

LIVING IN RED DEER *Survey*

2025 SUMMARY



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Methodology	6
<i>Data Handling</i>	6
<i>A Word on Statistical Significance</i>	6
<i>Understanding the Data</i>	7
Results	8
Priorities for Council for the Next Four Years	10
Community Affect	12
<i>Sense of Belonging, Trust & Civic Pride</i>	12
<i>Time Spent Volunteering or Helping Each Other</i>	13
Cultural Life in Red Deer	13
<i>Cultural & Arts Activities in Red Deer</i>	14
Supporting Diversity & Inclusion	16
Parks & Spaces	18
<i>Red Deer Parks & Open Spaces Meet Community's Expectations</i>	18
<i>Community Priorities for Parks, Amenities & Trails</i>	19
Environment	20
<i>Importance for The City to Dedicate Resources to Environmental Initiatives</i>	20
<i>The City's Role in Environmental Sustainability</i>	21
Downtown	23
<i>Perceptions & Visits to Downtown</i>	23
<i>Activities or Businesses That Draw People Downtown</i>	23
<i>Making Downtown More Desirable</i>	25
Housing	26
<i>Methods to Increase Housing Inventory</i>	26
Engagement	27
<i>Experiences of Formal Public Hearings</i>	27
<i>Feedback for the Public Hearing Process</i>	28
<i>Other Methods of Engaging with The City</i>	29
<i>Getting More Involved with Municipal Decision Making</i>	30
Looking Forward & New Council	31
<i>Public Sentiment Towards City Council & Administration</i>	32
<i>Municipal Spending & Taxes</i>	32
<i>Final Thoughts from Respondents</i>	34
<i>Contradictions & Tensions: Opposing Viewpoints</i>	35
Respondents & Identity Based Experiences	36
<i>Respondent Demographics</i>	36
<i>Why We Collect Demographic Information</i>	36
<i>Identity Based Experiences</i>	37
What's Next?	39
Appendix	40

“They listen, then do what they planned to do anyways”

“I don’t feel safe in the parks”

“I love how many options for food there are downtown.”



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Living in Red Deer Survey gives residents a unified platform to share views on quality of life, City services, and local priorities. Conducted from September 2–29, 2025, the survey achieved 2,088 responses, setting a strong benchmark for future surveys. The Living in Red Deer Survey will be conducted every two years, alternating with the delivery of the Citizen Satisfaction Survey. The findings offer City Council and Administration insights into community sentiment to guide strategic planning and service improvement.

The survey asked questions about community affect, cultural life, parks and spaces, the environment, downtown, methods of engagement with The City, perceptions on City Council and Administration, and opinions on Council priorities for the next four years.

Overall, respondents are proud to live in Red Deer and are passionate about the well-being of their community. However, respondents disagree that decisions of

Council and Administration are transparent, fiscally responsible, or in the community’s best interest. Respondents reported feeling unsafe downtown and on trails, linking insecurity to homelessness, substance use, and property crime. Parks, natural spaces, and cultural amenities are valued but also leave users with safety fears.

Respondents believe a coordinated approach to safety, combining enforcement, support services, and community partnerships should be prioritized. They stated that fiscal accountability can be strengthened by focusing on essential services before discretionary projects. They also stated that modernized engagement through regular surveys and multi-channel communication will help include more residents in decision-making.

Areas respondents outlined as priorities for the next four years are: homelessness and housing, property taxes and budget, crime and public safety, drugs and addiction, downtown revitalization, City spending on non-essential projects, emergency staffing services, infrastructure maintenance, housing development and density, and access to healthcare.



INTRODUCTION

The Living in Red Deer Survey is designed to provide residents with an avenue for input on a range of topics from quality of life and City services to local priorities and emerging initiatives, into one cohesive platform. By combining multiple areas of inquiry into a single effort, we are streamlining how we gather feedback and ensuring every response helps shape the future of our city.

The insights collected through this survey provide City Council and Administration with a valuable snapshot of how residents feel about living in Red Deer today, and what they see as priorities for the future. This information will directly support decision-making, strengthen customer service efforts, and ensure community voices continue to guide City planning and initiatives.

By engaging residents in a coordinated way, we are strengthening our ability to prioritize customer service, respond to community needs, and integrate meaningful public input into Council reports and administrative

recommendations. Over time, the Living in Red Deer Survey will also help reduce survey fatigue by replacing multiple smaller surveys with one inclusive tool for gathering community perspectives. This survey is intended to be conducted every two years, establishing the 2025 initiative as an important benchmark for future evaluation.

Between September 2 and 29, more than 2,000 residents shared their thoughts through the Living in Red Deer Survey. This participation reflects the pride and passion Red Deerians have for their community and their commitment to making it an even better place to live, work, and play.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who took the time to participate and share their perspectives. Your feedback helps ensure that our collective vision, Our City, One Voice, continues to grow stronger.

METHODOLOGY

In 2025, The City of Red Deer wanted to identify key research questions aimed at gathering public feedback about living in Red Deer. This initiative was designed to inform Council and Administrative decision-making and strategic priorities.

A mixed survey with both closed and open-ended questions was developed through inter-departmental partnerships.

An online survey was launched via Survey Monkey platform. To reach as many residents as possible, The City took a multi-channel approach to communication and promotion. The survey was featured across digital and traditional platforms, including social media, Google Ads, The City’s website, print ads in The Advocate, radio promotion, and outreach through community partners such as the Red Deer Public Library and other local agencies. Postcards were distributed through community groups and City facilities, helping extend the reach even further. Additionally, printed copies of the survey were available at City facilities for those without access to a computer.

Paper surveys were made available at various recreation centres throughout the city to ensure accessibility for residents who preferred non-digital participation. The survey was open for four weeks and received 2,088 unique responses. Returned paper surveys were entered manually.

Data Handling

Data was collected through Survey Monkey. Incomplete responses were included in the analysis to the extent that they were completed. Data analysis was completed using Microsoft Excel and the statistical program Jamovi. This work was supplemented with the use of LLM (Large Language Model) AI, after data was clean of identifying locations and features.

A Word on Statistical Significance

This survey had a very large response pool which lends itself to statistically significant findings. When the sample size is large it is easier to find between group differences (young vs old, men vs women). However, just because a finding is statistically significant does not mean it is meaningful. For example, women and men may have answered a question differently in a way that is found to be statistically significant, but in practice the different may not be impactful; a difference of 0.2 on a 5 point Likert scale may be statistically significant but bare no practical implications.

This report highlights differences in responses between populations that are meaningful and statistically significant. In this case meaningful is defined as a larger than 0.5 point difference on a 5 point Likert scale.

The Living in Red Deer Survey is a biennial, opt-in survey that alternates with the third-party-conducted Citizen Satisfaction Survey.

Both surveys help The City understand community perspectives, but they serve distinct purposes. The Citizen Satisfaction Survey is a statistically valid telephone survey conducted every two years in the spring, designed to capture feedback from a representative sample of residents. However, because participation is limited to those selected, it does not provide an opportunity for all citizens to take part.

The Living in Red Deer Survey was introduced to complement that process, offering an open and accessible avenue for every resident to share their views, regardless of whether they were selected for the Citizen Satisfaction Survey. The surveys are also conducted at different times of the year, which allows The City to capture and compare community sentiment across varying contexts and seasons.

Understanding the Data

Throughout this report, we use qualitative terms to indicate how commonly certain perspectives appeared in the data. The legend below explains what each of these terms represents.

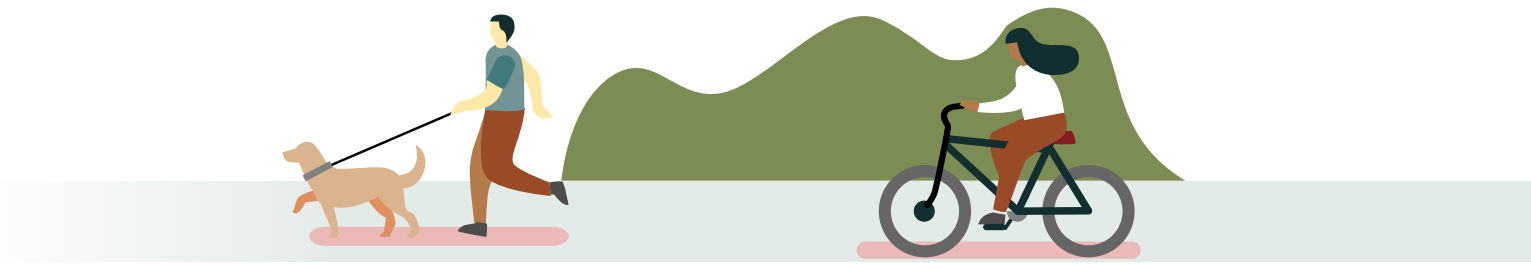
Majority: represents a perspective or theme that was the most commonly expressed across responses.

Many: represents a perspective or theme that appeared frequently across responses.

Several: represents a perspective or theme that emerged in multiple responses, showing some recurrence.

Some: represents a perspective or theme that appeared in a noticeable number of responses.

A Few: represents a perspective or theme that only appeared occasionally, though frequently enough to still be worth noting.



RESULTS

The results section is organized into thematic areas covering Council priorities, community affect, cultural life, parks and spaces, environment, downtown, housing, public engagement, perceptions of Council, and demographics.

Top Ten Topics for Council

- Homelessness & Housing
- Property Taxes & Budget
- Crime & Public Safety
- Drugs & Addiction
- Downtown Revitalization
- City Spending & Wasteful Projects
- Emergency Services Staffing
- Infrastructure & Maintenance
- Housing Development & Density
- Healthcare Access

Homelessness & Housing: Respondents express frustration with visible homelessness, tent encampments, and the lack of shelter solutions. Opinions are divided between those calling for relocation and enforcement versus those advocating for comprehensive support services including mental health care and transitional housing.

