

District of Mackenzie

Official Community Plan Update

2025

WHAT WE LEARNED

Phase 2 Public Engagement

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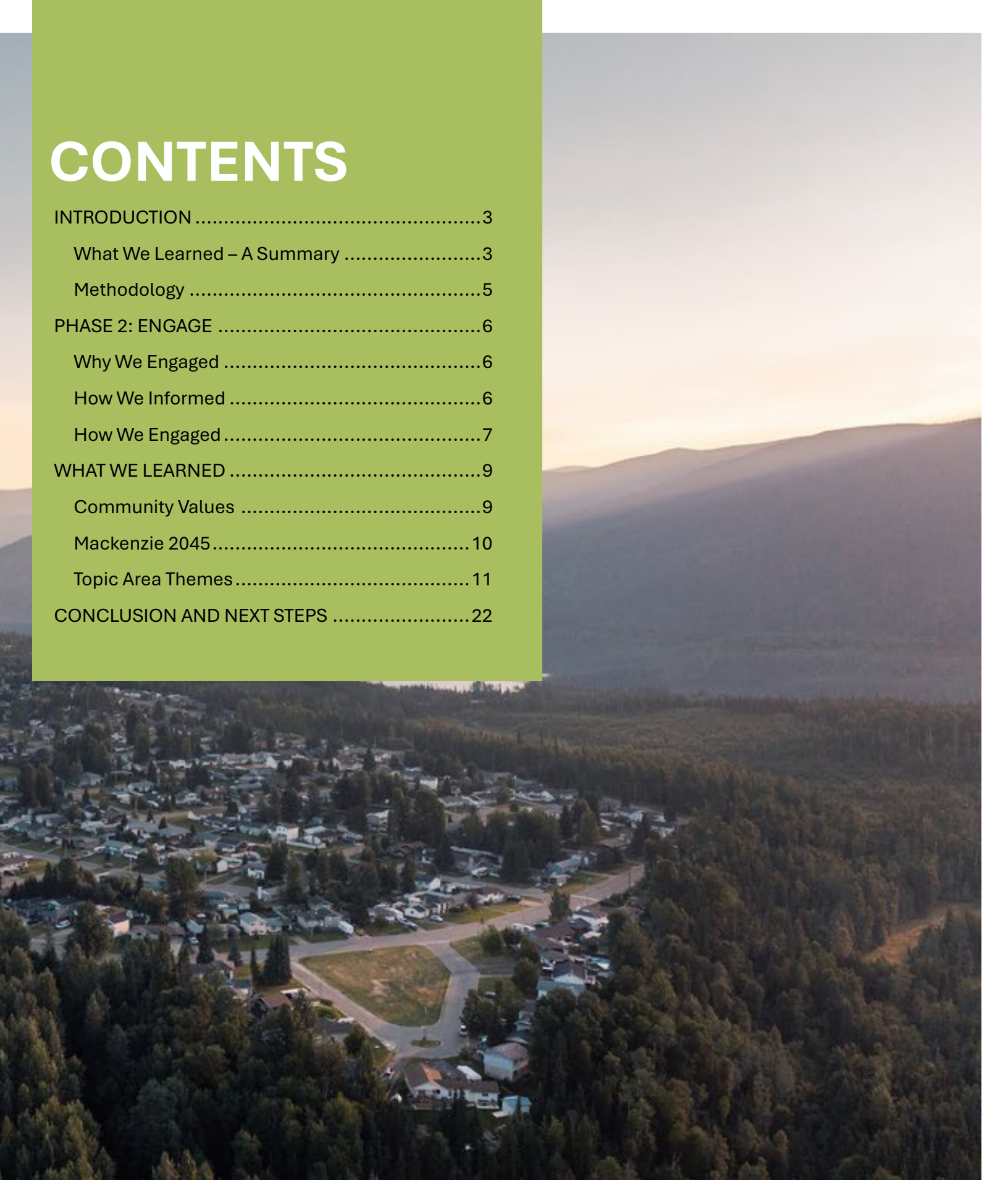
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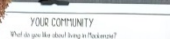
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Introduction

The District of Mackenzie is updating its Official Community Plan to guide the community's development over the next 20 years, as required by the Province under the Local Government Act.

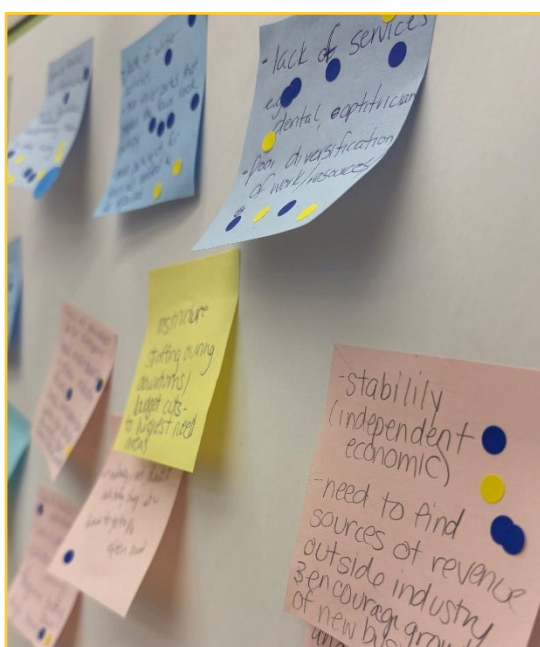
The Official Community Plan (OCP) is a key document that sets the long term vision for the community. It reflects the community values and guides decisions on land use, housing, transportation, parks and recreation, heritage, environmental protection, economic development, social well-being and more. The OCP also addresses natural hazards such as wildfire risk, while helping to prioritize investments in municipal infrastructure like recreation facilities, water systems and roads.

The OCP is shaped by research, technical studies, community engagement and input from Staff and Council.

The first phase of community engagement focused on gathering input on the community's vision for Mackenzie, identifying community values, and outlining directions for the OCP chapters. This feedback will inform the development of the updated OCP. A draft of the updated OCP will be shared in the fall 2025 for additional community feedback.

What We Learned – A Summary

The following summary highlights key themes related to vision, values and priorities that emerged from the engagement events and survey. Overall, participants expressed a strong connection to the Mackenzie community and shared desires for a sustainable, economically resilient and prosperous future. Additional detailed summaries are provided later in this report.



