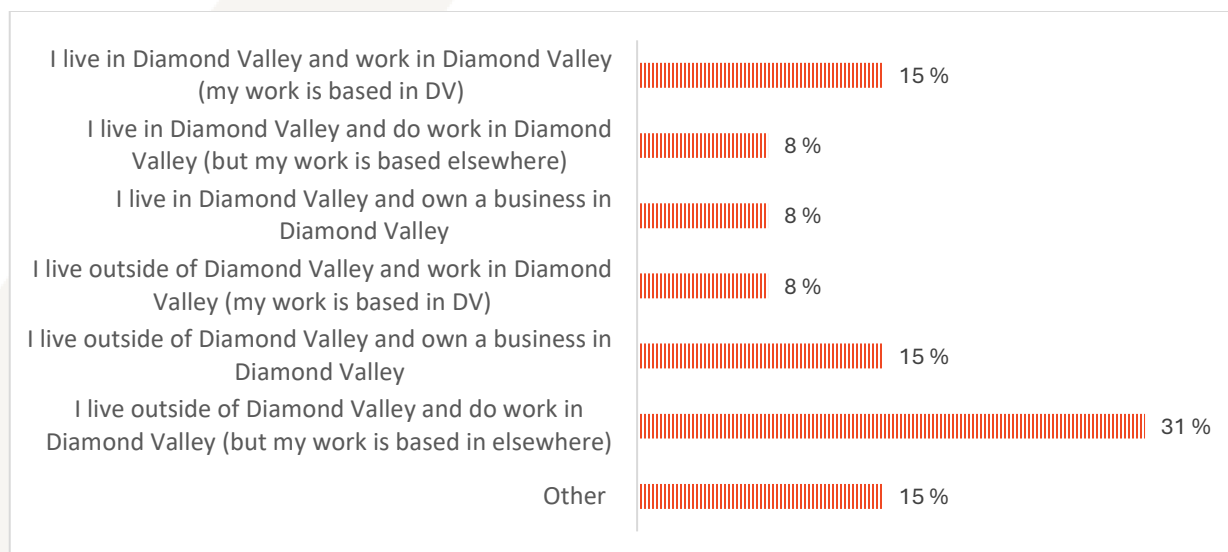


#### 4.3.2 Stakeholder Polling Exercise

##### 1. Where do you live and work?

Many respondents (31%) live outside Diamond Valley while working in town, with their work based elsewhere. Additionally, 15% of respondents are non-residents who own businesses in Diamond Valley, demonstrating its appeal to external entrepreneurs. Among residents, 15% live and work locally, while smaller groups with 8% of respondents each either live in Diamond Valley and own businesses or live in the town but work elsewhere. The remainder fall into the “Other” category (15%).







## 2. What is the most attractive thing about developing/building/owning a business in Diamond Valley?

<b>COMMUNITY</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multigeneration: the ability of the community to embrace all generations</li> <li>• Sense of community and supporting local</li> <li>• The support from members of the community to each other</li> <li>• Creating community</li> <li>• Local customers</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Good people</li> <li>• Interactive</li> </ul>
<b>LOCATION &amp; ACCESSIBILITY</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Country living close to the city</li> <li>• Proximity</li> <li>• Access to Kananaskis</li> <li>• Mountains</li> </ul>
<b>SMALL-TOWN APPEAL</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small town</li> <li>• Small-town feeling</li> <li>• Personalized service</li> <li>• Personable</li> </ul>

<b>BUSINESS/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the fastest-growing markets in southern Alberta</li> <li>• Growing town</li> <li>• Affordability</li> <li>• Attractive</li> <li>• Approval Process</li> <li>• Being part of responsible growth</li> </ul>
<b>LIFESTYLE &amp; AMENITIES</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convenience</li> <li>• Recreation opportunities</li> <li>• Recreation</li> <li>• Health care</li> <li>• Attainable housing</li> </ul>

### 3. What is your biggest challenge developing/building/owning a business in Diamond Valley?

<b>INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; RESOURCES</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainty of water (as a developer)</li> <li>• Limited town resources</li> <li>• Affordable housing for workers</li> <li>• Labour availability</li> <li>• Civil servicing constraints</li> <li>• Cost of servicing</li> </ul>
<b>MARKET &amp; ECONOMIC CHALLENGES</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer base is lower than a city</li> <li>• Small population</li> <li>• Small market</li> <li>• Demand for development at an unprecedented level</li> <li>• The Town has financial challenges</li> <li>• Lack of funds to support community initiatives</li> </ul>
<b>GOVERNANCE</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureaucracy</li> <li>• Regulation, red tape, environmental everything</li> <li>• Too much turnover in the town office</li> <li>• No sense of urgency</li> <li>• Poor vision</li> </ul>

<b>COMMUNITY &amp; PERCEPTION</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not supported by locals</li> <li>• Being taken for granted</li> <li>• Surrounding areas do not know how great it is</li> <li>• Getting our message out</li> </ul>
<b>POSITIVE RESPONSE</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I don't have any challenges in owning my business</li> </ul>

### 4.3.3 Activity Stations

Workshop participants rotated through three activity stations to discuss the following topics. While Table 1 had clear results to report, Tables 2 and 3 held discussions that were thematic and broad, and could not be summarized in a concise table format like Table 1. Instead, key themes that represent discussions throughout all activity stations are presented below in 4.2.4.




- **Table 1:** Where would you spend money? At this table, participants were asked how they would prioritize the distribution of municipal budget, followed by discussion. Topics are ranked based on the funding priority of participants:

<b>Tied 1<sup>st</sup> Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance or replacement of critical ageing hard infrastructure</li> <li>• Maintenance or replacement of community facilities - libraries, sports fields, indoor rec facilities)</li> </ul>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing regulatory barriers – policy, process improvement</li> </ul>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing the Town to be “development ready” – e.g., installing infrastructure (roads, services, utilities) pre-emptively in new commercial and industrial sites, rezoning undeveloped parcels</li> </ul>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community enhancement – preserving character, downtown beautification, and cultural identity</li> </ul>

- **Table 2:** Where should we grow, and what?
- **Table 3:** How fast should we grow?

#### 4.3.4 Key Themes from Stakeholder Workshops

Key themes from conversations at each stakeholder workshop table are presented below.

