

TOWN OF
Westlock
ENGAGEMENT
SUMMARY

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
BYLAW 2024-16



September 2024

Highlights - Public Engagement

The Town of Westlock's Municipal Development Plan refresh project took place from November 2022 through the fall of 2024. The project included an iterative public engagement component, which targeted a range of participants including residents, business owners, user groups, and the general public.

Feedback from all participants was used by the Project Team to clarify the community's needs, wants, and concerns, identify targeted revisions, and to finalize the final draft of the revised MDP.

22+ months
to create the revised MDP

2 major phases
of public engagement activities

32 sign-ups for
project updates

58 survey
responses

2 community
message boards

174 message board
comments

1 Farmers' Market
pop-up

1 Chamber of Commerce
presentation

3 Open House
sessions

11 Open House
boards

51 Open House
participants

462 sticker dot votes
by participants

845 project page
views

18,152+ video and social
media reach

"I love the fact that Westlock is a
busy community with a
thriving county."
- Participant

"Westlock needs to revitalize and be more
welcoming. We need people to want to
shop/stay/play in Westlock and we don't
have a lot to offer right now."
- Participant

Engagement Process

A multi-phased approach enabled participants to provide input through the plan refresh process and allowed the Project Team to consider public input at all stages of the MDP's review, revision, and refinement.

Each major phase of engagement focused on collecting specific types of feedback which were then incorporated into the final revised MDP. Phase One of public engagement started at a broad and visionary level and then progressed to specific review and testing of key changes in Phase Two.

The overall purpose of all the engagement activities was to ensure those that the project impacts have an opportunity to:

- Learn about the project and the Municipal Development Plan;
- Provide input on changes and amendments to the MDP;
- Be informed of the progress of the project.

Other expected objectives of the engagement activities included:

- Providing alternative or perspectives that may have been missed;
- Filling in gaps in data; and
- Commenting on the draft document.

**"I think our town has a lot of potential for growth and can be a good place for all families as well as retired seniors. The two groups are not mutually exclusive. I have hope we can be a more inclusive community."
- Participant**

**"I would like to see Westlock focus on becoming even more senior friendly with additional manageable single level housing close to shopping and cafes"
- Participant**



Engagement Opportunities

Project Launch

ENGAGEMENT FOCUS: Educating about the project, the Municipal Development Plan, and gathering data on engagement preferences.

Press Release

Following Council's endorsement of the project, a press release was used to notify the public and broader community about the project and its goals.

Project Website

A project website was created as a home base for all relevant project documents, information, and updates. All communication and advertisements regarding the project pointed back to this central location.

Educational Video: What is a MDP?

As part of the project launch phase, an educational video was released to provide information on Municipal Development Plan and its role and impact on the Town's future growth and development.

Call for Project Update Sign-Ups and Engagement Preferences

A call for sign-ups for project updates and engagement preferences was put out by the Project Team to gauge initial project interest as well as how the public would like to be engaged over the course of the project.

what's next WESTLOCK

Sign up for project updates and let us know how you'd like to participate.

The Town of Westlock is refreshing its Municipal Development Plan.

This plan sets the vision for and guides future development in Westlock for the next 20 years.

We want your input on what's next for Westlock - sign up for project updates at www.westlock.ca/p/mdp-refresh and stay tuned for upcoming engagement opportunities.

Questions? Development Services | planning@westlock.ca | 780-349-4444

What is a Municipal Development Plan?

what's next WESTLOCK

Town of Westlock

Public Engagement - Phase One

ENGAGEMENT FOCUS: Obtaining broad feedback on ideas for the next 20 years in Westlock.

2 Community Message Board Locations

Community Message Boards were set-up between July 10 and August 20, 2023 at two high-traffic locations in Westlock which offered an unstructured opportunity for participants to leave comments regarding their needs and wants for Westlock's next 20 years.