SMALL TOWN LIVABILITY

- Enhance the small town feel and social connections between community members
- Attract and retain community members by improving access to recreation, housing, community services, business opportunities and nature

DIVERSE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

- Create a variety of housing forms such as accessible townhomes and apartments (with elevators) to house people in various stages of life
- Continue to create housing that everyone can afford
- Focus on housing specific to seniors with required services and infrastructure
- Further discuss the lack of contractor services in town and how this impedes new builds/renovations to existing homes in the District

SOCIAL WELL-BEING

- Enhance accessibility in the built environment and municipal processes
- Support children, youth, families and seniors
- Support those with mental health issues and substance misuse

ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION, PARKS & RECREATION

- Support climate change initiatives
- Protect and development infrastructure from natural hazard areas such as urban wildfire risk
- Enhance access to and around outdoor recreation, trails and parks
- Protect natural areas

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

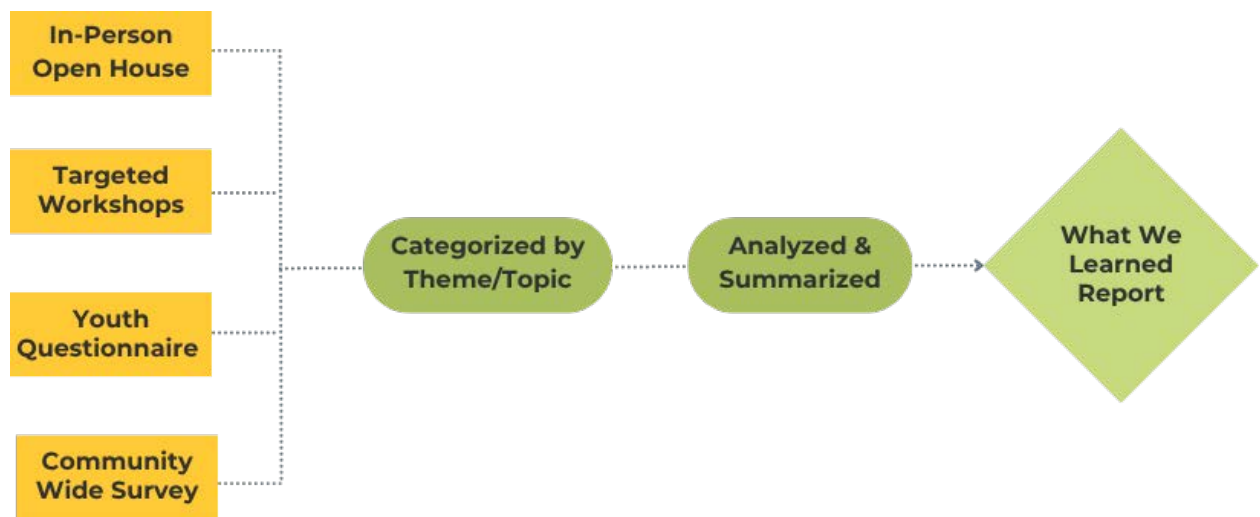
- Create more active and accessible transportation options in the District
- Create more sidewalk and pedestrian pathway connectivity in the District
- Continue to focus on investment in existing water and sewer systems

ECONOMY AND JOBS

- Diversity economic opportunities (such as tourism) and support local businesses
- Revitalize/beautify the downtown core
- Attract and retain employees and professionals

Methodology

All feedback from the in-person open house, targeted workshops, youth questionnaires and the community wide survey has been summarized into key themes, findings and directions that will inform the development of the updated Official Community Plan.





PHASE 2: ENGAGE

Community engagement was undertaken during June/July 2025, to help inform the creation of a vision, goals and overall priorities for Mackenzie's Official Community Plan.

Engagement activities included a community online survey that was also available in a printed copy, in-person workshops, an in-person open house and a youth questionnaire.

WHY WE ENGAGED

Community engagement is integral to the OCP process as these long range planning documents are built for the community, by the community. Community members are experts in their own lived experiences and therefore have inherent expertise to share. Further, the community's input strengthens the OCP and the overall planning process.

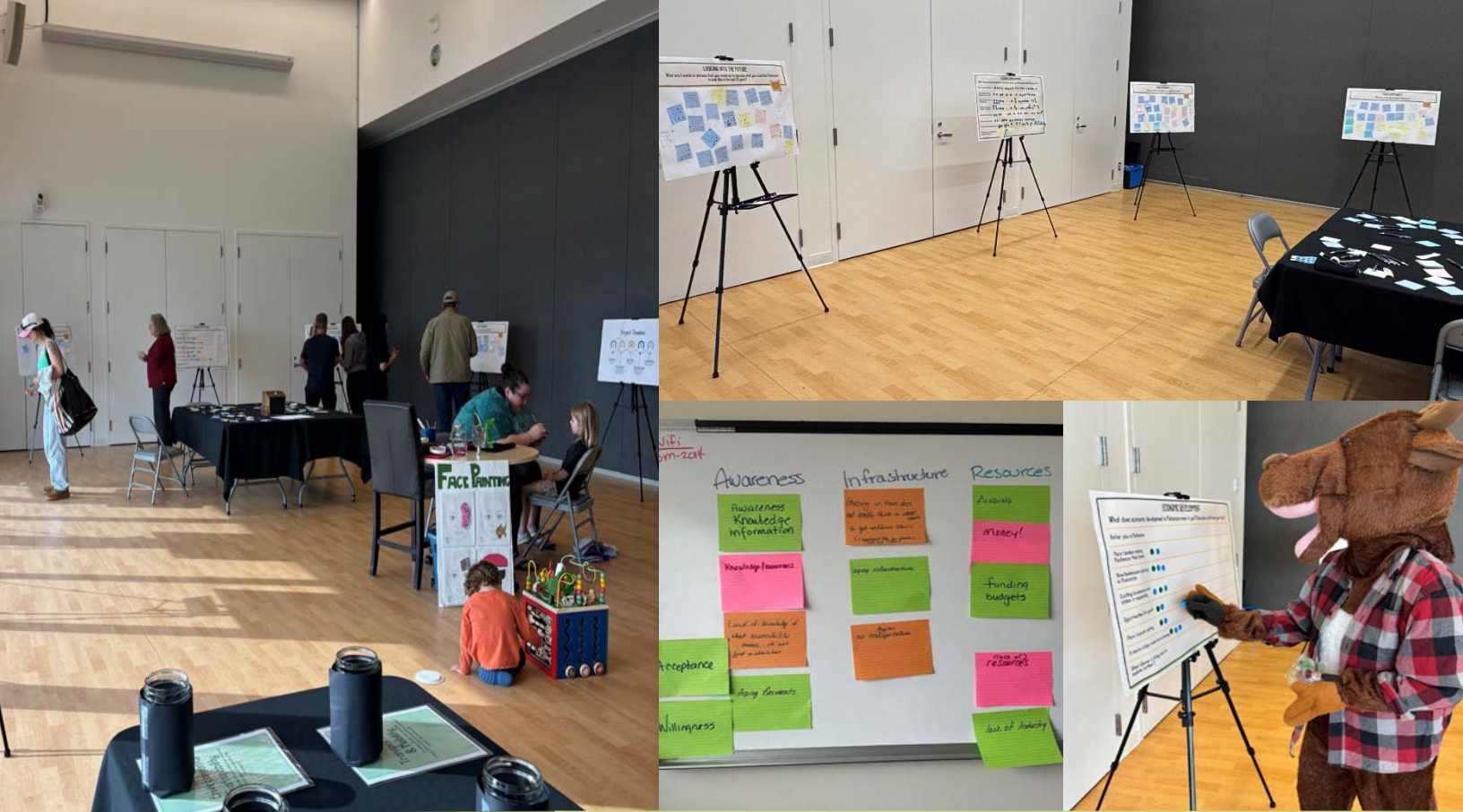
HOW WE INFORMED

Project Webpage

A dedicated project webpage for the Plan was launched in May 2025 to provide the public with information relating to the project. The webpage provides the community with immediate access to the most up-to-date information relating to the Plan's progress, along with relevant information, project timelines, engagement information and the link to an online survey.