<b>GOVERNANCE</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Town process for development should be clearer, with full communication of application requirements at the start to prevent multiple resubmissions by applicants and a timely approval process.</li> <li>• Businesses need better service at the application counter.</li> </ul>
<b>STRATEGIC GROWTH</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a desire for smart growth that serves the community's needs, such as medical services, parks, public spaces, and businesses, rather than just accommodating developers' interests.</li> <li>• Support for a phased growth approach that progresses step by step.</li> <li>• The Town should consider water-saving initiatives, like those implemented by the Town of Okotoks (e.g., a fund for residents to purchase water-saving appliances).</li> <li>• Growth is needed to support businesses.</li> <li>• The Town should initiate development areas.</li> <li>• The town should not grow for the sake of growth.</li> <li>• Maintaining character and quality is important for the Town.</li> <li>• The Town should approach growth mindfully and strategically, keeping residents educated and informed.</li> <li>• There is a sense of protectionism regarding housing forms and business types, as change can be intimidating.</li> <li>• Land management should be based on market demand versus policy regulation.</li> <li>• Growth is occurring too slowly.</li> <li>• Move public infrastructure (e.g., Black Diamond town hall, fire hall, pool) to new locations when they need to be replaced and redistrict these centrally located lands for commercial use.</li> </ul>
<b>SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a desire to preserve Diamond Valley's small-town character and lifestyle and to maintain the municipality's history.</li> <li>• Shared that Diamond Valley has lacked an identity since amalgamation – previous town signs were taken down, and there has been no clear identity since.</li> <li>• The town needs to determine how to refer to the two former towns and build awareness around common names (one example was referring to "east and west districts").</li> <li>• There is a desire to find ways to connect the Town physically to support community cohesion, such as through river activities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues related to immigration in Calgary and other metropolitan areas are a concern, including housing, unemployment, and lack of resources to support immigrants.</li> </ul>
<b>HOUSING</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing diversity is key.</li> <li>• There is a lack of housing.</li> <li>• Housing costs versus service employee wages should be proportional.</li> <li>• Desire for smaller lots to support housing diversity.</li> <li>• There is a cost for servicing affordability.</li> <li>• Some people are house-poor, and the Town should explore how that impacts the community.</li> <li>• The Town should initiate development, especially residential.</li> </ul>
<b>BUSINESS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners want the ability to purchase their own property and build rather than rent at high rates. There is an idea to create an incubator business area where businesses can buy their own land and start or grow their operations.</li> <li>• Build on the movie and television industry, which frequently films in the area. Diamond Valley could create a business area to support this industry with warehouses and movie sets, similar to the Calgary Film Studio but with a more rural focus (e.g. High River).</li> <li>• Eliminating downtown parking minimums in both downtown areas.</li> <li>• More flexible land use regulations (e.g., Land Use Bylaw) for businesses and a more streamlined approval process.</li> <li>• A desire for some growth to support businesses and reach a minimum level of economic activity in the area.</li> <li>• Greater clarity on development levies and costs prior to application to make proper investment decisions.</li> <li>• More permitted uses in the Land Use Bylaw (e.g., secondary suites should be permitted).</li> <li>• Maintain or grow the population to ensure the province doesn't close or shrink the hospital.</li> <li>• Developments should be Dark Skies compliant.</li> <li>• Diamond Valley should create a Small Enterprise Zone.</li> <li>• Explore how remote work may impact the non-residential tax base.</li> <li>• Strategic placement of commercial retail units (box stores).</li> <li>• There's a growing gap between construction costs and labour.</li> <li>• Taxation challenges with pipelines, the river, and Alberta Transportation.</li> <li>• Attract and retain employees and look at the availability of labour.</li> <li>• Explore niche non-residential development.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Calgary ring road has changed access to the community, shaping livability and employment prospects. Access from the city is more efficient, making it easier to attract people from Calgary to work in Diamond Valley.</li> <li>• Incentive programs to help attract business, such as tax incentives.</li> </ul>
<b>RECREATION</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended that the Town explore programming of public areas.</li> <li>• More public facilities and support for existing recreation areas (e.g., the curling club).</li> </ul>
<b>DOWNTOWN</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressed concern with the Black Diamond Area Redevelopment plan and challenges of its implementation, particularly regarding sidewalk and roadway improvements under provincial jurisdiction.</li> </ul>
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize funding upgrades to hard infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer) to address deferred maintenance issues.</li> <li>• Infrastructure should be able to keep up with generational growth considerations for residential development.</li> <li>• Shared a desire to understand how water capacity issues will affect and potentially constrain future growth (e.g., population cap).</li> </ul>
<b>OTHER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared that “mono” everything is not resilient (e.g., one type of business or house). There is a need for diversity.</li> </ul>

## 4.4 SURVEY

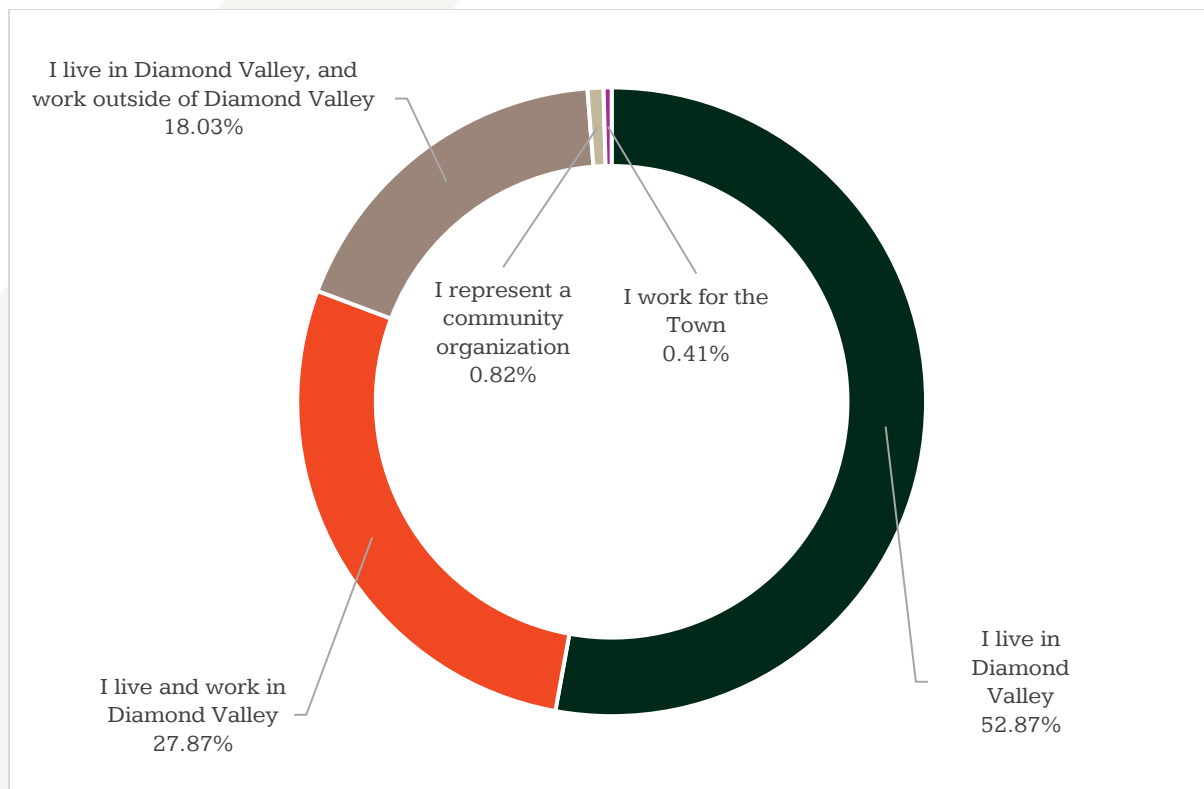
An online survey was created to supplement in-person engagement events. It was launched on the Town website and ran from December 6<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>. The survey solicited information from the general public, Town employees, and local organizations, with additional questions targeted at responses from these groups.