“JEEZ, Can we do something about the homeless!!! I realize this is a world wide problem but is there nowhere in the world where they’ve made progress??? Problems made by man (human) can be solved by man (human).”

Property Taxes & Budget: The recent property tax increase frustrates respondents who feel they’re paying more for fewer services, including reduced grass cutting, garbage removal in parks, and decreased snow removal. Many demand fiscal responsibility and administrative spending cuts, with respondents identifying that seniors on fixed incomes particularly struggling to afford the increases.

“You raised our property taxes a ridiculous amount. Less services now too.... this doesn’t add up. Where’d the money go?”

Crime & Public Safety: Respondents cite Red Deer’s reputation for high crime rates, particularly property crime, theft, vehicle theft, and street racing. Respondents identified they feel unsafe in parks, trails and downtown, expressing frustration with “catch and release” justice practices. Respondents call for increased police presence, better bylaw enforcement, and visible neighborhood patrols, with a pervasive perception that the city is becoming more dangerous.

“I don’t feel safe in the parks.”

Drugs & Addiction: Open drug use, discarded needles in parks and playgrounds, and visible addiction issues were primary concerns for respondents. The safe injection site closure receives mixed reactions. Respondents are divided between wanting stronger enforcement against public drug use versus advocating for more treatment and rehabilitation facilities.

“Last week, a fellow was injecting himself on a bench right on the trail, had all his stuff out drying across the path and everywhere.”

Downtown Revitalization: Downtown is repeatedly described as unsafe, dirty, and unwelcoming, with concerns about abandoned buildings, struggling businesses, limited parking, and concentrated social disorder deterring visitors. Respondents express sadness over downtown’s decline and call for comprehensive solutions to make it a vibrant, family-friendly destination again.

“Too many businesses moving to the County. We need to have incentives for businesses to move to Red Deer and incentives for existing businesses to stay in the city.”

City Spending & Wasteful Projects: Spending on the CN Rail bridge is the most frequently cited example in this section. Others criticized expenditures including subsidies to River Bend Golf Course, the downtown study and various beautification projects. Respondents ask for common-sense spending with priorities focused on essential services rather than ‘vanity projects’.

“Spending \$3.3 million to move a pedestrian bridge is completely ludicrous. Total waste of taxpayers money...”

Emergency Services Staffing: The move to a “dynamic staffing” model for firefighters generates intense criticism, with respondents concerned about Station 2 closures, believing it leads to inadequate emergency response capacity in North Red Deer. There are frequent mentions of “safe staffing” levels of four or more firefighters per truck at all times. The issue is seen as a matter of public safety being compromised to save money, which respondents find unacceptable.

“I reside in station 2s area. I dread the day I may need them and have them not there. It terrifies me.”

Infrastructure & Maintenance: Respondents perceive that despite higher taxes, basic services have declined; grass isn’t cut regularly, weeds proliferate, and roads are poorly maintained or repaired with inferior methods (micro-paving criticism). There’s frustration that basic municipal services are being neglected while money goes to special projects.

“Parks doesn’t have enough money in spring to cut grass but in the late summer it’s 30 degrees, the grass isn’t growing but they are out cutting the same grass that they couldn’t afford to earlier. Brilliant!”

Housing Development & Density: Proposed high-density and infill housing in established single-family neighborhoods generates significant opposition, with concerns about parking shortages, neighborhood character changes, and infrastructure capacity. There is tension between growth needs and preserving existing community character.

“Why are we wanting high density housing when we don’t have the hospital/ transit/ police/ etc. services for a massive amount of more people?”

Healthcare Access: Long emergency room wait times, doctor shortages, and hospital capacity issues are major shared concerns. There’s frustration with provincial government underfunding and recognition that Red Deer’s growing population needs enhanced medical infrastructure. Healthcare access is seen as both a quality-of-life and safety issue that requires council advocacy with the provincial government.

“Ensure that Red Deer and area receive equivalent funding per capita for health as do Edmonton and Calgary.”

Community Perceptions on the Top Ten Council Priorities for the Next Four Years

Respondents were asked to provide key topics to council for the coming four years. Respondents focus on things that they do not like and would like changed. The majority of respondents expressed frustration with perceived decline in safety, cleanliness, and livability despite increasing taxes. Respondents want stronger fiscal accountability, better basic services, and decisive action on homelessness and crime.



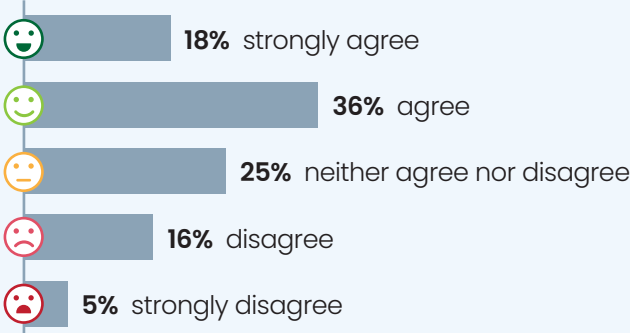
Community Affect

This section explores residents’ sense of belonging, trust, and civic pride through their agreement with various statements about community life. It examines perceptions of The City’s role in supporting diversity and inclusion, capturing the range of perspectives from strong support to opposition. The section also investigates residents’ volunteering patterns, the importance of cultural activities to community life, and which types of cultural and arts programming residents value most or feel are missing.

Sense of Belonging, Trust & Civic Pride

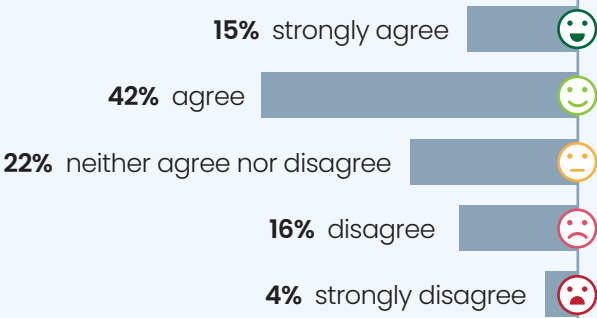
Survey respondents continue to demonstrate high agreement with aspects of pride, belonging, and being a welcoming community. This is in line with previous surveying efforts, including the Citizen Satisfaction Survey of 2024. Residents participate in public feedback opportunities like this survey because they so firmly believe in the value of their community. These findings demonstrate that on the whole Red Deerians love where they live and want the community to thrive.

Proud to be a Resident



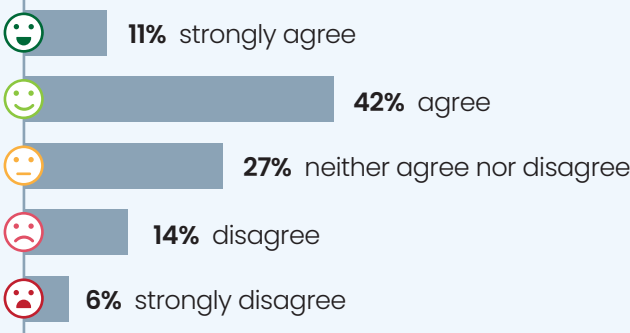
**2024 CitSat – 48% a strong sense of pride*

Belonging to Neighbourhood



**2024 CitSat – 45% strong sense of belonging*

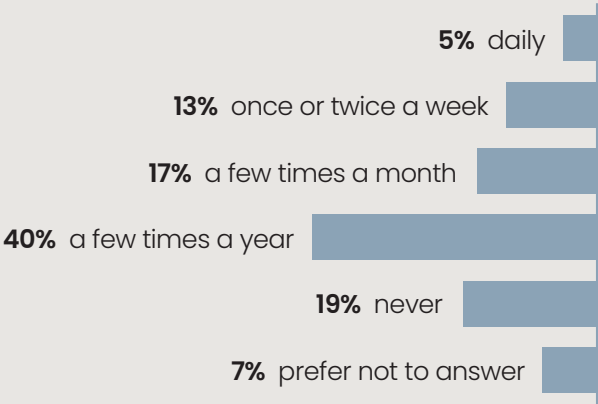
Community is Welcoming



Time Spent Volunteering or Helping Each Other

Those who volunteer in the community reported higher levels of pride and belonging in general. From this survey we cannot establish if they volunteer because they feel pride and belonging, or vice versa. Regardless, 75% of respondents volunteer between a few times a year and daily.

How Often do you Volunteer?



Cultural Life in Red Deer

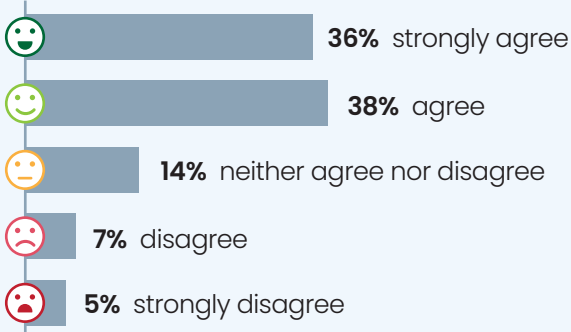
This section reviews the value of cultural activities in Red Deer and explores which cultural activities are most valued, which are missing, and how The City should be involved in diversity and inclusion efforts in Red Deer.

Cultural & Arts Activities in Red Deer

Respondents were asked about Red Deer’s arts and culture landscape. About half of respondents expressed positive sentiment, noting appreciation for existing festivals, public art, and events focused on food and/or music. Respondents value the importance of cultural activities in Red Deer, with 47% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they are important. This signals the value of activities and warrants further thought into which types of activities are most meaningful and how respondents would like to see The City engaged.

Some respondents feel that there are enough cultural or arts activities and more are not needed. Some raised concerns about spending on arts and culture activities, especially during a time of financial restraint. Others noted safety concerns when attending downtown events.