Social Media

Social media posts were shared across Facebook and Instagram announcing and promoting the project launch, the Open House, and the online survey.



HOW WE ENGAGED

Community Wide Open House

On June 24th, 2025, an informal Open House was held at the Mackenzie Recreation Centre from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm. The purpose of the Open House was to provide residents with information about the project and to encourage them to answer questions about their community as it is now and how they see it in the future. The Open House included a table for snacks and refreshments, information boards outlining more information about Official Community Plans, a project timeline, and the overall objectives of the Open House. Interactive comment boards were also provided where residents could leave their written comments using sticky notes. Residents were encouraged to place a small dot beside sticky note comments that they agreed with. Both L&M and District project team members were available to answer questions and to facilitate the interactive stations. A kids section was set up in the middle of the Open House and included a professional face painting station, colouring sheets, books, and toys. As an added bonus, the District's mascot Bruce the Moose was in attendance to further encourage Open House participation. Approximately 60 community members attended the Open House.

Online Community Wide Survey

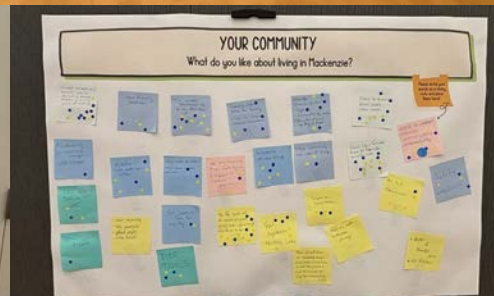
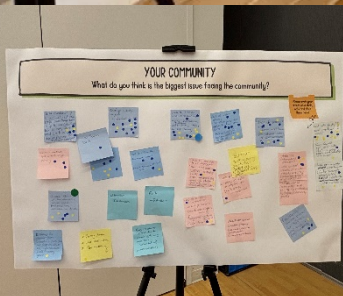
An online survey was launched via the District's project webpage as a way of seeking input on community issues, ideas and priorities for Mackenzie, as well as visions for its future. The online survey was open from June 24th, 2025 until July 13th, 2025, and received a total of 22 responses. The survey was also available via fillable PDF and a printed copy.

Youth Questionnaire

Our team worked with the principals at Morfee Elementary School and Mackenzie Secondary School to assist us with the youth engagement component of the project. In consideration that the end of the school year was fast approaching, our team designed age-appropriate questionnaires for the elementary school students and high school students to complete. Questionnaires were emailed to the school at the end of May 2025 and in total 53 questionnaires were received by Morfee Elementary School and 39 questionnaires were received by Mackenzie Secondary School.

Targeted Workshops

In-person targeted workshops were held with the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee as well as with Mayor and members of Council. Our team members gathered key information and insights through these workshops in order to assist us with policy development and overarching themes for inclusion into the policies and objectives of the Official Community Plan.



WHAT WE LEARNED

Community Values

Community members shared what they valued about Mackenzie, offering insights into why people chose to live, work and play in Mackenzie.

A Family Friendly, Small Town Community

Community members appreciate the affordability of the community, especially pertaining to housing. Young families can still afford to move to the area, buy a home and enjoy the family oriented, quiet and laid back lifestyle of Mackenzie.

Access to Nature

Community members really appreciate the natural beauty of Mackenzie and the close proximity of the community to outdoor and recreational activities, such as mountain biking or the surrounding lakes. Although some noted that improvements, such as trail improvements around the lakes, could further enhance the easy access that residents have to the outdoors. The area's outdoor beauty was recognized as a key attraction for both locals and visitors alike.

Shops and Services

While many residents expressed the need for improvement to help the downtown core thrive, residents valued the presence of local shops and their contributions to the local economy.

1 Imagine Mackenzie in 20 years, what do you hope to see?

A big mall!
More things to do in Mackenzie.
2 Like fun stuff, 3 Like maybe a movie theater.

2 Remember a favorite time in Mackenzie. Where were you and what made it special?

Walking around town!
and hanging out with friends.

3 If you could improve one thing about your community, what would it be and why?

More things to do and food/drink places.
More stuff like indoor stuff and outdoor stuff.

1 Imagine Mackenzie in 20 years, what do you hope to see?

Probably more stores and restaurants.

2 Remember a favorite time in Mackenzie. Where were you and what made it special?

Whenever I was at the beach or whenever I was at the 92. I was around a bunch of friends.

3 If you could improve one thing about your community, what would it be and why?

I think it would be the town being cleaner. Like more garbage bins or something.

1 Imagine Mackenzie in 20 years, what do you hope to see?

more jobs for young people to bring people to the community.

2 Remember a favorite time in Mackenzie. Where were you and what made it special?

The Beach, that's like the only thing to do in summer so there's lots of people there.

3 If you could improve one thing about your community, what would it be and why?

Creating more job opportunities and things to bring people to the community. You can't make a retirement community with nobody to take care of them or run the community.

Youth Engagement Feedback

Mackenzie 2045

Community members were invited to envision what Mackenzie could look like in 2045. Their vision reflected a community that is safe, continues to be affordable, active, equitable, economically diverse and environmentally sustainable, - while still preserving the friendly, small town atmosphere that current residents cherish.

A Safe Community

Participants felt that through additional services, supports and housing, Mackenzie could grow to be a safe community for everyone. Other ideas to help create a safe community included better active transportation infrastructure and safe transit options, specifically for seniors. Mackenzie youth emphasized the need for hangout spaces that are safe, well-lit and provide ample socializing opportunities.

Vibrant and Diverse Economy

Most residents indicated that they hoped to envision Mackenzie in 2045 as a vibrant and economically diverse community, with a special emphasis on enhancing the tourism sector and the infrastructure required to support this. Further, a revitalized downtown core with thriving local businesses would further strengthen the economy.

Small Town Feel

Community members value the small town feel and friendliness of the town, and hope that Mackenzie 2045 would continue to be this way. Local businesses would thrive, there would be more walkable and bikeable routes throughout the District, encouraging social and community connection through outdoor activities, community events and active living.



Topic Area Themes

Housing

- **Targeted Housing Options:** Feedback received from in-person and online engagement indicated that there was a need for expanded housing options to meet the population's aging needs. This includes more accessible housing, assisted seniors housing, more rental housing options and more affordable housing options for low-income families.
- **More Housing Options:** With housing in Mackenzie consisting of pre-dominantly single-detached homes, the community identified a lack of mid to high density, accessible, and short-term housing as a current challenge. Feedback also highlighted the lack of available contractors in town to help renovate or build new housing forms which leads to significant construction/renovation costs as contractors have to come in from out of town.
- **Mixed-Use Housing:** Some community members indicated that having more mixed-use commercial and residential developments, especially within the downtown core would support local businesses by increasing housing diversity, foot traffic and beautification. This, in turn, would strengthen the local economy and create more opportunities for growth.

“

We need assisted living for seniors in order to keep them in our community.