**243** number of survey responses were received, with **215** number of individual comments.

### 4.4.1 Survey Analysis

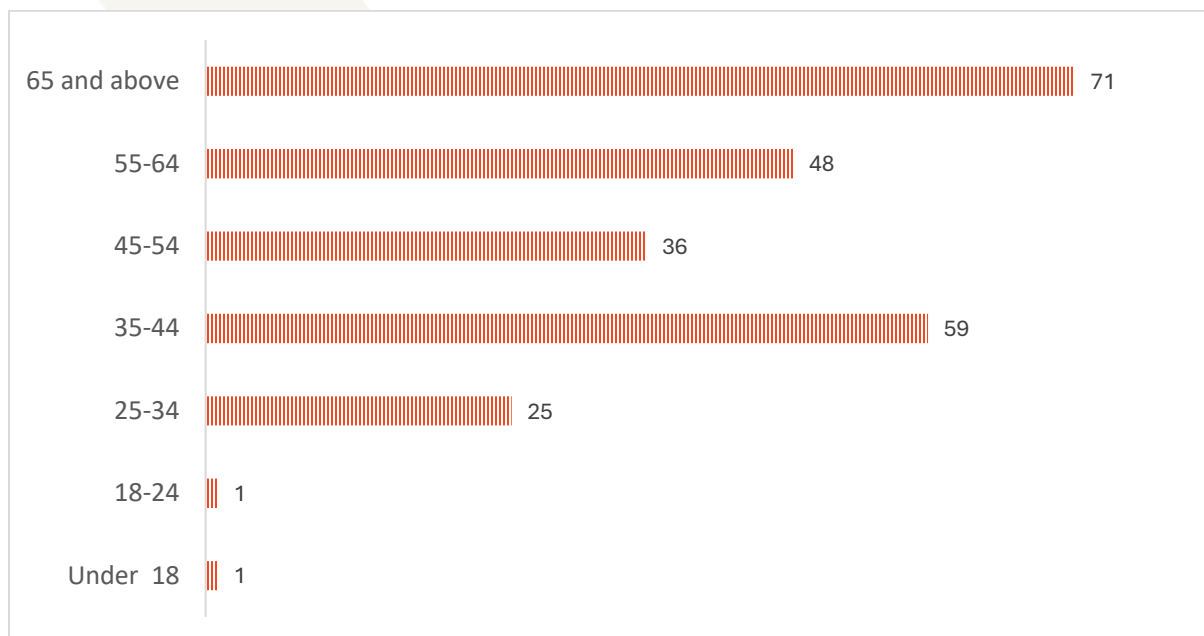
#### 1. What best describes your relationship to Diamond Valley?

The survey responses indicate that **52.87%** (129 responses) of respondents live in Diamond Valley, with **27.87%** (68 responses) also working in town. Meanwhile, **18.03%** (44 responses) of residents live in Diamond Valley but work outside, suggesting a notable commuting pattern. In addition, 0.82% of respondents represented community organizations, and 0.41% work for the town. Overall, the responses highlight a strong residential presence in Diamond Valley, with a significant portion also contributing to the local workforce, while others commute for work outside the town.



## 2. Age Range

The responses show a diverse age range of respondents, with the largest group of 71 people aged 65 and above (29.2%), followed by 48 people aged 35-44 (24.3%). 59 people responded from the age groups 25-34 (10.3%) and 48 respondents were aged 45-54 (14.8%). The younger age groups, 18-24 and under 18, have very few respondents, each at 0.4%, or 1 respondent.



*Questions 3 and 4 were developed to engage specifically with community organizations.*

### **3. What group or community partner do you represent?**

Two respondents who selected the option "representing community organizations" specified their affiliations.

### **4. What priorities should the Town consider in the MDP that would benefit community initiatives and support the services it provides?**

The survey received two responses to this question. One respondent suggested creating a Historic District along the Cowboy Trail and implementing a Formula Business restriction to protect small businesses and maintain the town's unique charm. The other respondent emphasized the importance of continuing the town's support for social initiatives that foster community engagement across all age groups. These responses reflect a desire to preserve the town's identity while promoting inclusivity and community connection.

*Questions 5 and 6 were developed to engage specifically with Town staff.*

### **5. What department do you currently work in?**

Only one respondent works for the town, specifically in the Planning & Development department. No responses were received from other departments, such as Assessments & Taxation, Building Permits & Inspections, Economic Development, or others. As such, there is limited representation of town staff in the survey.

### **6. What priorities should the Town consider in the MDP that would further your department's initiatives and support the services your department provides?**

Only one response to this question was received in the survey. The response emphasized the need for the establishment of clear non-residential economic development priorities and objectives and an update to the Economic Development Strategy to reflect targeted industries and measurable outcomes. This response highlights a focus on strategic economic growth and clear objectives for future development.

