

Your Greater Downtown. Your Voice.

Engagement Survey Summary

April 2026



Introduction

“Greater Downtown” includes four connected neighbourhoods: Capstone, the Railyards, Historic Downtown, and Parkvale. Together, they form the heart of Red Deer.

Over the past year, the Greater Downtown Governance project brought interest-holders together to discuss how initiatives, roles, responsibilities, and funding can better support downtown Red Deer. These conversations highlighted common priorities for people who live, work, and spend time downtown. Six priority areas were identified to help guide future initiatives and investments:

Destination Development

Supporting events, attractions, public spaces, and beautification that make downtown a vibrant place to visit, gather, and experience. Examples: events, placemaking, beautification, decorative lighting, public art.

Neighbourhood Identity

Encouraging collaboration between businesses and partners to build unique districts and strengthen the character of different downtown areas. Examples: themed districts, coordinated branding, business clusters.

Investment-Friendly Environment

Supporting policies and initiatives that encourage businesses, entrepreneurs, and developers to invest and grow in the downtown. Examples: business support programs, redevelopment incentives, lighting, building improvements.

Community Safety and Wellbeing

Creating a downtown environment that feels safe, welcoming, and supported through coordinated social and community initiatives. Examples: clean team programs, safety initiatives, partnerships addressing social challenges, advocacy.

Parking Management

Ensuring parking is accessible, convenient, and managed in a way that supports businesses and visitors. Examples: parking strategy improvements, accessibility, advocacy.

Connected and Accessible Downtown

Improving how people move through downtown and making it easier to walk, bike, and access key destinations. Examples: streetscape improvements, wayfinding, pedestrian connections.

Method

This survey was the first in a series of engagement opportunities to help understand, determine, and shape how future funding and initiatives could support impactful downtown initiatives. The information was gathered in Fall 2026, ahead of the Greater Downtown Council Committee forming, to help inform community priorities.

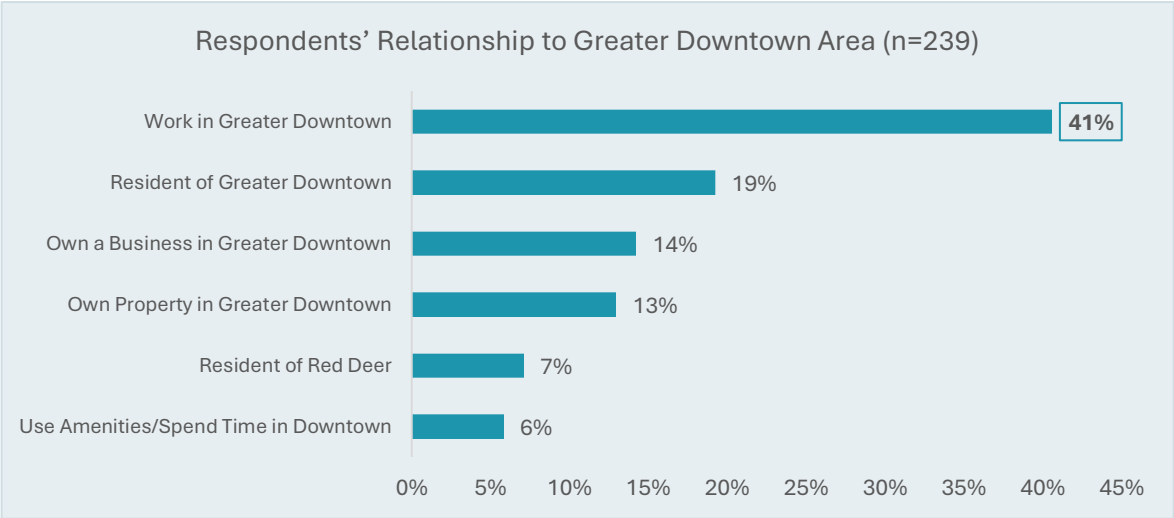
- To identify the priorities that matter most to the community
- To understand how funding could be directed to create meaningful impact
- To determine what success looks like for Greater Downtown

SurveyMonkey was used to design the survey and collect responses. The survey was open for two weeks, from March 23 to April 7, 2026. The online link was shared through the Engage Red Deer page, City of Red Deer social media, the Red Deer Chamber of Commerce newsletter, Tourism’s member email list, Parkvale Community Association social media and email list, MAG email, and Downtown Neighbourhood Association email. Information was also hand-delivered to downtown businesses in Capstone, Historic Downtown, and the Railyards. Paper copies were available at the Golden Circle and Three Robins to support broader participation and accessibility.