— Participant Input

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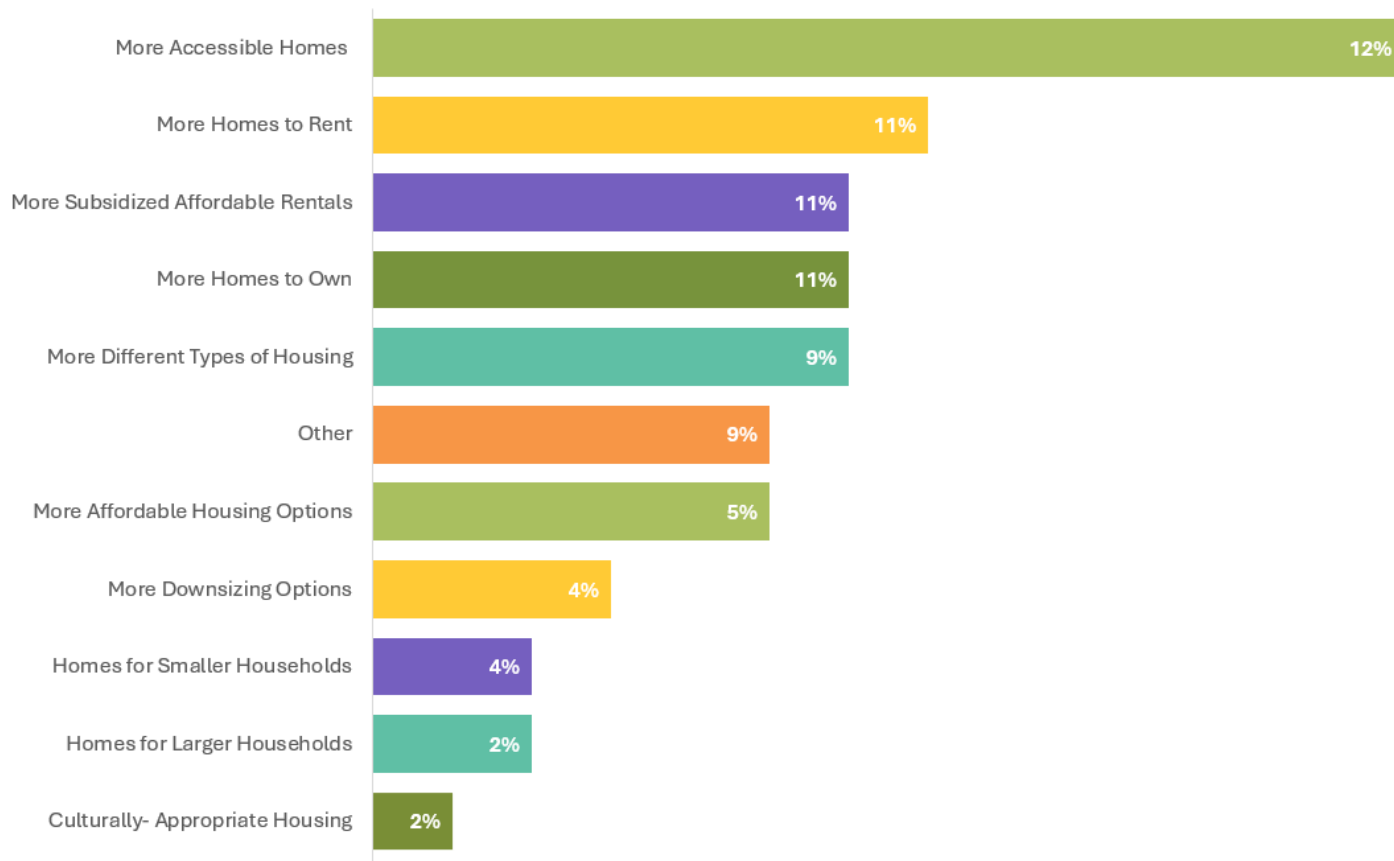
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We worry a bit about housing repairs. There are highly skilled local tradespeople here, but they are in high demand and not always available. We prefer to pay local skilled tradespeople, and we cannot afford to pay for tradespeople to come from PG. We'd like to know what we can do to support continued strong trades availability in Mackenzie.

— Participant Input

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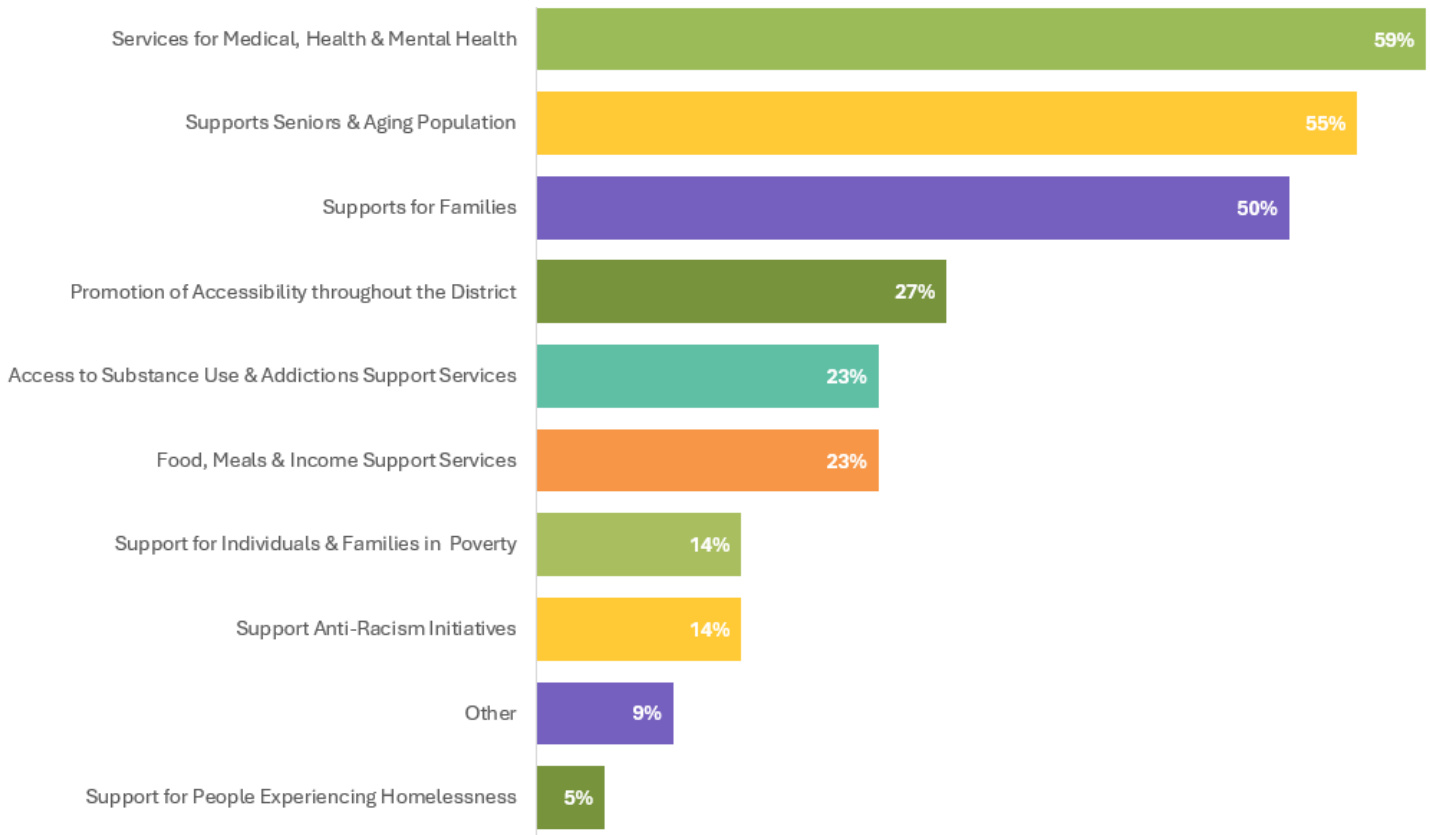
Figure 1: Top Three Housing Issues or Topics to Address in the next 5, 10 or 20 Years
Source: Mackenzie Official Community Plan Survey