### **7. What is your vision for Diamond Valley 25+ years in the future?**

Respondents to the survey were asked to share their future vision (20+ years) for Diamond Valley. The survey received 209 responses to this question. Three thoughtful visions proposed by respondents are shared below:

*"I think this section should be filled out by ALL that have responded to this survey. Firstly, we can celebrate proudly now for the beautiful town we live in. We are located in an incredible part of the world that provides us with so much beauty and opportunity. We have community spirit and have several celebrations to show our loyalty. To improve, we need to develop our community in a responsible fashion that reflects our beautiful area. Careful and thoughtful planning will keep our community "special", desirable. I.e., balancing high density and single dwellings with affordable housing. Supporting local business, community groups and celebrations of our town help us keep our community alive. The town office is the leader,*



*representative and head of our town. With that leadership we can attract more business and people to our area for the long term. Respect for our special area of the world needs to be maintained. Protection and supply of water, greenspaces, infrastructure and roads are of significant importance. Keeping the vision of "Back to Nature" with responsible development is possible and sustainable. Development without consideration of this is short-term thinking without long-term gain.*

*"My vision for Diamond Valley in 20 years is this: While "growth" to many of Alberta's rural municipalities meant allowing large franchises to move in, pushing out unique local independent businesses, Diamond Valley took a visionary approach and managed to maintain its small town charm and authenticity through honouring its historical roots and creating a unique Historic District along Alberta's famous "Cowboy Trail". Through implementing a Formula Business restriction and Historic Boomtown era design aesthetics in its bylaws when the two town of Black Diamond and Turner Valley merged to form the Town of Diamond Valley, the Historic District serves to maintain a unique and historic character, the diversity and distinctiveness of its commercial areas, and the small town quality of life for residents and visitors, while preserving and protecting the economic vitality of local businesses. Through preserving and celebrating its historical nature and prioritizing its unique, locally owned small businesses as one of its largest assets, Diamond Valley has become a popular tourist destination, keeping money in the local economy and ultimately benefitting the local community."*

*"I would like to see a solid plan for the future with vision and intent. We have suffered from poor planning, haphazard application of an aged (2004) MDP, and decisions driven by short term gain, rather than what's best in the long term. We can not undo past mistakes, but we can certainly see how shortsighted decisions of the past have ruined conditions/ opportunities of the present. For example, allowing development without sidewalks for both sides of a street and curb cuts shows that the town does not value a sense of community and walk/ accessibility that sidewalks create. Another example is not having wide roads for parking on both sides and ample traffic corridors shows that the town does not value the needs/peaceful enjoyment of residents in their allowance of developers to cut corners and approve poor design. Stop being content with the absolute worst ideas that bring in a bit of money, and start upholding a philosophy that puts the community first. A good design can lay this out in a clear way, and give confidence to residents that this is a good place to live now and in the future."*

All responses to this question were analyzed, and several common themes emerged. Verbatim comments that reflect major themes are shared below.


## GOVERNANCE






*"I would like public acknowledgment of where the shortfalls are and how we can work to improve them over the next 20+ years. Pretending everything is fine or good enough is not helpful or encouraging. Honest reflection can go a long way to demonstrate a renewed vision."*




*"A community of hard working families that value a community where families are safe and their opinions are heard and actioned upon"*

*"Have a crystal clear communication plan and roll out for changes, reasons why, and cause/effect if need be to help people understand. "*

	<p><i>"We have a competent council that values the communities tax dollars and doesn't vote to increase our utility bills so that it appears our taxes are not being increased."</i></p>
<p><b>STRATEGIC GROWTH</b></p> 	<p>Some respondents expressed they do not want to see growth...</p> <p><i>"No growth, same small town feel."</i></p> <p><i>"I like this town just the way it is"</i></p> <p><i>"Maintain the small town vibe, keep it natural with an active focus, with lots of parks, pathways, etc. No more dense housing!"</i></p> <p><i>"It would be nice to keep the small town charm. No strip malls or big box stores. Keep the green spaces green. No more commercial development."</i></p> <p><i>"I would love to see the small town feel kept. Towns all around big cities are expanding and it's harder to find that small town vibe close to a city. We have an opportunity to protect that here and still be a highly desirable unique community. We have some essential improvements to make, but I think we can do that and be great."</i></p> <p>Other respondents felt that strategic growth could be beneficial.</p> <p><i>"With more development building the infrastructure of the community I feel that Diamond Valley area will grow and develop into a well balanced community. With more residential and commercial properties."</i></p> <p><i>"A population cap should be considered and researched."</i></p> <p><i>"I am concerned about the "small town" view that people have of Diamond Valley. There seems to be a population in the area who discourage growth, new businesses, and change. However, without any of these things, we are going to be unprepared for when Diamond Valley inevitably grows. In 20 years I see Diamond Valley mirroring Cochrane, along with their infrastructure issues and poor planning. I would hope that we can encourage businesses in the area - not just mom and pop shops, but also franchises that a lot of people don't realize are actually owned and ran locally and are a boon to the community. These businesses often donate large amounts to the community and provide employment and other opportunities."</i></p> <p><i>"Intelligent growth. Development of the tax base, keep small town feeling and remember our heritage."</i></p> <p><i>"By focusing on thoughtful and conscious development, Diamond Valley can grow in a way that respects its heritage, supports its community, and preserves its connection to the surrounding natural landscape. This approach ensures a resilient and prosperous future, making Diamond Valley a beloved home and a destination with lasting appeal for generations to come."</i></p>
<p><b>SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE</b></p>	<p><i>"I understand there's necessary growth needed but I'd still love to keep the small town feel."</i></p> <p><i>"A slow and steady growth while maintaining a rural atmosphere."</i></p>