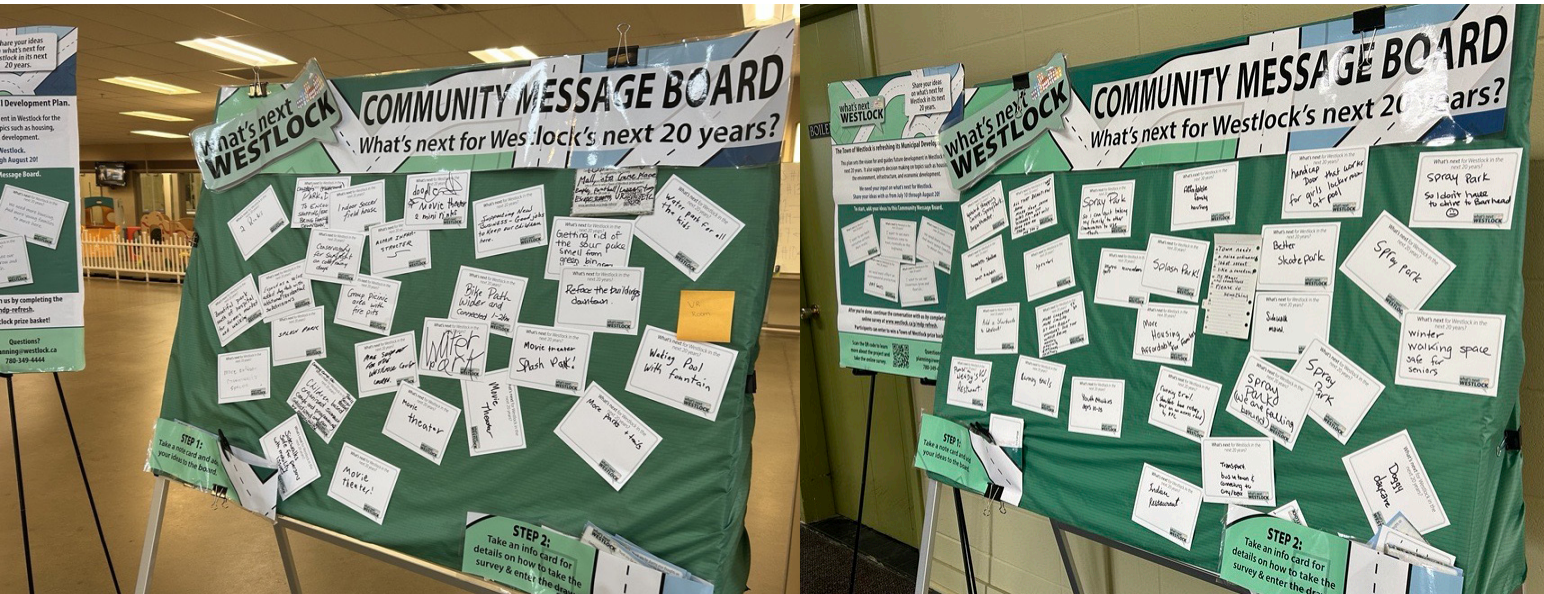
- Heritage Building (10007 100 Avenue)
- Rotary Spirit Centre (9603 100 Street)

Online Survey

Feedback was collected through an online survey that built upon the open-ended question asked at the message boards and featured additional questions regarding the current MDPs' vision, guiding principles, and policy topic areas such as housing and the environment. The survey was open for responses from July 10 to August 20, 2023.

Farmers Market Pop-Up

One pop-up event occurred at the local Farmers Market on July 20, 2023 which allowed the Project Team to have casual conversations with the public regarding the project.



"More affordable housing would also be an asset to the community."
- Participant

"The more options we have the easier it is to attract new families to our town. Grow and keep our small town charm."
- Participant

"Don't mix housing types. By mixing and condensing neighbourhoods, we will quickly lose that small town feel."
- Participant

Public Engagement - Phase Two

ENGAGEMENT FOCUS: Confirming the major changes to the MDP align with the community's wants, concerns, and aspirations for the future and informing further revision and finalization of other plan components.

Chamber of Commerce Presentation

A direct presentation on the proposed changes to the MDP was given to the Town's business community at the April 23, 2024 Chamber of Commerce meeting.