Cultural Activities are Important



Most Valued Cultural & Arts Activities

- Music
- Cultural Festivals & Celebrations
- Visual & Public Arts
- Community Events & Gatherings

Music: Events and activities featuring music were mentioned frequently by respondents. Music events mentioned included concerts, festivals, and orchestra performances. Theatre productions, both musical and dramatic were mentioned in this category.

“I think that music events and activities are especially powerful. Music seems to unite people on many levels and does so quickly.”

Cultural Festivals & Celebrations: Many respondents expressed support for multicultural events, with a smaller portion supporting an increase in diverse cultural and arts activities. Events like the Latin and Afro-Caribbean festivals were celebrated, as were Indigenous led events. Many responses in this category referred specifically to the sharing of different foods.

“Indigenous events add so much value! Pride is important too. Cultural Days in the fall are amazing!”

Visual & Public Arts: Many respondents expressed pride in the public art available around Red Deer. Specific examples mentioned included murals, statues, art galleries, and the Museum and Art Gallery (MAG).

“Red Deer does a great job with arts. I recently toured our murals in downtown RD. Amazing art for many cultural groups.”

Community Events & Gatherings: For many respondents, the focus of their response was not about the activity or events specifically, but about the chance to gather with other members of community. There is interest in a variety of community events and gatherings with an emphasis on affordability.

“Cultural and arts activities that bring the whole community together and are accessible to everyone add the most value.... What’s often missing is more everyday, affordable activities that don’t require big budgets or special interests, but simply create spaces for people to gather and enjoy our city together.”

Areas of Improvement for Cultural & Arts Activities

- Canadian/Alberta Heritage
- Year-Round Programming
- Availability & Accessibility
- Cultural Representation
- Communication

Canadian/Alberta Heritage: There is strong sentiment regarding a lack of activities focusing on local history, expressing desire for more Alberta – and Red Deer – specific activities and history. While several respondents explicitly support increased diversity programming, a small proportion oppose a focus on multiculturalism in favour of Canadian identity.

“Missing more heritage of Red Deer and Alberta. People cannot feel as though they belong if they don’t appreciate where they live.”

Year-Round Programming: Several respondents noted a lack of consistency in cultural and art activities throughout the year. Many responses about activities enjoyed were specific to summer-based events. Participants highlighted a need for year-round programming, highlighting the challenges of Canadian winters and a desire to connect with community all year.

“I’d like to be involved in events that take place periodically, not only once or a few times a year. Then I could meet my neighbors more often and create a stronger bond with them.”

Availability & Accessibility: Many expressed desires for more cultural and arts activities overall. This includes activities already enjoyed, as well as exploring other events and opportunities.

“Our family will travel to Calgary or Edmonton as they have more to offer.”

Many respondents shared that they are unable to attend the activities and events that do occur. Barriers included time, location, age-appropriateness, and cost.

“I find Red Deer has plenty of cultural and art activities for people with disposable income. For the families who have a harder time, opportunities are extremely limited.”

Cultural Representation: Many respondents identified specific cultures or cultural activities that they would like to see more of. A need for Indigenous-focused and led activities was highlighted. Other suggestions included specific global regions, 2SLGBTQ+ culture, and age-specific activities.

“I just think each nation’s community should be encouraged to hold an event that is marketed by the city. We still have a very xenophobic citizenry.”

Communication: For some respondents, concern was raised not about the activities, but about awareness of and communication around said activities. Many indicated that they do not know where to find out about events happening in Red Deer or only learning about them after they have happened.

“Honestly it’s not so much the activities but knowing they are happening.”

Growing Tensions: Throughout the survey, a small group of respondents left responses that were hateful towards disparaging of minorities. This was most prevalent but not exclusive to the responses to this question. Multiple responses called for mass deportation, anger from perceived favouring of specific groups and fear of losing or already lost Western heterosexual culture. Other responses, seemingly from people from these minority groups, expressed fear and discomfort experienced while living in Red Deer.



Supporting Diversity & Inclusion

Respondents were asked to provide feedback about The City’s role in supporting diversity and inclusion. There is a polarization in community attitudes, with responses ranging from calls for strong proactive City leadership in diversity and inclusion to demands that The City play no role whatsoever. This divide represents one of the most contentious aspects of current municipal life suggesting a need to carefully navigate competing community priorities and values.

Respondents perception on The City’s role in supporting diversity and inclusion

- Events and cultural celebrations
- No role / minimal Involvement
- Leadership and advocacy
- Support services for newcomers
- Accessible infrastructure and programs
- Community safety & anti-discrimination
- Funding and resource support
- Education and awareness
- Communication and promotion
- Balanced inclusive approach

A complete detailing of the strategies suggested for each of these suggestions is found in Appendix II. The key themes are organized by levels of involvement: no involvement, balanced involvement, and active involvement.

No Involvement

No Role or Minimal Involvement:

Many respondents felt The City should have little or no role in diversity and inclusion efforts. They suggested focusing on core services, such as roads, infrastructure, and emergency response, treating everyone equally without special programs and leaving community groups to organize activities independently of City funding.

“Should not play a role. Shows favouritism to one group over another. Just administer the city! Let individual groups finance and support their own activities.”

Balanced Involvement

Balanced Inclusive Approach:

Some respondents emphasized a balanced, inclusive approach to strengthen diversity and inclusion. Strategies included supporting newcomers without overlooking existing residents, addressing the needs of seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income residents, and fostering community-building that includes everyone.

“There should always be some support but not at the cost to taxpayers I believe that too much money is being spent on a minority of people to the detriment of the majority.”

Active Involvement

Events & Cultural Celebrations: Most respondents emphasized events and cultural celebrations as key to promoting community diversity. Suggested strategies included hosting and supporting multicultural festivals, block parties, and neighborhood gatherings, as well as offering low barrier permits, road closures, and logistical support to make such events more accessible.

“Inclusive events like that taste of Edmonton in a large open area to attract more people to the city. Also by attending diverse group events.”

Leadership & Advocacy: Respondents noted that The City should lead and advocate for community diversity by setting an example in policies, hiring, and decision-making, taking a visible stand against racism, and ensuring Council and the Mayor actively participate in diverse events.

“Leading by example with diversity reflected in staff and City leaders. Call out all acts of racism and homo and trans phobia. Elevate the conversation with Indigenous communities and create meaningful partnerships.”

Support Services for Newcomers: Supporting services for newcomers was identified as a key proponent of community diversity and inclusion. Suggested strategies included offering or funding English as a Second Language programs, supporting settlement and integration services, and providing multilingual resources and translated information.

Accessible Infrastructure & Programs:

Accessible infrastructure and programs were frequently cited as essential for enhancing community inclusion. Strategies included ensuring physical accessibility for people with disabilities, improving and expanding transit services, and offering affordable programs to reduce financial barriers to participation.

Community Safety & Anti-Discrimination:

Maintaining community safety and promoting anti-discrimination were highlighted as key City priorities. Suggested strategies included enforcing zero-tolerance policies for hate speech, addressing crime, homelessness, and drug issues to ensure public safety, and penalizing or discouraging racist and hateful behavior.

“... I wish we were more diverse and inclusive but I think that doesn’t really exist in such a conservative place. (I know we have a small gay pride thing but.... it’s so small...) And the amount of people I’ve talked to who just immediately blame immigrants for everything is insane.”

Funding & Resource Support: Respondents felt The City should fund and support efforts to strengthen diversity and inclusion, including grants for cultural and diversity-focused organizations, backing non-profits, and funding community and neighborhood programs.

“Partial funding through grants and making public facilities accessible for community groups. The city should also help promote the groups that do exist to bring their availability to a broader audience.”

Education & Awareness: Respondents believe The City should promote education and awareness to strengthen diversity and inclusion. Strategies include public education campaigns, cultural competency training for staff and Council, and addressing misinformation and stereotypes.

“Ensuring all organizations in the city are equipped with the knowledge, education and training to remove biased hiring and to remove barriers to the minority groups. The city itself is one of the least inclusive municipality organizations I’ve seen.”

Communication & Promotion: Respondents suggested The City improve communication and promotion to support diversity and inclusion. Strategies included better advertising of programs and events, using multiple platforms to reach wider audiences, and sharing information about available services and resources.

“It would be hard to know what the city felt about diversion and inclusion. Because there is no communication in this city.”

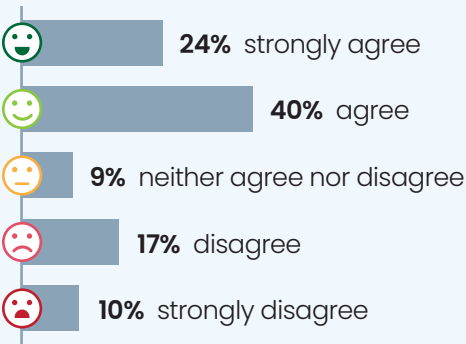
Parks & Spaces

This section assesses resident satisfaction with Red Deer’s parks, open spaces, trails, and related amenities (playgrounds, benches, outdoor rinks, etc.). It captures both the level to which these spaces meet community expectations and detailed feedback on how they could be improved. The analysis encompasses maintenance standards, accessibility, safety, seasonal operations, and infrastructure needs across The City’s extensive park and trail system.

There is broad agreement that parks and natural spaces in the community meet residents expectations. Parks, trails, and natural spaces continue to be appreciated and praised in Red Deer.

Red Deer Parks & Open Spaces (Natural and Manicured) Meet Community’s Expectations

Parks & Spaces Meet Expectations



*2024 CitSat – 67% agree

Community Priorities for Parks, Amenities & Trails

Respondents indicated that they value Red Deer’s park system as a defining feature and is invested in seeing it reach its full potential as a safe, beautiful, accessible amenity for all respondents.