	<p><i>"Keeping it small town charm. I'd hate to see anymore box-stores come in. I hope it will stay small and quaint. Okotoks is not the goal or the dream."</i></p> <p><i>"Prosperous WHILE maintaining its small town charm and architectural aesthetic."</i></p> <p><i>"I love how quirky and full of character this town feels. I hope it remains the same without losing its charm."</i></p> <p><i>"Mountain town, not an Okotoks."</i></p>
<p><b>HOUSING</b> Including seniors housing</p> 	<p>Status Quo Housing:</p> <p><i>"No high rises, housing that fits into the already existing houses, keep the neighborhood esthetics the same."</i></p> <p>Housing Variety:</p> <p><i>"Residential growth but take into consideration the existing neighbourhoods and don't create multi plus densities within established single family communities."</i></p> <p><i>"Need AFFORDABLE housing for young people to buy and NEED affordable rental units! There's currently NOTHING!"</i></p> <p><i>"A welcoming inclusive community offering affordable housing. A much larger commercial/light industrial component to the tax base."</i></p> <p><i>"My vision "Right now? Kinda bleak. As a younger generation looking to start my own family, there is no place for me here or my family. There is no housing we can afford here. There's not even any rentals. And the ones that are available are senior living. I love this town, I would love to stay, to grow here. But based on trends, that's not possible. 20+ years in the future? I will be reaching 50ish by that time, and still I fear I will have nowhere to call home. And if I do, it won't be in a town that couldn't even be bothered to take care of their young today. We need affordable housing today! We are suffering in this economy. Me and mine are not the dwindling population. We are the ones having families, putting our dollars in the economy, and being expected to take care of our elders. We can not do any of that with no housing."</i></p> <p><i>"Allow areas to include small or tiny homes under 800 square ft."</i></p> <p><i>"Senior housing. One floor, no stairs. Somewhere to live when the bigger house is too much but not ready for a nursing home. Reasonably priced. This is for now and 20 years from now."</i></p> <p><i>"More affordable rentals for seniors that allow pets. and NO MORE increase in the population. We only have so much infrastructure."</i></p>
<p><b>SAFE COMMUNITY</b></p> 	<p><i>"Smaller close knit community, with small town feel, neighbours know each other, traffic isn't crazy, low crime, businesses that relate to community themes."</i></p>

	<p><i>"Safe, quiet, friendly, charming, with enough amenities that we don't need to drive elsewhere."</i></p> <p><i>"A vibrant and growing community that welcomes young and old to develop their respective families in a safe and healthy environment."</i></p> <p><i>"A place that is comfortable and safe to live for people of all ages."</i></p>
<p><b>BUSINESS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b></p> 	<p><i>"More small business, independent stores, less commercial structures and chain restaurants."</i></p> <p><i>"More businesses / commercial outlets but keeping the small town feel - I.e. no big box stores, chains tires etc."</i></p> <p><i>"Focus on Commercial Development in WEST Diamond Valley."</i></p> <p><i>"We need full amenity stores, i.e.: grocery stores."</i></p> <p><i>"We need a.. "dollar store, affordable shopping."</i></p> <p><i>"A small, close knit community which is a tourist destination along cowboy trail, known for its outdoor amenities, local &amp; eclectic shops and unique dining."</i></p> <p><i>"I'd like to see DV as a trendy destination for local tourism and a convenient place for locals to keep their business local. Like Canmore/Banff for outdoorsy tourists, but not so crazy. A destination, like Calgary's 17th Avenue where people from DV and Albertans can come for the day. Less chains, more mom and pop shops. Still a good place to raise a family and commute to the city for work, but less snoozey."</i></p>
<p><b>RECREATION</b></p> 	<p><i>"A nice gym or recreation centre."</i></p> <p><i>"I can see a recreation centre being a great addition to our community."</i></p> <p><i>"I would love the see an indoor pool."</i></p> <p><i>"RECREATION CENTRE would provide services and employment for youth."</i></p> <p><i>"The potential for a trail system within the 2 towns. We're all about outdoors!"</i></p> <p><i>"...expanded parks/river parks/trails in town, and a bike/ski path connecting Turner valley to the provincial park."</i></p>
<p><b>FISCAL HEALTH/TAXES</b></p> 	<p><i>"Keep the small town vibe. Don't want increased taxes to support expanded infrastructures e.g. new schools, roads, utilities, shopping malls."</i></p> <p><i>"More commercial businesses to reduce property taxes."</i></p> <p><i>"My vision for Diamond Valley 20+ years from now is a friendly small town that preserves its charm with quaint shops and welcoming community spirit. I see thoughtful new developments featuring beautiful walking paths and green spaces. A strong, sustainable industry would support the local economy, reduce the tax burden on residents, and align with our commitment to a pollution-free environment."</i></p>

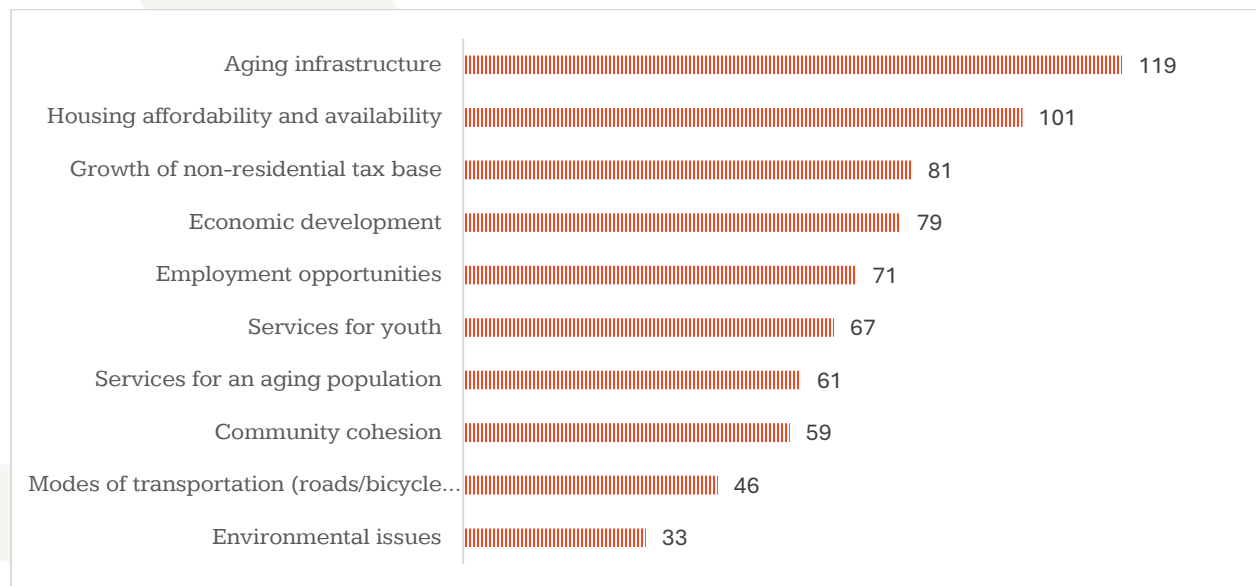
<p><b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b></p> 	<p><i>"We need improvements to maintaining our roads, street lights, some trail connections, maps etc."</i></p> <p><i>"A vibrant diverse community with independent stores, green spaces and parks, mixed housing and infrastructure that is in good working order. We should not be adding housing and residents until water and sewer capabilities are sound and infrastructure is solid."</i></p> <p><i>"Walkways become a normal &amp; pleasureable way to get around the Town to shop &amp; to enjoy a simple walk, meeting neighbour's, exchanging news &amp; greetings, walking the dog enjoy the seasons &amp; times of day."</i></p> <p><i>"A town that stops charging us insane water bills because they can't fix the pipes underground or wasting water."</i></p>
<p><b>WATER RESOURCE</b></p> 	<p><i>"Population CAPS set to preserve the area and ensure we don't run outta water resources!!!!"</i></p> <p><i>"Keeping a small town vibe and slower growth with in mind finite water resources we have. Finding our own niche and style by not imitating other bigger town, city in term of development."</i></p>
<p><b>TRANSPORTATION</b></p> 	<p><i>"Taxis or transportation for people to okotoks and also to get between Turner valley and black diamond."</i></p> <p><i>"A well planned connected community that provides accessibility. An active transportation component and preserving of the community natural assets."</i></p> <p><i>"I would hope it would be a walkable town, well landscaped, with paved and natural paths, with quiet places to eat away from traffic, with good public transportation."</i></p> <p><i>"Bus service for the elderly so people don't starve to death."</i></p> <p><i>"Large drop in art center."</i></p>