A total of 180 responses were received. Online and paper responses were combined and analyzed together. Before analysis, the data was reviewed for incomplete or duplicate responses.

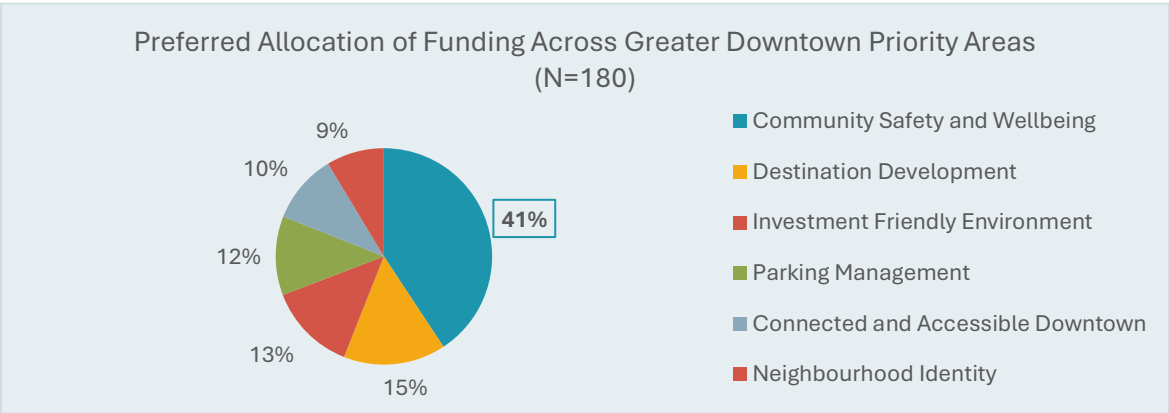
Results

Most respondents were connected to downtown through work (41%). Smaller groups lived downtown, owned property, or operated businesses there. Fewer respondents engaged with downtown only as Red Deer residents (7%) or for amenities and leisure (6%).



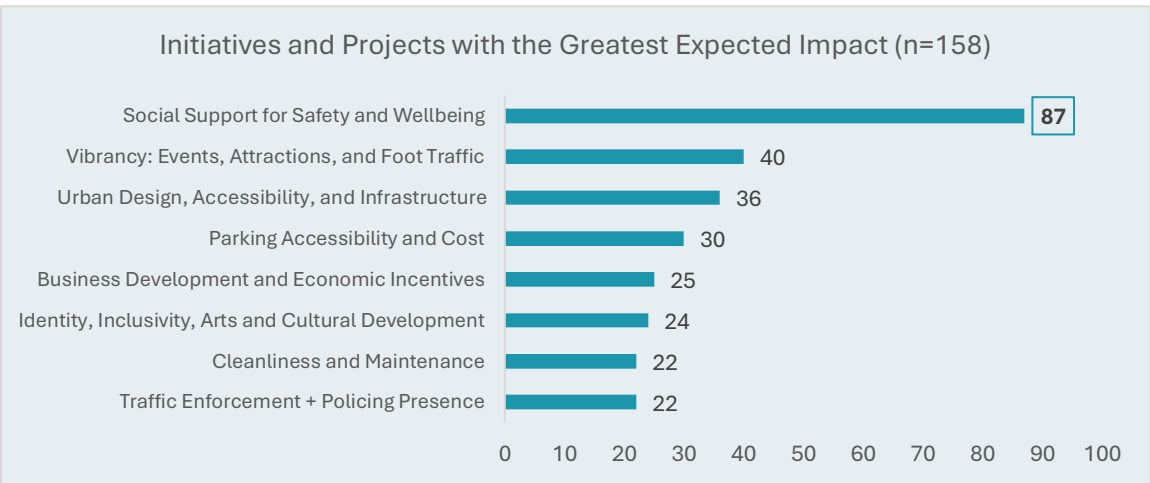
Preferred Funding Allocations

Community safety and wellbeing was the top funding priority (41%). Remaining funding was more evenly spread across destination development (15%), investment-friendly environment (13%), parking management (12%), and a connected and accessible downtown (10%). Neighbourhood identity received the lowest share (9%), showing less urgency at this time.