The dominant theme of homelessness and safety concerns appears in the majority of responses and often overshadows other issues. Many respondents specifically note they have stopped using parks and trails they once loved due to these concerns, representing a significant loss of community amenity enjoyment despite Red Deer’s objectively strong park system infrastructure. The feedback was so prevalent that it has been acknowledged through other priorities so that more finite and granular input could be found. Along with concerns, respondents also highlighted different approaches and strategies to improve parks and open spaces, amenities and trails.

The key themes are:

Restoration & Repairs

Address Encampment & Addiction Safety Concerns in Parks: Respondents are passionate in their concern for parks and want them to be usable for all. This sentiment is challenged by the presence and spread of encampments, and the debris and damage that is attendant to those camps. Create welcoming, safe spaces where all respondents feel comfortable bringing their families at any time of day.

“By providing more housing and social supports for disadvantaged people we could significantly reduce the problems caused by the urban campers and night prowlers in our parks.”

Restore Maintenance Standards: Return Red Deer to its reputation as a beautifully maintained “City in a Park” with pristine green spaces.

“The standard of park maintenance has declined significantly in the last Council term. Flower beds are being removed, planters are empty, flower baskets eliminated. Other cities like Lacombe, [Other city close by] and Blackfalds look better than we do.”

Maintenance & Management

Continued & Expanded Winter Maintenance/Snow Clearing: Respondents appreciated existing trail snow clearing and requested expanded year-round access and winter recreation. Suggested strategies included increasing snow and ice removal on major trails, providing online maps of cleared trails, and maintaining lit outdoor rinks.

“I so appreciate that the trails are shoveled in the winter. I walk daily and I think the shoveled walks are so appreciated”

Maintenance, Vegetation & Weed Management: There is strong demand to adhere to Red Deer’s reputation as a “City in a Park.” Regular mowing, trimming, and targeted weed control, especially for dandelions and thistles along with increased budget for upkeep, were suggested. Mentions also include clearing excessive deadfall while preserving habitat, planting native trees, and implementing fire-smart measures near residential areas.

“Nothing but weeds in our parks. Thistle is a noxious weed but the city doesn’t take care of those weeds. I find it very perplexing that if those weeds were going in my yard, the city would be ticketing me.”

Improved Waste Management: Respondents want clean parks with sufficient disposal options. Recommendations include more frequent garbage collection, additional trash and recycling bins, and sharps containers in key locations.

“Would like to see to see the garbage bins emptied before they’re overflowing...”

Rapid Response Beautification & Climate Protection: Concerns about graffiti, vandalism, dumping, and degradation from exposure to extreme weather were raised. Strategies include a dedicated graffiti removal team, reporting systems, shade structures, pergolas, and weather-resistant furniture.

“Removal of graffiti would make a huge difference as walking by racial slurs and hate speech daily is taxing.”

Expansion & Investment

Enhanced Trail Safety: Respondents emphasized the need for a visible safety presence and enhanced trail safety, including encampment management, posting speed limits for e-bikes and scooters, and public education on trail etiquette. Proposed strategies include volunteer trail ambassadors, community clean-up events with safety oversight, better lighting, emergency call buttons, and stronger partnerships between community groups and safety services.

“I would love to see commissionaires on golf carts on the trail system ensuring safety and assistance to users.”

Trail Connectivity: Respondents state that trail connectivity will serve to enhance use and utility of the trail system. Suggestions include widening trails in busy areas and improving connections between neighborhoods and major parks through new trail links and pedestrian bridges.

“Trail connectivity needs to be improved. Too many dead end at streets.”

Amenities for Families & Accessibility: Respondents note that parks should be family-friendly and inclusive. Strategies include keeping washrooms open, adding water fountains, increasing seating options with accessible designs, and modernizing playgrounds with wheelchair access, sensory features, safer surfacing, and natural play elements.

“It would be great if you added more partially recumbent benches, similar to what is available at the water park in Capstone.”

“Would love to see more baby and toddler friendly options at parks.”

Enhanced Pet-Friendly Infrastructure: Respondents want parks that accommodate pets while remaining clean and safe. Strategies include dog waste stations, dedicated bins, off-leash parks in under-served areas, and small neighborhood dog parks.

“Could there be more little stations with dog poop bags along trails to encourage cleanup.”

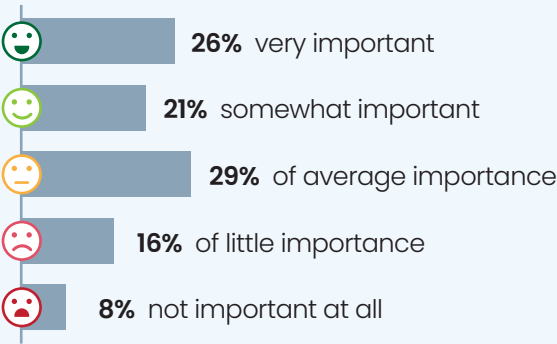
Environment

This section assesses the importance residents place on environmental sustainability initiatives and explores what they consider appropriate ways for The City to support environmental goals. It captures the range of perspectives from strong support for environmental action to skepticism about costs and municipal roles in this area, while identifying specific initiatives residents recommend or oppose.

Importance for The City to Dedicate Resources to Environmental Initiatives

Most respondents, 47%, place a higher-than-average importance on environmental initiatives.

Dedicated Resources for Environmental Initiatives



The City’s Role in Environmental Sustainability

Respondents were asked to share how they think Red Deer can support environmental sustainability. Responses ranged from specific strategies and suggestions to skepticism about the cost and need for such initiatives.

Top Suggestions for Environmental Sustainability

- Maintain Parks & Green Spaces
- Recycling & Waste Management
- Public Transit Improvements
- Solar/Renewable Energy
- Addressing Homelessness

Maintain Parks & Green Spaces: Many respondents indicated support of green spaces around Red Deer, wanting to see them remain available and in good condition. Others suggested expanding available green spaces, utilizing innovate spaces for re-naturalizing, adding food forests, or flowers for beauty and pollinator support. A few noted that improving the environment of Red Deer can also improve pride in the community.

“You have good parks just protect them.”

Recycling & Waste Management: Many respondents discussed waste management. A variety of suggestions were made under this category. Some recommended increasing the availability of recycling and compost options, specifically in multi-family homes and in public areas. Others discussed expanding recycling options, allowing for more materials to be included. Education about how to and

what can be recycled was also suggested several times as a measure of improving current waste management infrastructure.

“Get business/commercial composting and recycling, there’s a huge amount of waste from commercial areas that could be diverted, even if it’s only composting, the food waste alone is insane.”

Public Transit Improvements: Several respondents suggested changes to the public transit system. Responses highlighted that few use the bus, resulting in empty buses traveling the city. Others called for improvements to the transit system to encourage more use, decreasing dependency on personal vehicles. Regarding traffic, some also noted poor timing of traffic lights resulting in long idling times. Mixed zoning was also suggested to improve walk-ability.

“Transport and housing- long term solutions to encourage more walk-ability through better, more frequent public transport, and more mixed/high density housing especially around transport hubs to facilitate less over-reliance on cars.”

Solar/Renewable Energy: Some respondents focused on using renewable energy where possible. Solar and hydroelectric power were some of the suggested renewable energy sources. Some encouraged investing in longer-term renewable energy solutions. A few respondents highlighted the economic benefits of renewable energy and ability to sell excess energy produced. Having City buildings equipped with solar panels was mentioned by several respondents.

“Improve renewable power use, encourage residential and commercial renewable power use, improve energy efficiency at city facilities.”

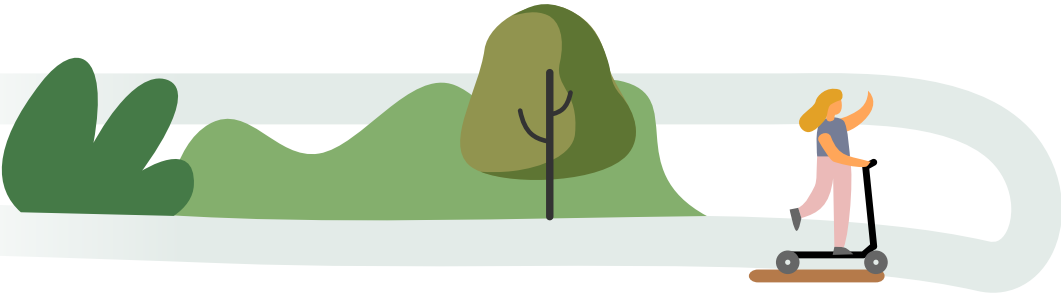
Addressing Homelessness: For a few respondents, issues of environmental sustainability were linked to addressing issues of homelessness. Concerns about fire risk and drug paraphernalia left at encampment sites were frequent.

“The homeless encampments are a disgusting mess, a lot of garbage gets distributed and blows around from these.”

Other Suggested Initiatives: In addition to those above, respondents provided a wide variety of suggested environmental initiatives that could be done in Red Deer. Suggestions included tree planting programs, naturalizing green space, expanding water catchment infrastructure, incentives for homeowners to make “green” upgrades, use of the river to produce hydroelectric power, green roofing/ rooftop gardening, food forests, and the expansion of community gardens.

Indigenous Perspectives: Several responses note the need for Indigenous involvement in environmental initiatives.

“By having Indigenous folks lead the environmental sustainability initiatives. They have been caretakers of this land since time immemorial and many have knowledge passed down to them on how to protect the environment in a way that works and protects it. Don’t just consult, employ Indigenous environmental leaders and make it a hiring priority.”



Skepticism & Opposition: Several respondents expressed full or partial opposition to environmental initiatives. For many, the current financial situation of The City elicits concern with spending on environmental initiatives. Others note the personal cost of making environmentally friendly choices.

“When it is affordable and there are enough jobs for people (which there aren’t at the moment), people can then think about things like environmental sustainability.”

Others questioned the role of municipal government in environmental initiatives.