Social Well-being and Inclusion

- **Access to Healthcare:** Healthcare in Mackenzie faces several limitations, including limited access to existing services such as reduced hospital hours or the lack of specialized healthcare services such as dentists, optometrists, etc.
- **Accessibility:** Throughout the engagement period, community members indicated their concern about the limited accessibility and infrastructure for people of all ages and abilities in Mackenzie. Challenges included the lack of available/accessible housing stock for seniors or those with accessibility concerns, shortages in social services such as daycares and poor regular transportation options.

Figure 2 Top Three Social Well-Being and Inclusion Issues to Address in the Next 5, 10 or 20 Years
Source: Mackenzie Official Community Plan Survey

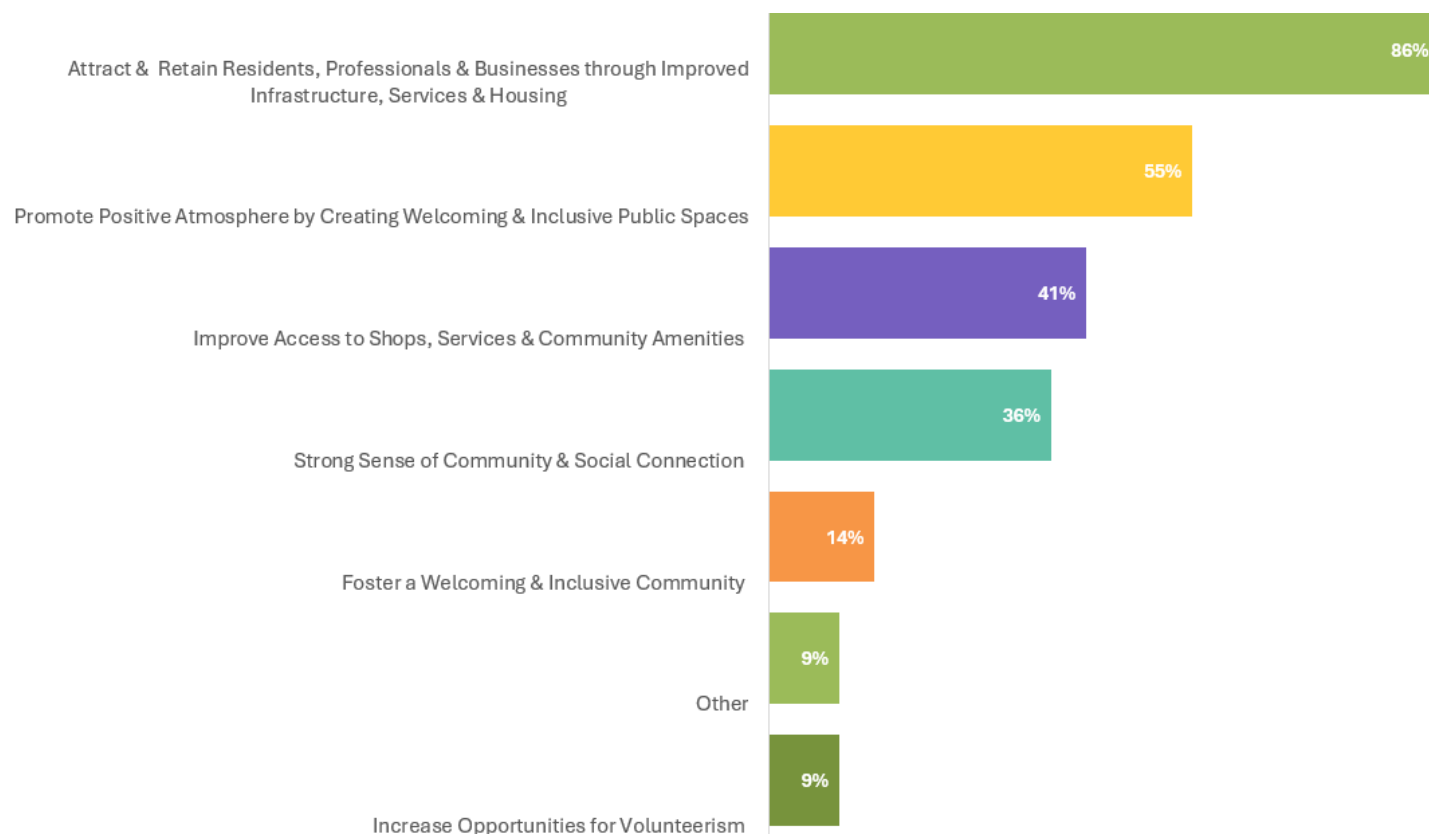


Community Livability

- Improve Community Amenities:** Community members felt that enhancing existing community amenities and services would help attract and retain residents, businesses and professionals in the community. Many highlighted the need for greater support for both youth and seniors, including more youth oriented amenities, daycare and childcare options and other essential services. Additionally, a recurring theme across the feedback was the importance of expanded sidewalk and pathway networks to encourage a healthier, more active lifestyle for the community.
- Community Beautification:** Many residents indicated that the town needs more beautification efforts and spaces for people to gather that include local art, street furniture, and music; with special attention to the downtown core. This would further help attract and retain more local businesses, residents and professionals in the community. Some further indicated the need for the District to utilize bylaw services to help clean up unsightly premises.



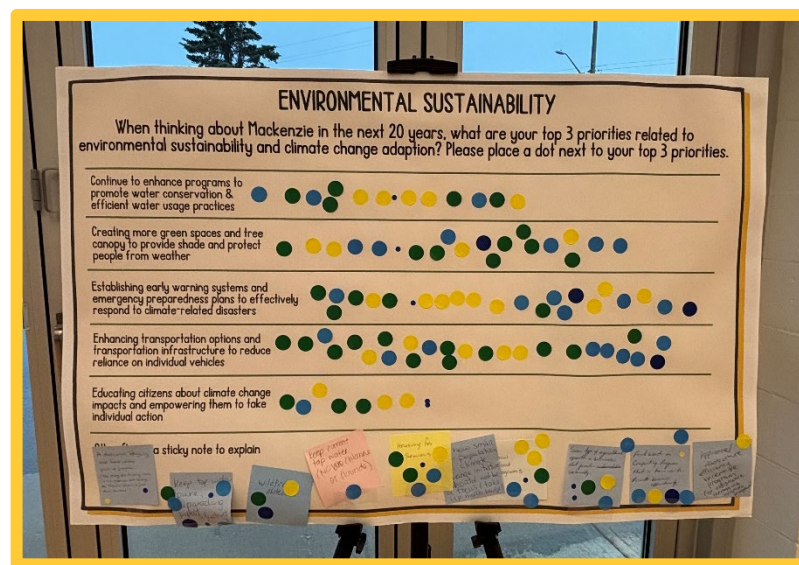
Figure 3 Top Three Community Livability Issues to Address in the Next 5, 10 or 20 Years
Source: Mackenzie Official Community Plan Survey



Ecosystem Protection & Climate Change

When asked what their top 3 priorities related to environmental sustainability and climate change adaption are for Mackenzie in the next 20 years, community members indicated the following as their top 3 priorities:

1. Enhancing transportation options and transportation infrastructure to reduce reliance on individual vehicles.
2. Establishing early warning systems and emergency preparedness plans to effectively respond to climate-related disasters.
3. Creating more green spaces and tree canopy to provide shade and protect people from weather.