Highest Impact Projects and Initiatives

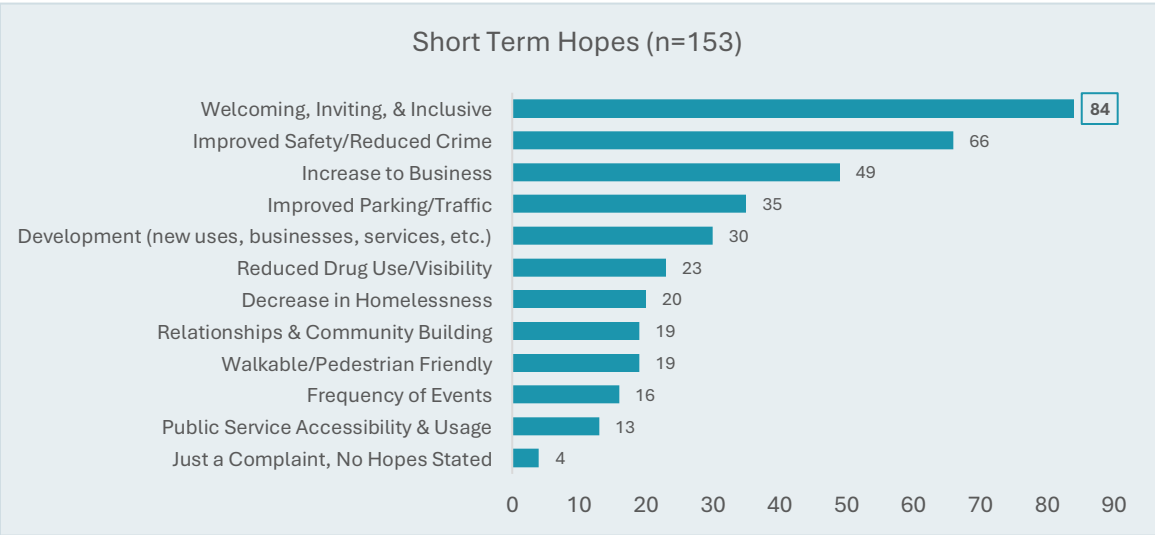
Respondents’ ideas closely aligned with the funding priorities identified earlier. Highest-priority ideas focused on safety and social supports, particularly homelessness in the downtown core, visible drug use and crime. Mid-level priorities included increasing vibrancy through events and foot traffic, along with improvements to urban design and parking. Lower-ranked, but still important, priorities included business and economic supports, identity and cultural development, cleanliness, maintenance and traffic and police enforcement. Overall, results suggest priorities are interconnected, with progress in one area often helping to advance others.



**This was an open-ended question. The chart shows recurring themes in respondents’ answers. Some themes may appear more or less often depending on how respondents described their ideas.*

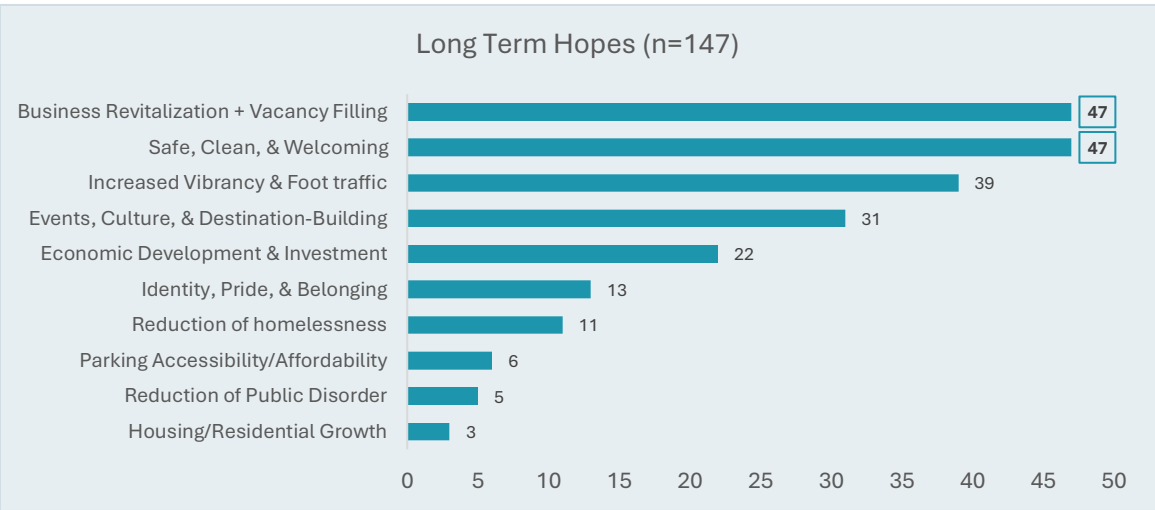
Desired Initiative Results

In the short term, responses focused on people’s current experiences downtown. The top priority was creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, followed by improving safety and reducing crime. Respondents also consistently identified practical and visible issues such as business activity, parking and traffic, and public disorder, including drug use and homelessness. Together, these priorities highlight a strong focus on safety, accessibility and everyday comfort.