“It should be an individual’s priority to want and to work at having a good environment. Education in how would be The City’s responsibility. Leading by example”

A few respondents explicitly deny or question climate change, calling for no action on environmental initiatives.

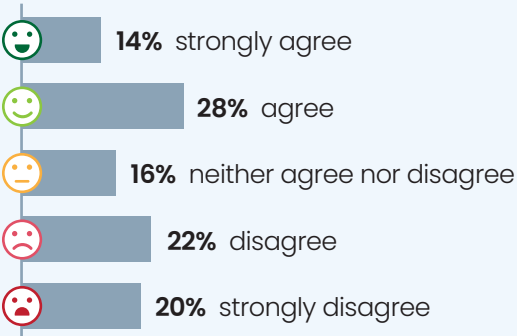
“Keep our community well maintained, clean and safe. There is no climate emergency. Quit wasting tax dollars on useless causes like climate.”

Downtown

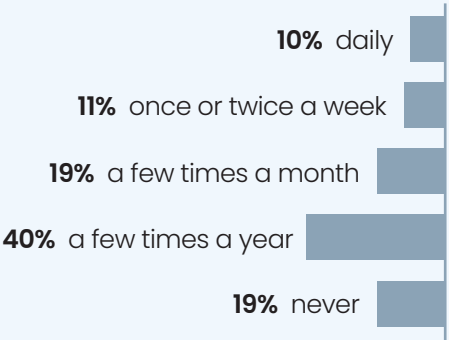
Downtown is the heart of our community—where business, living, recreation, and culture all come together. This section examines residents’ relationship with Red Deer’s downtown core, including their perceptions of its role as a community gathering place and the frequency with which they visit. It explores what activities and businesses draw people downtown, what barriers prevent visits, and what amenities or changes residents feel are missing to make downtown a more vibrant and accessible destination.

Perceptions & Visits to Downtown

Downtown as a Gathering Space



How Frequently do you Visit Downtown?



*2024 CitSat – 46% visited downtown in the past 12 months

Responses to the idea of downtown as an important gathering place were varied, with 42% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 42% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The majority of respondents visit downtown a few times a year or not at all. Unsurprisingly, respondents who report coming downtown more frequently agree more strongly that downtown is an important gathering place.

Activities or Businesses That Draw People Downtown

Respondents were asked what draws them to Downtown Red Deer. Most respondents expressed safety concerns that limit or prevent their use of Downtown. Out of nearly 1700 responses to this question, over half expressed negative sentiment about the current state of Downtown Red Deer.

Top Attractions Bringing People Downtown

- Restaurants & Food
- Library
- Work/Professional Appointments
- City Hall Park
- Shopping/Entertainment
- Ross Street Patio

Restaurants & Food: The most common response indicated that people visit Downtown Red Deer for dining purposes. The Taco Loft was the most frequently mentioned restaurant (“the only reason I go downtown”). Other mentions included 53 on Ross, Ross Street Ice Cream, City Roast Coffee, Sunworks, Original Joes, Chubby’s Jerk and King Donair. Statements about restaurants and dining were often qualified with safety concerns.

“I am downtown for work. I love how many options for food there are downtown.”

Red Deer Public Library: Many respondents noted that the downtown branch of the Red Deer Public Library brings them downtown. Again, many qualify their statements praising the library with concerns for safety when visiting.

“The library is the only reason I ever have to go downtown.”

“I literally only come downtown to go to the library anymore, maybe once a month, downtown no longer feels like a very safe place to be, it’s really sad.”

Work/Professional Appointments: A common reason for visiting Downtown Red Deer is either for work or for professional appointments (banking, legal and government services, accounting, medical care, etc.) Many note that they do not spend time downtown beyond these needs for fear of safety and that they would go elsewhere if possible.

“Work brings me downtown but I leave immediately after.”

City Hall Park: Comments highlighted enjoyment of City Hall Park year-round, praising the flower beds in the summer and the Christmas lights in the winter.

“The Christmas displays and the flowers at City Hall are great and we enjoy them every year.”

Shopping/Entertainment: Shopping opportunities that bring respondents downtown, mentioning the Capstone Market, Sunworks, Housewarmings, Junktiques, and others. Responses about grocery shopping downtown regularly raised concerns of safety, especially at Superstore. Comments were also made about business hours, noting that many businesses downtown have limited hours of operation.

“There are a few good stores that I’d like to go but I really just avoid downtown.”

“I work downtown but try to shop at the stores downtown as much as I can. And support the downtown restaurants and coffee shops.”

Others mentioned visiting downtown for different events, such as CentreFest, the Afro-Caribbean Festival, the Latin Festival, holiday festivities, and various street festivals.

“We only go downtown for a community event like the summer festival.”

Ross Street Patio: Use of the Ross Street Patio was the most consistently positive feature of downtown mentioned by respondents. Respondents expressed enjoyment of live music, outdoor dining, atmosphere, and community gathering. Some voiced that Ross Street Patio is a limited space and that Red Deer could use more spaces such as this. As with other draws to the downtown, concerns about safety were expressed.

“I like the Ross Street patios, but there needs to be a wider variety of options, need more similar places in the area.”

Making Downtown More Desirable

Changes Needed to Make Downtown More Desirable

- Improved Safety
- Entertainment
- Shopping & Retail
- Dining Options
- Family Friendly & Accessible

Improved Safety: Concerns about safety were raised by over half of all responses to this question. Most statements about enjoyable features of the downtown were qualified with safety concerns. While many stated safety concerns keep them from visiting the area altogether, others expressed interest in spending more time downtown should it become safer.

“I would LOVE to explore downtown though when and if it becomes safer in the future.”

Entertainment: Many respondents indicated that if there were more options for entertainment, they would be more likely to frequent downtown. Performance or activity-based entertainment was often suggested.

“The addition of dedicated entertainment venues like a live music hall or a small theater could... make the downtown core a destination for evenings out.”

Shopping & Retail: Several shops were mentioned as reasons for coming downtown, though many respondents would like to see more options for shopping. An emphasis on locally owned businesses was present.

“It is virtually impossible to shop for anything downtown anymore, and the few shops that struggle to survive are really struggling. I love living, working and playing downtown, but this is becoming more and more difficult.”

Dining Options: In addition to increased shopping options, respondents would like to see more dining options. Coffee shops and cafes were also frequently mentioned as businesses that would keep people downtown for longer.

“Missing more diverse restaurants, clubs and bars for night life, better cafes and brunch restaurants.”

Family Friendly & Accessible: Many indicated that they would come downtown more frequently if there were more family friendly options. Others, especially those working standard office hours noted that many businesses are not open late enough for them to patronize.

“Downtown is currently really disappointing. It does not have the same vibe or accessibility I would expect to see in a city our size. Often times the shops etc. are closed early which makes it hard for those of us who work full time days to access what downtown has to offer”

Housing

This section captures resident perspectives on housing availability, affordability, and development patterns in Red Deer. It captures concerns about rental costs, home ownership accessibility, development density, and the balance between growth needs and preservation of neighborhood character. The section reflects the tensions between different housing priorities across the community.

Methods to Increase Housing Inventory

Respondents were also able to add their own suggestions, with 410 respondents doing so. Some used this as an opportunity elaborate on options provided. Many used this space to identify specific areas of the city that should be prioritized or areas that should be avoided.

Methods to Increase Housing Inventory



Locations for Development: Capstone was mentioned often, with varying degrees of support for the development happening there. Many emphasized a desire for new areas to be developed rather than attempting to increase density in existing neighbourhoods. Others highlighted vacant or run-down existing buildings that could be renovated or replaced.

“Expand outwards. Stop trying to add density to our already developed areas. This degrades property values and ruins the general feel of neighbourhoods.”

Cost of Housing: One in four comments provided focused on the cost of housing. This included comments concerned with tax increases, rent prices, and a lack of starter homes to be purchased by first-time buyers rather than landlords. These comments also included concern with homelessness attributed to housing cost barriers.

“Zone for affordable housing with certain requirements that keep cost down but allow for dignity. We can build all we like but if it's all for the wealthy it's just an investment vehicle.”

Infrastructure to Support Housing

Development: Many comments expressed a desire for focus on infrastructure either before or with housing development. These comments were focused on ensuring there will be enough parking, adequate provision of services, and traffic. Many of these comments were also reflected continuing concern about the rezoning proposed to acquire the Housing Accelerator Fund.

“Housing demand is outpacing supply because of the rapid population growth. Before adding more housing measures, The City should focus on ensuring infrastructure, services, and community safety can keep up. If growth continues too quickly, it becomes difficult to maintain livability for everyone.”

Options for Smaller Homes: Several other solutions to Red Deer's low housing inventory were suggested. The most frequent suggestion was to focus on providing smaller homes. This would accommodate those that do not have large families and are likely to be more affordable, especially to first-time buyers. Developing tiny home communities was also mentioned several times, often as a solution to shelter more unhoused people.

“It would be great if Red Deer had some tiny house communities, allowing individuals and small families to have a house without a huge mortgage.”

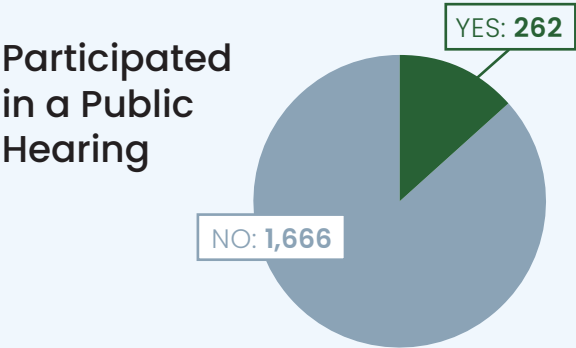
No Municipal Involvement: Finally, a few comments suggested that housing inventory should not be the concern of The City and should be left to the private sector.

“The city shouldn't really be involved in housing other than to deregulation as much as possible and allow private investment & market forces to respond to demand naturally.”