## 8. What do you feel are the biggest challenges Diamond Valley is facing? (Pick your top 3)

Aging infrastructure was identified as the most significant challenge, selected by 119 respondents. Housing affordability and availability followed closely with 101 selections, highlighting the importance of addressing housing issues in the community. The need for economic development and the growth of the non-residential tax base were emphasized by 79 and 81 selections, respectively, reflecting a desire for economic diversification and stability.

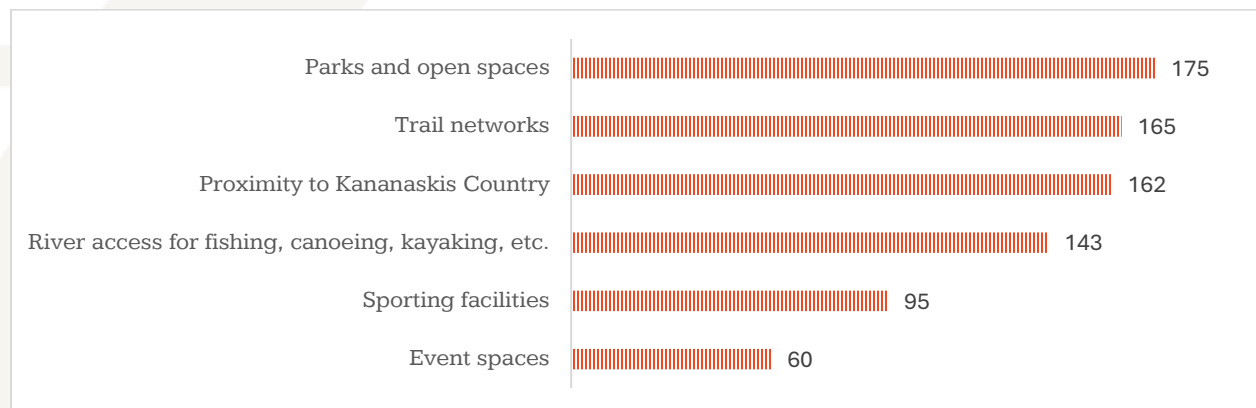
Other notable challenges included services for youth (67 selections), services for an aging population (61 selections), and community cohesion (59 selections), suggesting that social and community development are also important priorities. Modes of transportation received 46 selections, reflecting the need for improved infrastructure such as roads and sidewalks, while 33 respondents selected environmental issues. Overall, the survey indicates that while aging infrastructure and housing are top concerns, concerns about

economic development, transportation, and community services for both youth and the aging population are also significant.



### 9. What recreation facilities or amenities do you value most in Diamond Valley? (Select all that apply)

The survey responses regarding the most valued recreation facilities or amenities in Diamond Valley reveal a strong preference for outdoor and nature-based options. Parks and open spaces were the most valued, receiving 175 selections, followed by trail networks with 165 selections. River access for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking was also highly valued, with 143 selections. Proximity to Kananaskis emerged as another important priority, with 162 selections highlighting the community's appreciation for nearby natural attractions. Sporting facilities and event spaces received fewer selections, with 95 and 60, respectively. Overall, the survey shows that Diamond Valley residents value nature, outdoor recreation, and scenic areas, with less emphasis on structured sporting or event spaces.