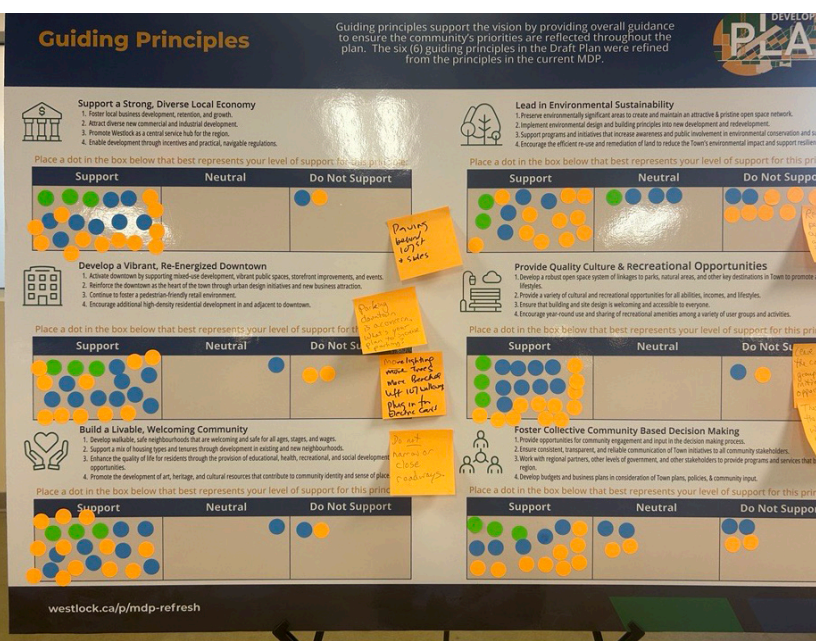
Digital Open House Boards

For those who were unable to make an in-person session, the same open house boards were made available on the project website over the course of April and May 2024.

3 Open House Sessions

Eleven (11) boards were used to showcase the key highlights of the draft revised Municipal Development Plan. Participants were able to give feedback using dot stickers and sticky notes.

- April 24, 2024 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- April 25, 2024 from 5 to 8 p.m.
- May 1, 2024 from 1 to 8 p.m.



"To keep Westlock an attractive place to live and work, it needs to be economical. That's one of the only competitive edges we have over other communities"
- Participant

"We need to maintain neutrality in public spaces to ensure that all feel welcome"
- Participant

What Was Said

Key Themes (from all phases of public engagement)

- Participants expressed a strong desire for increased recreational opportunities, particularly those that would be free and easily accessible to all age groups, including a splash park and expanded trails.
- Participants that mentioned downtown focused on expanding the business offerings in the area and the desire to see the area refreshed with new amenities.
- A significant number of participants focused on better accessibility to public spaces through improved sidewalks, signalization, and transportation. In particular, seniors and those with mobility issues were highlighted as the benefitting population.
- Participants requested continued maintenance and repair to existing infrastructure, particularly sidewalks.
- The need for more housing, particularly affordable and below-market (ie. homeless shelter) housing, and the upkeep of existing aging housing stock, was highlighted by participants.
- Participants expressed the need for more activities for children and families and increased childcare and educational opportunities.
- Participants spoke to the desire for additional community support included requests for mental health support and an expanded library.
- Some participants focused on topics of governance, including the need for new ordinances or bylaws.
- Participants connected strongly with Westlock's small town feel, friendly atmosphere, and wide selection of amenities.
- Participants expressed the importance of retaining and attracting families and skilled workers and supporting the arts and local First Nations communities.
- Participants would like to see unique architectural design standards for the highway corridor, and overall beautification of the highway corridor through the addition of landscaping and lighting.
- Participants noted that improved pedestrian connections were required along the highway and that pedestrian safety and highway maintenance needed to be prioritized.
- Participants highlighted recycling, green space and tree preservation and air quality monitoring as their most desired environmental practices.
- Participants noted concerns regarding environmental sustainability, its impact on cost efficiency, outside influence, and micro-management of private resources.
- Participants mentioned encouraging or incentivizing the restoration of existing buildings as well as enhanced promotion of existing resources (ie. museums).
- Participants indicated concern for rising crime levels.
- Participants mentioned the need for fiscal responsibility & transparency and ensuring decisions are grounded in solid economics.
- Participants expressed a desire for the safety and welcoming of all, not specific groups, in public spaces and the community at large.
- Participants noted concerns regarding parking availability and the narrowing or closure of roadways.
- Participants shared the importance of respecting all modes of transportation, including gas-powered vehicles.
- Participants expressed the desire to have community groups lead the funding and provision of cultural opportunities.
- Participants spoke to issues of affordability in terms of property taxes and franchise fees.
- Participants expressed a desire for development to pay for the costs of development.
- Participants expressed concerns regarding the location of high-density housing and future industrial lands.