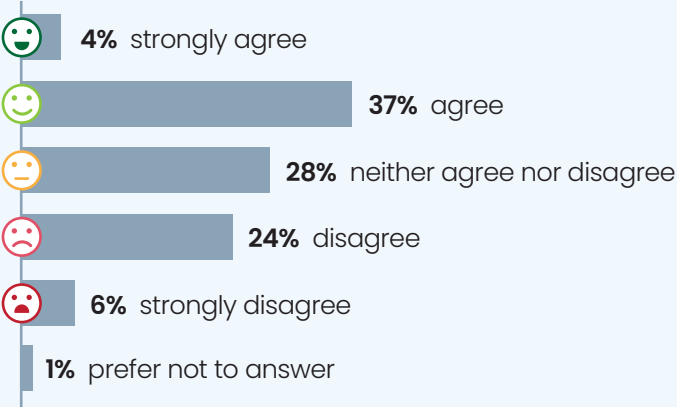
Engagement

Engagement is how residents connect with The City—whether by sharing feedback, participating in projects, attending Council meetings, or staying informed through online tools and surveys. This section reflects on how respondents interacted with The City and how involved they feel in shaping decisions that impact our community.

Experiences of Formal Public Hearings



Public Hearings are Easy to Access & Participate in (n=254)



A minority of respondents had attended a public hearing in the last 2 years. Of these, 41% agree or strongly agree that hearings are easy to access and participate in, 28% are neutral, and 30% disagree or strongly disagree.

Feedback for the Public Hearing Process

The feedback reveals low levels of trust and accessibility in Red Deer’s public engagement. While the infrastructure for hearings exists, perceived issues with communication, timing, responsiveness and process management reduce resident confidence. This data reveals concerns as well as appreciation about Red Deer’s public hearing process across several key themes.

CONCERNS

- Awareness & communication
- Accessibility & timing
- Perception that input is ignored
- Process management issues
- Operational concerns
- Transparency concerns

APPRECIATION

- Administration addressing questions clearly
- Public input influencing Council decisions (rezoning)
- Virtual attendance option
- Evening start time

Awareness & Communication: The most pervasive complaint is that respondents simply are not aware hearings are happening. There’s strong demand for proactive communication using modern channels: social media posts with advance notice, text alerts (similar to snow zone notifications), email notifications to property tax accounts, and physical signage around the city.

“I didn’t even know this was a possibility.”

Timing: Hearings exclude many people due to daytime schedules, downtown locations, and accessibility challenges. Those with work, childcare, disabilities, or mobility issues struggle to attend. Respondents suggested evening meetings, virtual options, live streams with recordings, and multiple sessions. The current format favors those with flexible schedules and resources.

“Hold hearings and council events where the public can participate outside of working hours, so we don’t have to lose wages to attend or in an online format during the evenings. Many of us want to attend or engage but can’t afford to take time off work.”

Perception That Input Is Ignored:

Respondents view hearings as performative rather than genuine consultation. They feel decisions are predetermined, with developers having privileged access and public input treated as a formality. This perceived lack of influence breeds disillusionment, lowering participation and further eroding trust.

“They listen, then do what they planned to do anyways”

“It’s a joke... our opinions are swept under the rug”

“Window dressing. Decisions are already made”

Process Management Issues: Respondents viewed hearings as poorly managed, with too many contentious items packed into single sessions causing long delays and rescheduling. Five-minute speaking limits, after such a large time investment through waiting, added to their frustration. At times Council members sometimes appeared unprepared or asked irrelevant questions, wasting participants’ time and signaling a lack of respect for public input. Finally, speakers who speak last can also “blindsides” a hearing by introducing misinformation or heated opinion without opportunity for response.

Transparency Concerns: Respondents feel excluded from decision-making and distrust opaque processes. Frequent in camera sessions limit public scrutiny, fueling suspicions of special interest influence and biased information from administration. They see Council receiving “cherry-picked” data rather than objective analysis. With no follow-up explaining how feedback is used, respondents assume their input is ignored, deepening mistrust and skepticism.

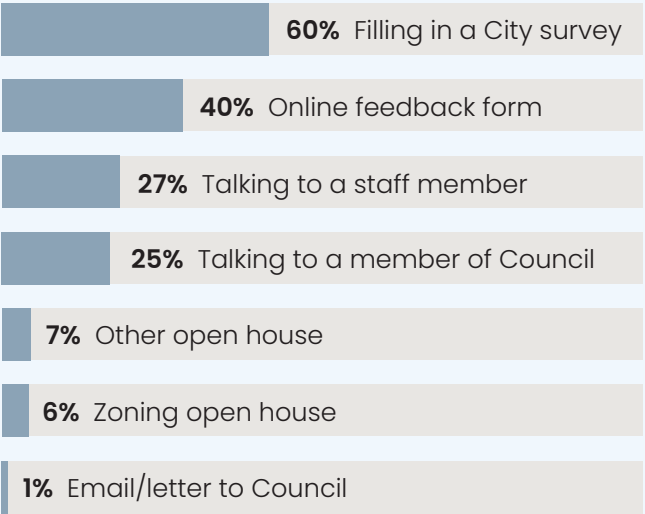
Demographic & Equity Concerns:

Respondents raised concerns about equity and inclusivity, noting that hearings are not accessible to non-English speakers or immigrants, exclude people with disabilities, and disadvantage working-class participants who risk wage loss to attend. They felt the process favors those with time and financial resources, resulting in biased input from a limited, more privileged group of respondents.

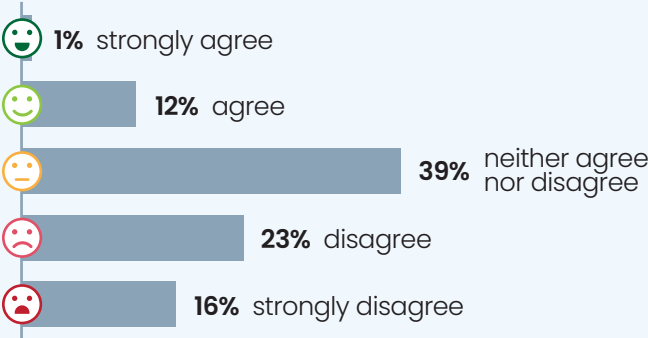
Positive Feedback: Despite prevalent criticism, some respondents shared positive experiences. They appreciated clear answers from administration, instances where Council changed decisions based on input (such as a praised rezoning case), and the availability of virtual or evening sessions. These examples show the system can work effectively when well executed, suggesting the aforementioned issues are fixable rather than inherent.

Other Methods of Engaging with The City

Methods of Engaging with the City



My Feedback is Considered in Decision Making



Survey respondents reported the many ways in which they had sought to engage with The City. Despite this effort to make their voice heard, the majority of respondents felt neutral or negative about their feedback being used in decision making. Only 13% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their feedback was considered.

Getting More Involved with Municipal Decision Making

Respondents were asked how, if at all, they would like to be more involved in municipal decision making. Results varied, with some content with their current level of involvement, some suggesting specific ways of improving involvement, while others expressed frustration with the entire system and a lack of trust in the process.

Key Themes

- More Surveys/Online Engagement Options
- Cynicism with Process
- Improved Communication
- No Desire for More Involvement
- More Public Engagement

More Surveys/Engagement Options: Many respondents noted that they appreciated this survey and would like to see more regular surveys to collect public feedback. Some noted that surveys would help reach a broad audience and can be completed on one’s own time rather than requiring attendance at specific times or locations. Others highlighted concern about survey use and express skepticism of results being meaningfully used, frustration that they never see results of surveys participated in, or general survey design concerns.

“I do think surveys like this one are important as well as online ways to submit ideas and concerns from the average citizen. But I’m also skeptical that these ideas and concerns are being taken seriously.”

Improved Communication: Throughout responses to this question, respondents reported a lack of communication and transparency about municipal decision making. Respondents expressed frustration with not knowing when and where public engagement opportunities were taking place and many noted a lack of trust in the communication process, feeling that the sharing of ideas was not transparent.

“It would also help to see transparent updates on how community feedback is being used, so residents feel their voices truly shape the city’s direction.”

More Public Engagement: Respondents requested more opportunities to make their opinions heard. This includes more frequent engagement opportunities offered at different times and places to accommodate different schedules and abilities. Some wished to have more frequent votes on important decisions. Engagement opportunities suggested including citizen advisory panels, a youth city council, forums at spaces occupied by specific demographics (e.g. senior’s facility), and online sessions.

“More active engagements with the public not just during election or the parade.”

Cynicism with Process: About one-quarter of responses to this question indicated cynicism with any process of involvement with municipal decision making. Tone of responses ranged from mild annoyance to despondence to exasperation.

“My involvement in voting used to feel meaningful, a way to hold those in power accountable. Lately, I feel like that sense of responsibility and impact has diminished, which is truly disheartening.”

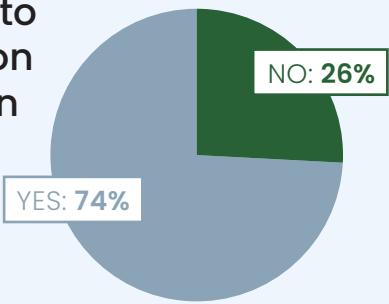
No Desire for More Involvement: Several respondents noted that they have no desire to be more involved in municipal decision making. They noted feeling satisfied with current opportunities to engage, lack of knowledge/interest in specific topics, or not having the time for additional involvement.

“I don’t want to be. That is what we pay people in the city to do.”

Looking Forward & New Council

This section focuses on residents’ perceptions of decision making at The City. The section also examines residents’ preferences regarding the balance between property taxation levels and service delivery, capturing perspectives on how The City should manage competing fiscal pressures.