To support long term resilience, community members recommended promoting locally grown food, protecting natural habitats such as the surrounding lakes and restricting development in areas that may be prone to natural hazards (wildfires).

“

Food waste or composting program that is town-wide. Private business opportunity.

- Participant Input

”

“

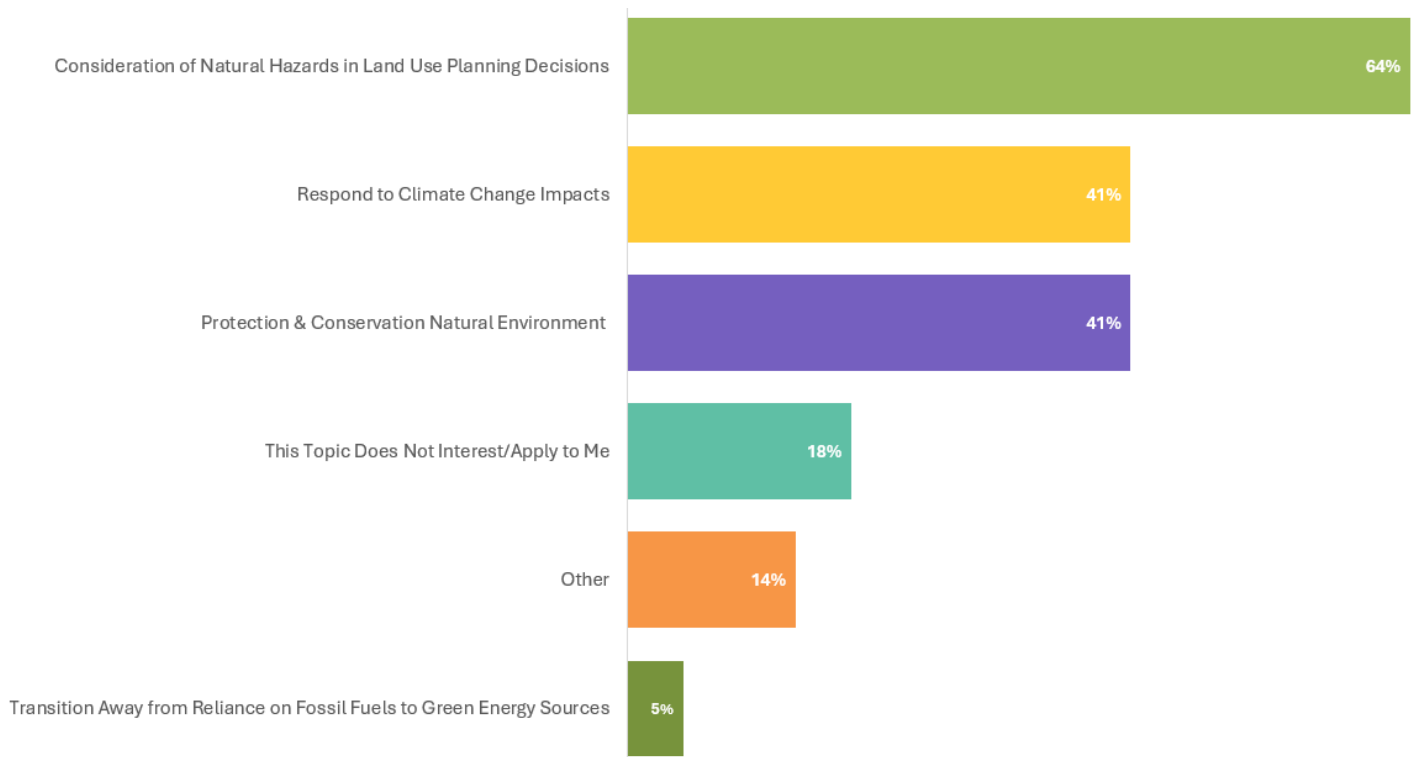
Make it less bear country in town so that we don't have to be scared.

- Youth Participant Input

”

Further, some residents mentioned the desire for a dedicated recycling and food waste pick-up program as they indicated that many residents put their recycling items in the garbage even though the transfer station is in close proximity.

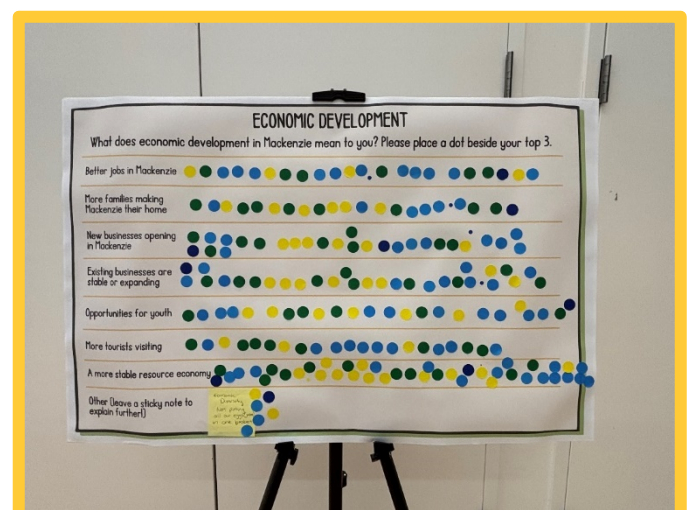
Figure 4 Top Three Ecosystem Protection and Climate Change Issues to Address in the Next 5, 10 or 20 Years
Source: Mackenzie Official Community Plan Survey



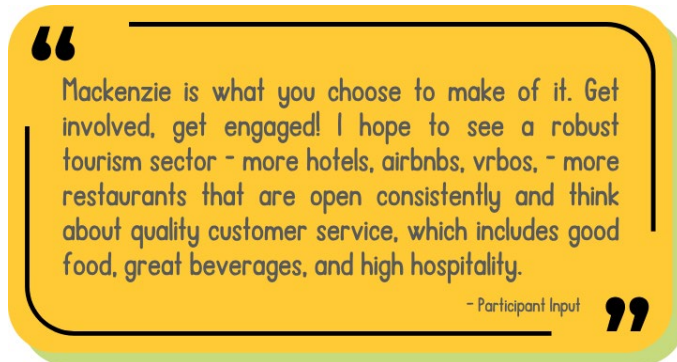
Economy & Jobs

When community members were asked what economic development means to them, the top three items were as follows:

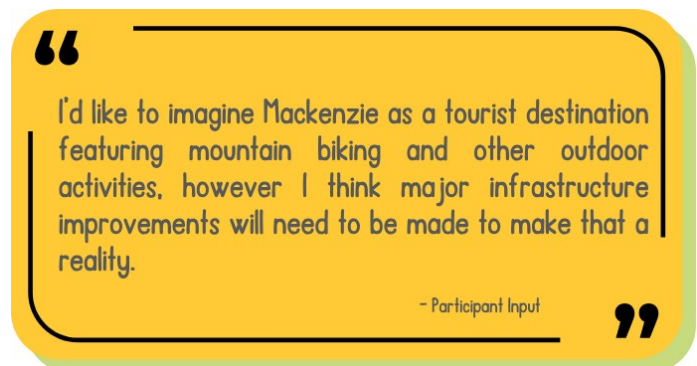
1. A more stable resource economy.
2. Existing businesses are stable or expanding.
3. New businesses opening in Mackenzie.