What We Did

What was Said	What we Did
Participants expressed a strong desire for increased recreational opportunities, particularly those that would be free and easily accessible to all age groups, including a splash park and expanded trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An expanded Recreation, Arts, and Culture town-wide policy area has been incorporated into the MDP to guide the provision of recreational opportunities. • The MDP references designing recreational infrastructure for a diversity of users of all ages and abilities in both passive and active forms.
Participants that mentioned downtown focused on expanding the business offerings in the area and the desire to see the area refreshed with new amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Downtown Core Policy Area focuses on fostering business retention and expansion. • Additional policies are included to encourage reinvestment into the area and the addition of high-quality design features.
A significant number of participants focused on better accessibility to public spaces through improved sidewalks, signalization, and transportation. In particular, seniors and those with mobility issues were highlighted as the benefitting population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MDP's transportation policies were expanded to include those focused on increasing the safety and quality of the pedestrian experience. • In addition, multiple policies across the MDP speak to requiring design that enables access and use for persons of all abilities.
Participants requested continued maintenance and repair to existing infrastructure, particularly sidewalks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset management which oversees the maintenance and renewal of Town-owned infrastructure, underpins much of the MDP, including sections pertaining to sidewalks. • The MDP proposes specific implementation items which will directly address sidewalk gaps, connectivity & maintenance.
The need for more housing, particularly affordable and below-market (ie. homeless shelter) housing, and the upkeep of existing aging housing stock, was highlighted by participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new Housing town-wide policy section is introduced in the MDP. Its policies touch on all aspects of housing delivery, including addressing affordability, the missing middle, and upkeep of older or derelict housing stock.
Participants expressed the need for more activities for children and families and increased childcare and educational opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies regarding offering a range of programming and opportunities for all ages are included throughout the MDP. • Specific policy direction is given in the MDP's Economic Development policies to pursuing additional educational opportunities with post-secondary institutions.

“ Housing policy should be equitable and accessible - rather than “business development/ landlord” focused only. It should be people/ community-centered. Keep things walkable.”
- Participant

“Downtown revitalization is important but so is the rest of the community. We can't focus on just one neighborhood/area. It's a collaboration.”
- Participant

What was Said	What we Did
Participants spoke to the desire for additional community supports included requests for mental health support and an expanded library.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While mental health supports and library services are currently not services the Town provides directly, the MDP provides policy direction to continue to support organization that do to ensure their longevity and to enhance their service provision.
Some participants focused on topics of governance, including the need for new ordinances or bylaws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A guiding principle of the MDP is to foster collective community based decision making, of which goals include transparent decision making with consideration of community input, including the creation of new Bylaws.
Participants connected strongly with Westlock's small town feel, friendly atmosphere, and wide selection of amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MDP's new vision incorporates references to Westlock's amenities, connectedness, and history to honor elements of Westlock today that participants resonated strongly with.
Participants expressed the importance of retaining and attracting families and skilled workers and supporting the arts and local First Nations communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MDP introduces a new town-wide policy area focused on Economic Development, which includes policy direction which speaks specifically to workforce retention and attraction. Wherever possible, the MDP references areas where First Nations can be incorporated into the Town's planning, service delivery, and operational processes. Based on participant feedback, the MDP includes opportunities for new and expanded arts amenities, in consultation with community groups.
Participants would like to see unique architectural design standards for the highway corridor, and overall beautification of the highway corridor through the addition of landscaping and lighting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Highway Corridor policy area retains policies referring to the design of the area and related to those policies, and specifies implementation actions to develop specific, actionable guidelines for use by developers and businesses in the area.
Participants noted that improved pedestrian connections were required along the highway and that pedestrian safety and highway maintenance needed to be prioritized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy direction for improved pedestrian connectivity and safety improvements has been incorporated throughout the MDP, both in the Town-wide policies and specific policy areas which involve the highway. While highway maintenance is under the purview of Alberta Transportation, the MDP provides direction for the Town to continue to work collaboratively with the province on the integrity and design of highways in Westlock.
Participants highlighted recycling, green space and tree preservation and air quality monitoring as their most desired environmental practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MDP includes an expanded town-wide policy area pertaining to Environmental Stewardship, which provides policy direction for tree retention, encouraging recycling & reuse, and emissions reduction.
Participants noted concerns regarding environmental sustainability, its impact on cost efficiency, outside influence, and micro-management of private resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on participant feedback, the Environmental Stewardship policy area was revised to promote voluntary stewardship practices, rather than mandatory ones. Sustainability is not a focus in the final draft of the MDP.