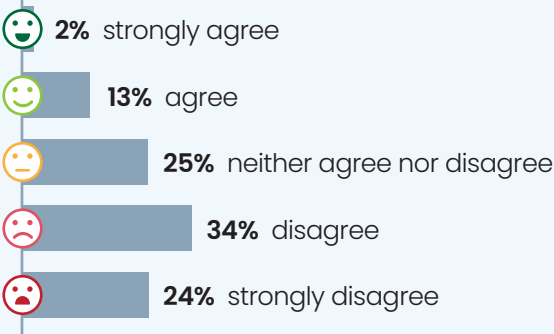
Know how to Find Election Information



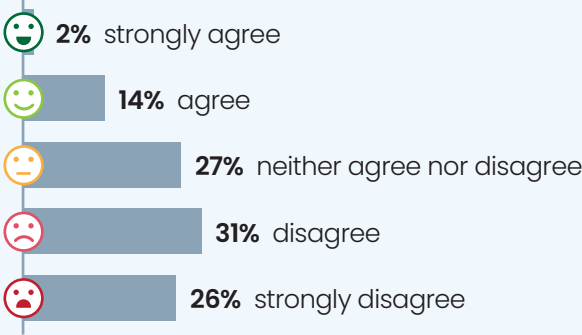
The Living in Red Deer survey closed shortly before the 2025 municipal election. Encouragingly, most respondents knew where they could find information on the election as it approached.

Public Sentiment Towards
City Council & Administration

Council Decisions in Best
Interest of Community



Admin Decisions in Best
Interest of Community

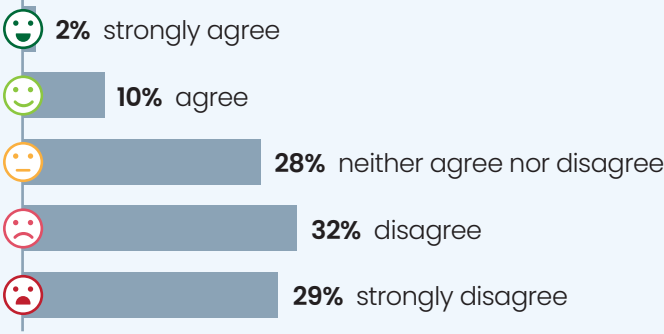


**2024 CitSat – 75% ranked their satisfaction between a rating of 5-10*

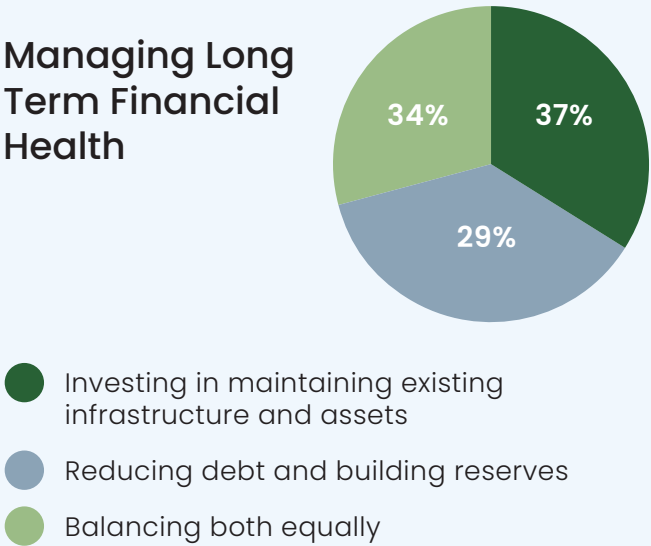
Respondents to the survey disagreed with the idea that Council and administration made decisions in the best interest of the community. This can be linked to the challenges with engagement, finances, and management of community issues identified in this and

Municipal Spending & Taxes

The City Manages Finances
Responsibly & Transparently

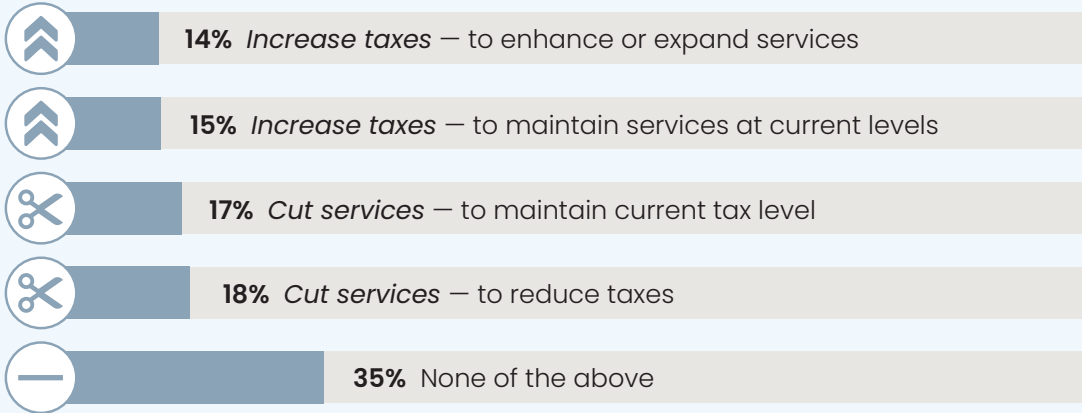


Managing Long
Term Financial
Health



other reports. These findings suggest a broader concern about transparency, communication, and accountability in decision-making processes. This sentiment has been captured throughout previous questions as well.

Changes to Taxes & Services



Respondents disagree that The City manages finances responsibly and transparently. This can be seen across responses to multiple questions as well, as frustrations with spending on social issues and the recent increase to the property tax rate have been brought up in other places. Respondents are roughly split between continuing to invest in infrastructure, reducing debt, and using a balanced approach. Respondents are also in a nearly equal spread amongst increasing taxes and cutting services, with the majority not having a response to how taxes and services should be balanced. This lack of preference could be a sign of indifference, frustration, or not wanting a say in technical financial matters.

Changes to Taxes & Services

LiRD results show that 61% of respondents disagree that the City manages its finances responsibly and transparently whereas in the Citizen Satisfaction survey 2024, a strong majority (71%) feel they receive good value

for their tax dollars. This can be seen across responses to multiple questions in LiRD, as frustrations with spending on social issues and the recent increase to the property tax rate have been brought up in other places. Respondents are roughly split between continuing to invest in infrastructure, reducing debt, and using a balanced approach.

The 2024 Citizen Satisfaction survey results showed a community almost evenly split on the preferred approach to municipal property taxes: 48% support cutting services to maintain or reduce taxes, while 43% favour raising taxes to sustain or enhance services. LiRD findings reflect a similar division. Respondents are again spread across increasing taxes (29%) and cutting services (35%), with a substantial portion (35%) offering no clear preference on how taxes and services should be balanced. This lack of preference could be a sign of indifference, frustration, or not wanting a say in technical financial matters.

Final Thoughts from Respondents

Participants were asked to share final thoughts with City administration and the new City Council. While the respondents express appreciation for The City’s natural amenities and see potential for improvement, there were also worries among respondents about safety, crime, and homelessness, alongside frustrations about rising costs and service quality. Many of the themes here are captured throughout the survey in other areas.

Public Safety & Crime: The most dominant theme across responses is a pervasive sense of insecurity. Respondents consistently describe feeling unsafe in public spaces, particularly downtown and on trail systems.

Quality of Life Indicators: Despite concerns, many respondents still identify positive aspects of living in Red Deer, including its size, location, and amenities. However, there’s a pervasive sense that quality of life has declined, with many considering leaving or already having left.

Rising Costs and Tax Burden: Property taxes and the cost of living are major concerns. Respondents feel they’re paying more while receiving less, with many expressing that tax increases are becoming unfordable.

Cultural Identity & Reputation: There is concern about Red Deer’s reputation, both within Alberta and nationally. Many respondents feel the city is perceived as unsafe, boring, or unwelcoming.

City Management & Accountability: There is dissatisfaction with City leadership and Administration. Respondents call for greater accountability, transparency, and fiscal discipline, with some questioning Administrative bloat and decision-making processes.

Homelessness & Addiction Crisis: Respondents express frustration with visible homelessness, drug use, and associated impacts on public spaces. Many respondents see this as the primary driver of other problems, including crime, downtown decline, and reduced use of parks and trails.

Downtown Decline: Respondents note the deterioration of downtown Red Deer, describing it as empty, uninviting, and increasingly dangerous. The downtown is seen as a symbol of broader city decline.

Emergency Services & Staffing: Concerns about adequate staffing for fire, police, and EMS services emerged strongly. Respondents want assurance that emergency services can respond effectively, with specific concerns about fire hall closures and officer staffing levels.

Parks, Trails & Green Spaces: Red Deer’s parks and trail systems are consistently cited as major assets and sources of pride. They also highlight concerns about maintenance, safety and accessibility.

Transportation & Infrastructure: Traffic flow, particularly light synchronization, is a frequent complaint. Respondents also express concerns about road maintenance, snow removal, and the need for better public transit.

Housing & Development: Concerns about housing affordability, rental costs, and development patterns are prominent. Some respondents oppose increased density and multi-family housing in established neighborhoods, while others see affordable housing as a critical need.

Senior Citizens’ Concerns: Senior respondents express feeling overlooked and financially strained. They highlight accessibility issues, the impact of tax increases on fixed incomes, and concerns about safety that limit their mobility and independence.

Contradictions & Tensions: Opposing Viewpoints

Throughout the results of this survey is a vast range of opinions. The table below illustrates the fundamental contradictions and tensions within the Red Deer community by presenting opposing viewpoints on five critical policy areas. The structure is designed to show that for each major issue, respondents hold opposed perspectives which complicated efforts to find consensus.