- **Enhance Tourism Opportunities:** Feedback indicates that many residents believe that the District could do more to promote year-round tourism. Suggested opportunities include showcasing public art by local artists, hosting more community and cultural events to attract visitors, continuing to improve existing amenities while developing new ones.



- **Downtown Revitalization*:** As indicated by many residents, improving the downtown core would boost economy, safety, tourism, resident and professional retention and walkability. Opportunities including incentivizing more local businesses and services for both residents and visitor and enhanced place making efforts.
- **Employee & Professional Retention:** Many community members indicated more could be done to attract and retain employees and other professionals to Mackenzie, with an emphasis on focusing on the retention of healthcare workers. Participants also mentioned the importance of attracting young families to Mackenzie and motivating younger members of the community to stay.



***It should be noted that the District created the Downtown Vision & Action Plan in May 2023 that creates a framework for a vibrant, walkable and mixed-use downtown core.**

- **Diverse Economy:** Almost all participants emphasized the importance of supporting businesses of all sizes – industrial, large and small – as each contributes to job creation and economic stability in the community.

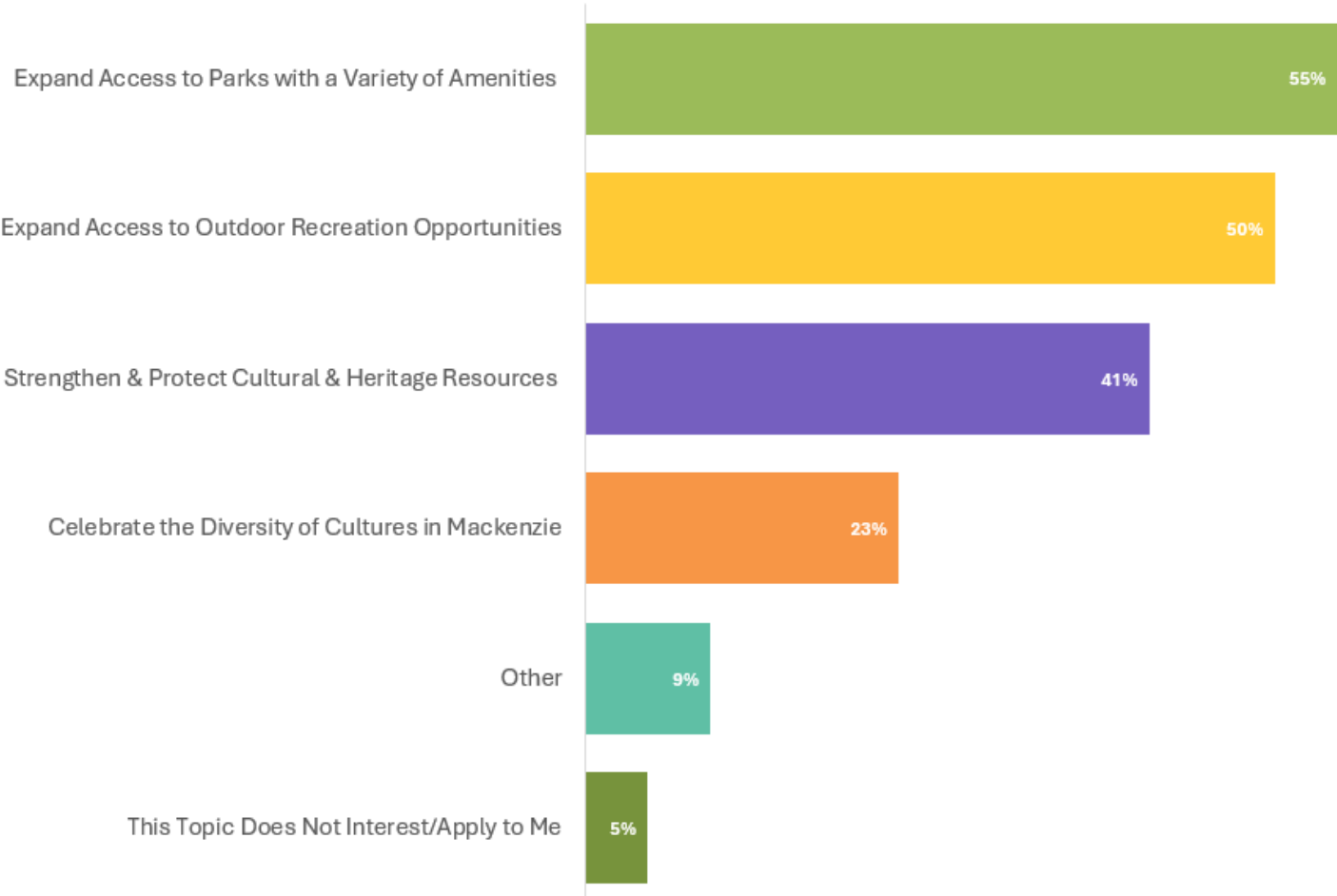
Figure 5 Top Three Economy & Job Issues to Address in the Next 5, 10 or 20 Years
Source: Mackenzie Official Community Plan Survey



Parks and Recreation

- **Children & Youth-focused Areas:** Many youth in Mackenzie indicated the need for more youth-centered public spaces that were safe, well lit and provided various activities. Opportunities include a soccer field, park seating in well lit areas, more youth focused community events and an enhancement of indoor activity spaces.
- **Year-Round Active Living:** Some participants felt that access to outdoor recreation opportunities needs to be enhanced within the District. Opportunities for enhancement included better trail connectivity to and surrounding the lakes, better signage and more sidewalk/bike lane connections to areas used for hiking and mountain biking.