What was Said	What we Did
Participants mentioned encouraging or incentivizing the restoration of existing buildings as well as enhanced promotion of existing resources (ie. museums).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MDP includes policy direction in multiple areas which refers to the upkeep of older or derelict buildings as well as associated implementation direction. • Policy direction is provided in the MDP to identify and support opportunities to strengthen the tourism industry.
Participants indicated concern for rising crime levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While community policing falls under the purview of the RCMP in Westlock, the MDP includes new policy direction regarding the design of both neighbourhoods and buildings that incorporated CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) principles as a way to discourage crime.
Participants mentioned the need for fiscal responsibility & transparency and ensuring decisions are grounded in solid economics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any municipal improvements or projects proposed or implied in the MDP are subject to available funding and their inclusion does not require the Town to undertake any of the work or projects and are subject to budget approval by Council. • A guiding principle of the MDP is collective community-based decision making, which also applies to budget-related decision making and transparency of Town initiatives.
Participants expressed a desire for the safety and welcoming of all, not specific groups, in public spaces and the community at large.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the MDP's guiding principles is building a livable, welcoming community of which a goal is to ensure all ages, stages, and wages feel welcome and safe in the community. • Specific policy direction is included in the MDP's Community Livability town-wide policy area which speaks to public spaces, programming, and events being built, offered, and planned for everyone.
Participants noted concerns regarding parking availability and the narrowing or closure of roadways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the Town's road network are informed by the Town's Transportation Master Plan and Transportation Association of Canada (TAC's) standards. The MDP provides policy direction which requires the efficient movement of people and vehicles. Any future road closures would be subject to a public engagement process as per the MGA. • Policy direction is included throughout the MDP in reference to requiring sufficient parking for developments. Exact number and size of parking stalls is dealt with in the Development Permit process in accordance with the Town's Land Use Bylaw.

**“Follow the minimum [environmental] protection levels required. We don't need to be an environmental leader at the expense of taxpayers”
- Participant**

**“We obviously need to follow [the standards] but we can also do more on our own. Looking for greener initiatives and taking advantage of grants etc is a great way to expand on saving our environment.
- Participant**

“There needs to be opportunities for large and small businesses. Many small independent businesses are being forced to close or relocate because of franchises. The community can have a good mixture with franchises but also needs small businesses unique shops and a refreshed Downtown core would be inviting.”
- Participant

What was Said	What we Did
Participants shared the importance of respecting all modes of transportation, including gas-powered vehicles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on participant feedback, specific language was included in the MDP’s transportation policies requiring the accommodation of a range of modes of transportation as well as ensuring that the freedom of movement, association or commerce is not restricted within, to, or from Westlock.
Participants expressed the desire to have community groups lead the funding and provision of cultural opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MDP includes policy direction to support community organizations in their provision of programming and cultural opportunities.
Participants spoke to issues of affordability in terms of property taxes and franchise fees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property tax rates and franchise fees are set and/or adjusted annually by Town Council based on the adopted Operating & Capital budgets. Property taxes are a primary source of revenue for all municipalities and help pay for services which impact quality of life such as utilities, roads, fire protection and recreation. The MDP provides policy direction which seek to improve the Town’s fiscal outlook and resident tax burden, such as asset management practices, the increase of non-residential growth, and the efficient use of land and infrastructure.
Participants expressed a desire for development to pay for the costs of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MDP includes specific policy direction which requires developers to pay for the cost of new infrastructure to service new development.
Participants expressed concerns regarding the location of high-density housing and future industrial lands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcoming more housing diversity would allow more residents including skilled workers and children, in the community, which also supports the viability of businesses and schools. Based on participant feedback, policy direction is included in the MDP regarding the location of high-density housing as more appropriate in the periphery of neighbourhoods, near amenities, or along major roads. Industrial areas are important to the overall economic wellbeing of the Town. It is important that sufficient opportunities are provided to allow industrial businesses to be established and thrive. Based on participant feedback, the Industrial Park policy area includes policy direction to require adequate screening or buffering between industrial uses and residential areas.

Key Plan Considerations

When developing the revised Municipal Development Plan, the project team had a number of key considerations, one of which is public input. All considerations are required to be assessed and integrated into the final MDP as is reasonably achievable. These considerations, summarized in the graphic below, can often be at odds or in direct conflict with one another.



“Private organizations and community groups should pay for “cultural” things. I am opposed to my taxpayer dollars being used to promote “culture”. ”
- Participant

“I’d like to see more focus on the arts in Westlock and see more public programming available for seniors and adults.
- Participant

What Was Said Reports

For more detailed information about what input was provided in each phase that informed the creation and refinement of the revised Municipal Development Plan, all verbatim feedback is available in the What Was Said Reports for each engagement phase. The reports are available on the project website at www.westlock.ca/p/mdp-refresh or by clicking through the links below

- [Public Engagement Phase One - What Was Said Report](#)
- [Public Engagement Phase Two - What Was Said Report](#)