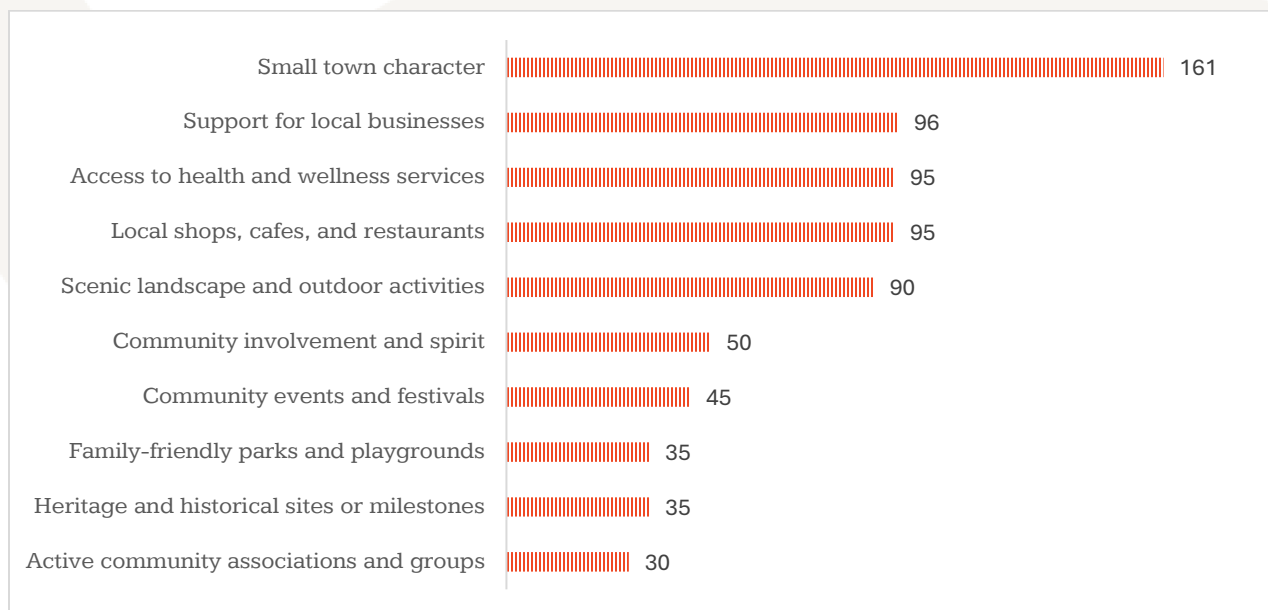




## 10. What are the things we should celebrate most as a community? (Select your top 3)

The responses highlight several key aspects that residents of Diamond Valley value in their community. Small-town character was identified as the thing to celebrate most, with 161 selections reflecting a strong attachment to the town's distinctive identity. Support for local businesses followed closely with 96 selections, underscoring the importance of a thriving local economy. The scenic landscape and outdoor activities received 90 selections, showing that the natural environment is highly valued, alongside local shops, cafes, and restaurants, which also received 95 selections, indicating a strong appreciation for local commerce.

Additional priorities included community involvement and spirit, with 50 selections, pointing to the value placed on social cohesion and access to health and wellness services, which also received 95 selections, emphasizing the community's focus on well-being. Heritage and historical sites or milestones, family-friendly parks and playgrounds, and active community associations and groups received fewer selections (35, 35, and 30, respectively). This suggests that while these aspects are appreciated, they are not as strongly prioritized as the top categories.



## 11. What areas of housing should the Town focus most on?

*For this question the "1-5" Likert scale ranges from Little Focus (1) to Major Focus (5), with Balanced Focus (3) in the middle and (2) and (4) representing intermediate levels.*

- **Housing Affordability:** Most respondents (56.9%) rated it as requiring a Balanced Focus, with 17.2% seeing it as a Major Focus, highlighting its importance as a community priority.
- **Assisted Living:** While 60.9% opted for a Balanced Focus, only 9.8% considered it a Major Focus, suggesting it is a lower priority compared to other issues.

- **Care Facilities:** A Balanced Focus is favored by 56.6% of respondents, with 16.2% and 13.6% selecting (4) and Major Focus, respectively, reflecting some division in community opinion.
- **Housing for 55+:** Over half of respondents (53.2%) preferred a Balanced Focus, and only 10.1% saw it as a Major Focus, indicating moderate importance.
- **Housing Inventory (Amount of Housing):** With 50.4% favouring a Balanced Focus, the remaining responses are evenly distributed, showing varied perspectives.
- **Diversity in Housing Choice:** Responses are spread, with 32.2% favouring Balanced Focus and 21% selecting Major Focus, reflecting a range of opinions on its importance.
- **Land Available for New Housing:** Opinions are divided, with 35.3% supporting Balanced Focus, 26% indicating Little Focus, and only 9.8% prioritizing it as a Major Focus.
- **Availability of Services for New Housing:** This is the highest priority, with 33.3% selecting Major Focus and 27.2% favouring Balanced Focus, underlining the importance of essential services like water and sewer.

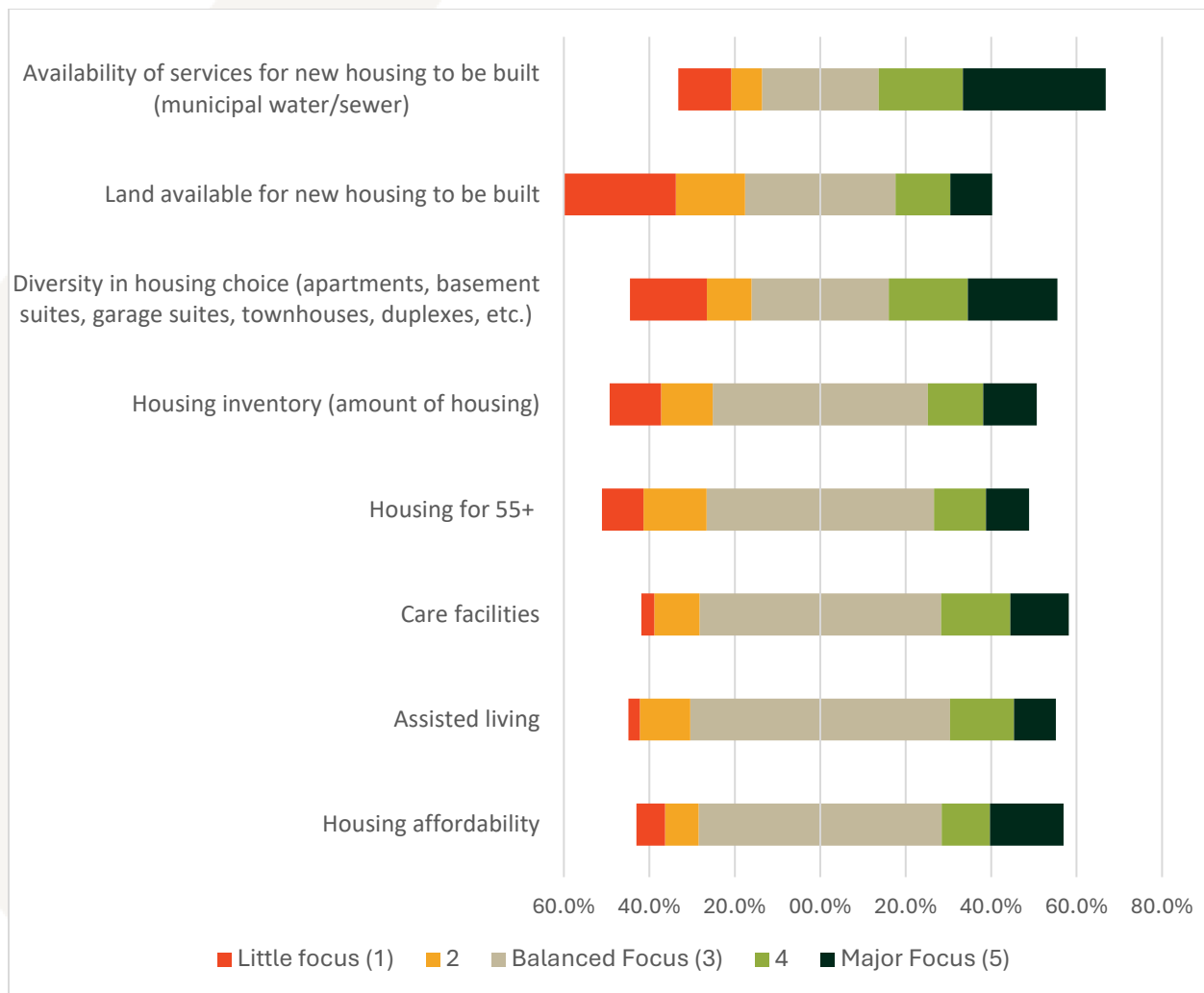
#### Top 3 Priorities (4 + Major Focus (5) combined):