Figure 6 Top Three Parks, Recreation, Culture and Heritage Issues to Address in the Next 5, 10 or 20 Years
Source: Mackenzie Official Community Plan Survey

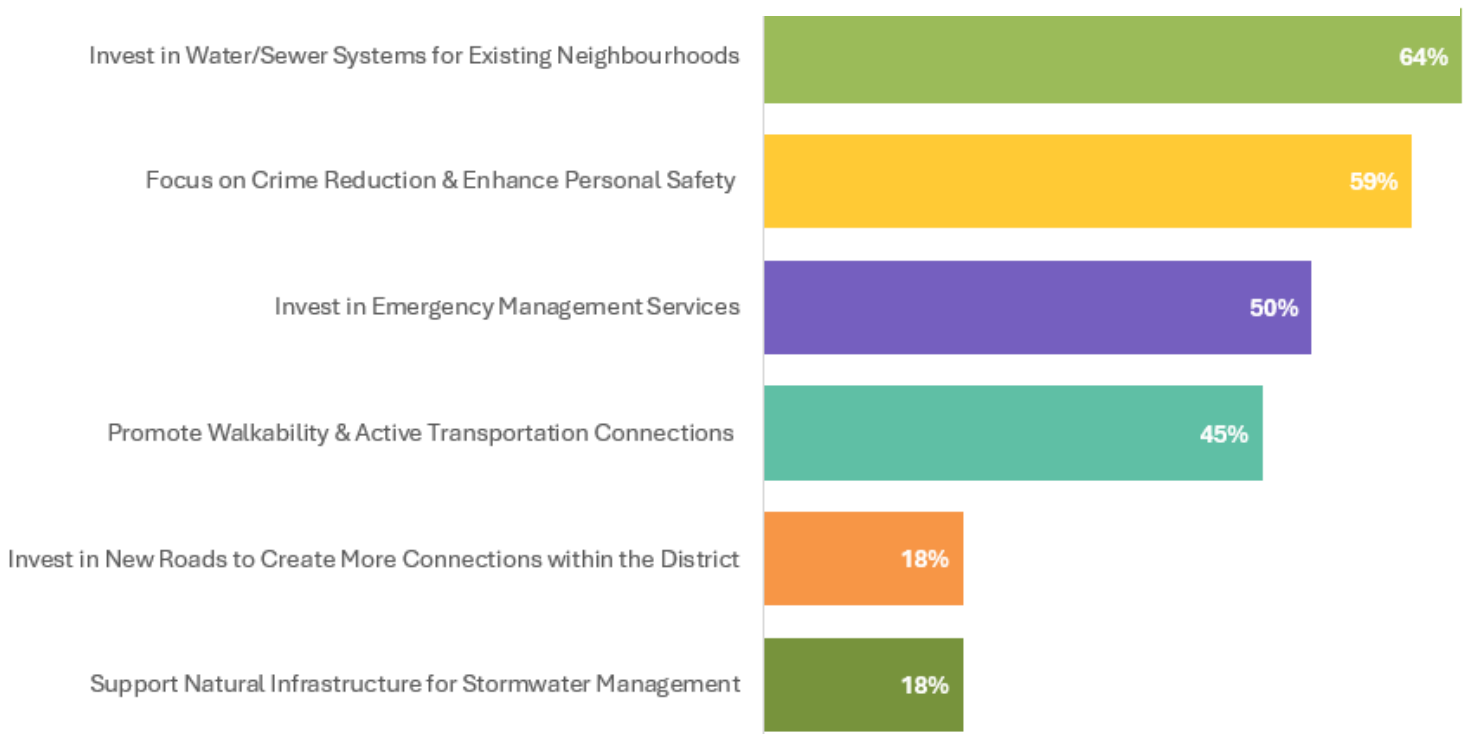


Municipal Services, Infrastructure & Emergency Management

- **Enhance Accessibility:** Community members identified numerous opportunities to improve existing infrastructure to enhance universal accessibility. Feedback highlighted the need for universally designed features to be included into public spaces to better serve the entire community, especially seniors and the aging population. Many also suggested that the District should provide more incentives to local businesses and organizations to promote accessibility within stores.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** Residents indicated the need for the District to focus on water and sewer system improvements in existing neighbourhoods.

- **Bike Lanes & Active Transport:** Feedback from both the online and in-person engagements highlighted the need for additional bike lanes in District and surrounding areas, including lakes. Expanding bike lanes would offer alternative, vehicle free transit options, enhance community connectivity and promote a healthy, active lifestyle. Participants also pointed out that more sidewalks and pedestrian pathways are required within the District to further promote walkability and connectivity.

Figure 7 Top Three Municipal Infrastructure, Transportation & Emergency Management Issues to Address in the Next 5, 10 or 20 Years
Source: Mackenzie Official Community Plan Survey



Priorities Exercise

At the in-person Open House, community members were invited to select their top five important priorities for Mackenzie. This station involved a series of jars, each labelled with different community priorities (e.g., transportation, infrastructure, housing, beautification, etc.). Participants were given 5 beads and asked to drop the beads in the respective priority jars. The following outlines the priorities that were provided to residents as well as the priorities that were ranked as the top three:

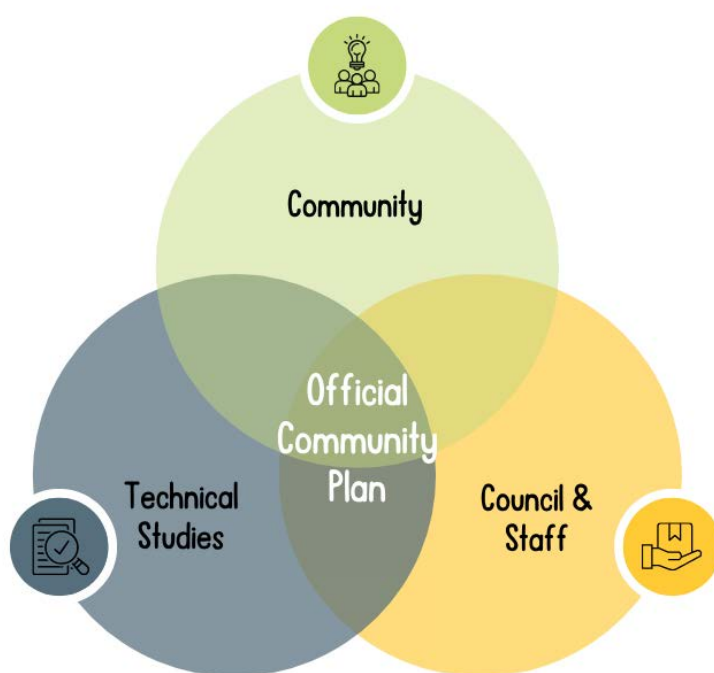
- Housing
- Municipal Infrastructure
- Parks & Recreation
- Community Beautification
- Arts, Culture & Heritage
- Economic Development
- Environmental Sustainability
- Transportation & Mobility

Housing, **Municipal Infrastructure** and **Economic Development** were ranked as the top three priority areas.



Conclusion and Next Steps

The feedback gathered throughout the first engagement period provides valuable information for the next step in the process: drafting the updated Official Community Plan. While community engagement is a vital part of updating the OCP, the graphic below highlights the additional streams of input that contribute to a comprehensive and well-rounded OCP. The graphic below illustrates how input streams from community engagement, technical studies, municipal staff and Council all come together to shape the new updated OCP. Ultimately, Council holds the decision making authority over the Plan, which is strengthened by the diverse perspectives and information that follows into it.



Moving forward, District Staff will share the results of the engagement process with Council and the public in August 2025. Consultants will incorporate these results into the draft OCP, which will be shared for further comment in fall 2025. The OCP bylaw will go before Council by the end of the year. A Public Hearing will be held in advance of Final Reading of the OCP bylaw.