**This was an open-ended question. The chart shows how often common themes appeared in respondents’ answers. Theme frequencies may be influenced by the words respondents used, which may result in themes being over- or under-represented.*

In contrast, long-term priorities reflected a broader vision for downtown growth and revitalization. Business development and bringing vacant spaces back into use were among the top priorities, along with maintaining a safe, clean and welcoming downtown. While safety remained important, it was seen as one part of a larger vision. Respondents placed greater emphasis on creating a vibrant downtown through increased foot traffic, events, culture and destination attractions, while also supporting economic growth, investment and a stronger community identity.



Taken together, these findings suggest short- and long-term priorities are complementary rather than competing. Safety, cleanliness and inclusivity were viewed as the foundation for achieving longer-term goals: economic vitality, increased activity and a more distinctive and vibrant downtown core.

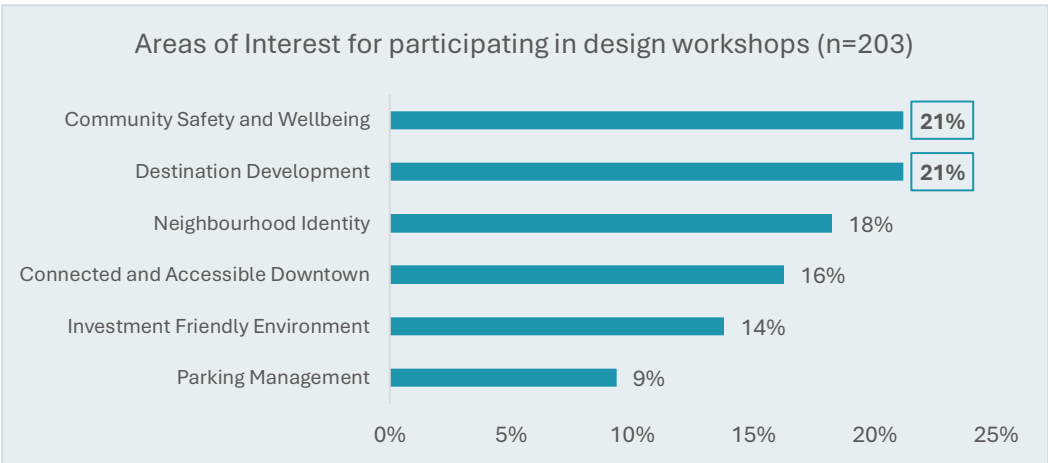
Prioritizing Initiatives

Respondents ranked Greater Downtown initiatives by priority using a weighted scoring system, where higher scores indicate higher overall priority. Community safety and wellbeing ranked highest, followed by destination development and creating an investment-friendly environment. Neighbourhood identity ranked fourth, parking management fifth, and improving downtown connectivity and accessibility ranked lowest among the priorities identified.



Design Workshops

Respondents were asked whether they would be interested in participating in design workshops related to funding programs and initiatives. Overall, only 39% said they would be interested in participating. When asked which design workshops they would be most interested in participating in, respondents most often selected community safety and wellbeing and destination development (21% each). This was followed by neighbourhood identity (18%), a connected and accessible downtown (16%), an investment-friendly environment (14%) and parking management (9%).



Summary of Results

The Greater Downtown Survey delivers a clear and consistent message. While respondents want a more vibrant downtown, stronger economic growth, and an improved overall experience, community safety and wellbeing emerged as the highest and most immediate priority. Throughout the survey, respondents repeatedly identified safety concerns, visible social issues and overall comfort in the downtown core as the most urgent challenges to address.

Respondents also expressed a strong desire for a more vibrant and economically active downtown. Destination development and an investment-friendly environment ranked as important secondary priorities. This reflects a balanced perspective: respondents see safety as a foundation for long-term success, while also recognizing the need to attract people, support businesses, and create a strong sense of place.

The findings show short- and long-term priorities are closely connected. Respondents viewed improvements in safety, cleanliness and day-to-day functionality as necessary first steps toward achieving longer-term goals such as revitalization, vibrancy and economic vitality. The shift in priorities over time suggests many respondents expect immediate challenges to be addressed, allowing greater focus on broader opportunities for growth and development. Rather than competing priorities, these findings point to a clear and phased vision for downtown transformation. A coordinated approach to address immediate challenges and support long-term growth will be essential to achieving the community's vision for Greater Downtown Red Deer.