1. **Availability of Services for New Housing (Municipal Water/Sewer):** Highest priority with a combined score of 53% (33.3% for Major Focus).
2. **Care Facilities:** Strong importance with a combined score of 29.9% (13.7% for Major Focus).
3. **Housing Affordability:** Key concern with a combined score of 28.5% (17.2% for Major Focus).

#### Lowest 3 Priorities (Little Focus (1) + (2) combined):

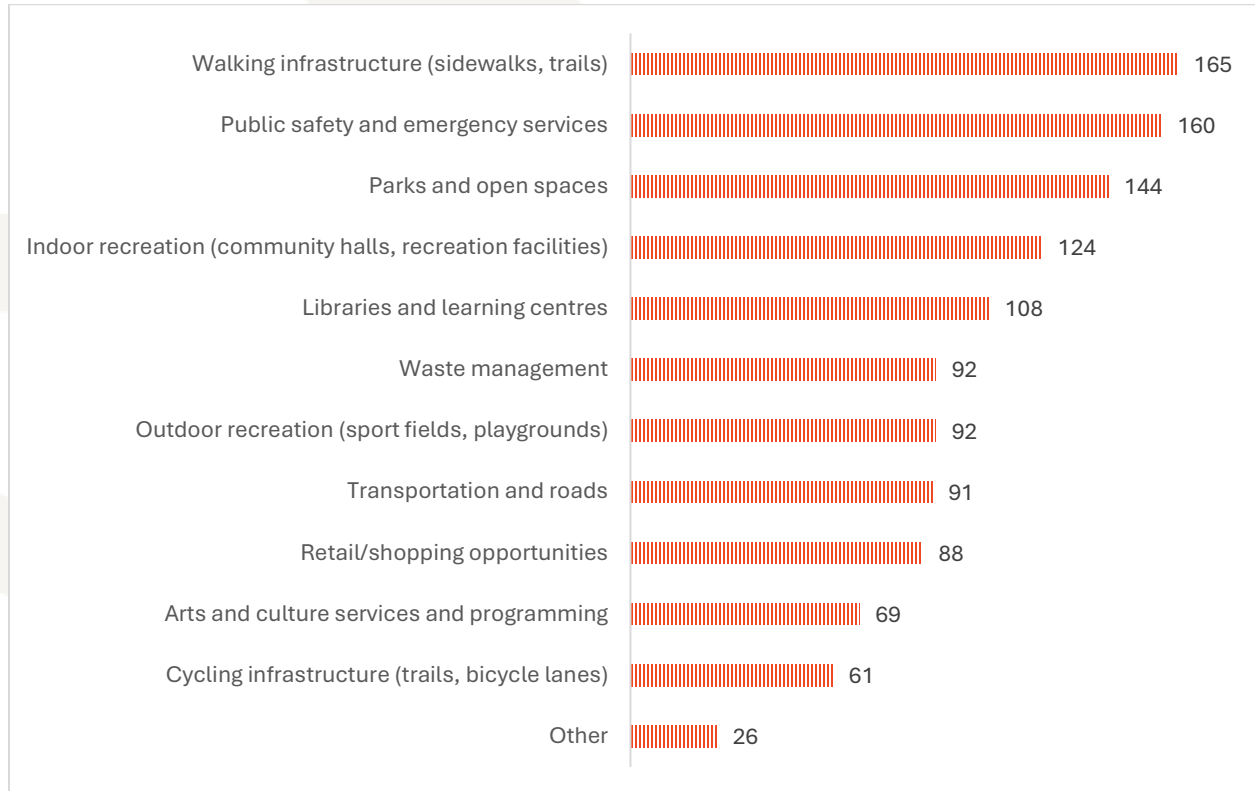
1. **Land Available for New Housing:** Least urgent concern with a combined score of 42.3% (9.8% for Major Focus).
2. **Assisted Living:** Lower overall priority with a combined score of 14.5% (9.8% for Major Focus).
3. **Housing for 55+:** Lower priority with a combined score of 24.5% (10.1% for Major Focus).





## 12. What local services or amenities are most important to you? (Select all that apply)

The survey results show that the community's top priorities are walking infrastructure, public safety, parks, and open spaces. Indoor recreation facilities and libraries are also important, followed by waste management and outdoor recreation. Transportation, retail opportunities, arts and culture, and cycling infrastructure are valued to a lesser extent. Overall, the survey results strongly emphasize infrastructure that supports walking, safety, recreation, and learning. The community values accessible and well-maintained public spaces and services that enhance their quality of life.



## 5 Next Steps

The Project Team will take what we have heard and begin drafting the MDP. A second round of engagement will take place during the summer of 2025. Stay tuned for more details on the project website: [Municipal Development Plan \(MDP\) | Diamond Valley, AB.](#)



**1 | PROJECT LAUNCH & BACKGROUND RESEARCH**  
AUGUST 2024 - NOVEMBER 2024



**2 | ROUND 1 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**  
DECEMBER 2024



**3 | DRAFTING THE MDP**  
OCTOBER 2024 - JUNE 2025

▶ We are here!



**4 | ROUND 2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**  
JUNE 2025



**5 | FINALIZING THE MDP**  
JUNE 2025



**6 | APPROVALS PROCESS**  
JULY 2025 - SEPTEMBER 2025