DIVERSITY	
Celebrate multiculturalism	Too many immigrants
Slow immigration	We need workers
HOMELESS	
Need compassion & help	Lock them up
Build shelter	We need workers
SPENDING	
Need services	Cut spending
Build pool	No new projects
DEVELOPMENT	
Need housing	Preserve green space
Densify	Keep character
GOVERNMENT ROLE	
City should lead	Stay out of it
More services	Stick to basics



Respondents & Identity Based Experiences

Respondent Demographics

DEMOGRAPHICS	SURVEY RESPONDENTS	2021 CENSUS
How old are you?		
Younger than 18	0.4%	24.3%
18-34	12.9%	19.9%*
35-54	44.3%	28%
55+		
What is your gender?		
Man	43%	49%
Woman	56%	51%
Non-Binary/Diverse	1%	--**
Do you identify as?		
Indigenous	5%	7%
A visible minority	13%	19%
A newcomer	2%	4%
How long have you lived in Red Deer?		
Less than 5 years	11%	19%
5-10 years	10%	--
More than 10 years	79%	--

*Note, census data uses 20 as the interval for age group.
**Statistics Canada incorporates non-binary responses into Men+ and Women+ categories.

Why We Collect Demographic Information

When completing a survey, respondents are asked questions about themselves that can influence their experience of living in Red Deer. We ask these demographic questions so that we can see if men and woman, or young and old, for example, answer the same question differently. This suggests a different experience of City services.

We also ask these questions so we can see how closely our respondent group matches the general public, to ensure that what is in the report closely mirrors the sentiment of the public. This survey had good representation from all demographics that is largely in line with the general public, apart from children. This is because children don't participate in public surveys as a general practice. This survey had satisfactory representation from Indigenous community members, newcomers, and people who identify as a visible minority. There was a slight over-representation of women in the response pool, which is typical for public surveys. There was lower than average representation from people who have moved to Red Deer in the last 5 years, which can be expected as those who have moved more recently are less likely to be engaged in municipal feedback processes. In this round of surveying 1% of respondents reported a gender other than man or woman; the 2021 Census included those who are gender diverse in the man and woman categories, and so these findings are not comparable to the broader Canadian population.

Overall, respondents who did not identify their age, gender, or identify status tended to score living in Red Deer lower in all aspects.

Identity Based Experiences

Asking demographic identifiers allows a comparison of responses between demographic groups. This provides insight into City services being experienced differently based on identity. If services are equitably experienced, there should be no difference in scoring between populations.

Women & Men: There was no meaningful or statistically significant difference in how women and men responded to agreement questions.

Age Category: Between age categories, there was a slightly higher positive agreement to a sense of belonging for those in the 55+ age category.

Visible Minority & Non-Visible Minority: Those who identified as a visible minority had less agreement to satisfaction with The City in all questions asked. In some cases, the difference was small. However, there was a statistically significant and notable lower score on elements of parks meeting expectations, transparent management of finances, Council making decisions in the best interest of the community, and Administration making decisions in the best interests of the community from those who identify as a visible minority.

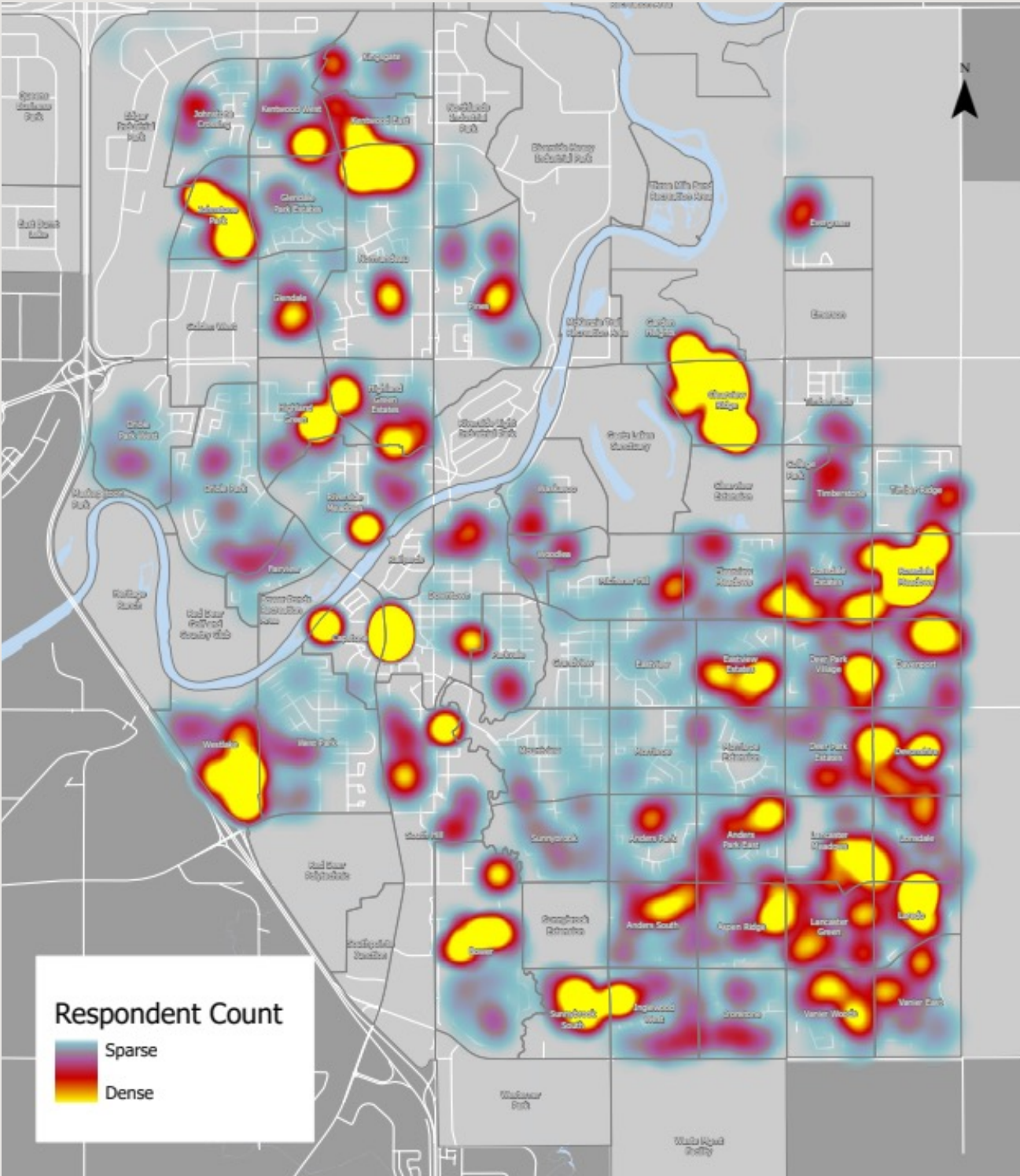
Newcomers & Non-Newcomers: Newcomers largely responded to agreement questions in a similar manner to non-newcomers. The exception is regarding The City managing finances transparently, where newcomers rated The City's performance statistically significantly more strongly than non-newcomers.

Indigenous & Non-Indigenous: Those who identify as Indigenous reported slightly lower agreement in the areas of being proud to be from Red Deer, having a sense of belonging, and Council and Administration making decisions in the best interest of the community. Indigenous respondents show a statistically significant and largely lower level of agreement to parks meeting expectations.



Geographic Representation

The survey responses had a healthy spread of geographic distribution, which suggests that the experience of one location over another is not embedded in the data.



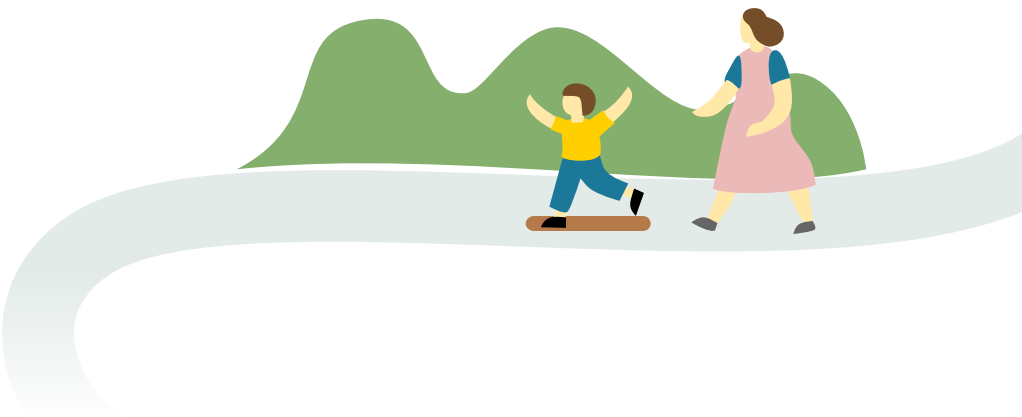
WHAT'S NEXT?

The Living in Red Deer Survey results offer a timely perspective on community priorities, perceptions and concerns as City Council sets its strategic direction.

This biennial survey enables The City to ask questions that invite residents to share their views in their own words. This approach yielded rich qualitative data with each of the major questions generating hundreds of thoughtful responses that go beyond numerical satisfaction ratings. These comments can be further analyzed to uncover underlying themes, emerging issues, and the nuances of community sentiment related to each topic area.

This dataset represents an ongoing opportunity for deeper analysis. As Council and administration identify areas of interest this feedback can be mined and revisited to inform specific policy or initiative. It can also serve as contextual evidence to supplement other engagement and research efforts on a case-by-case basis.

Ultimately, this iteration of the Living in Red Deer survey marks the beginning of an evolving dialogue between The City and its residents. The intent is for this tool to become a recurring and adaptive mechanism for civic engagement. With consistent administration and thoughtful iteration, Living in Red Deer can help build a long-term understanding of how residents experience life in the city and how those experiences shift as Red Deer continues to grow and change.



APPENDIX

The following questions were developed in-house through a collaborative approach across all City sections.

Community Vibes

1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree or prefer not to answer.)

- I am proud to be a citizen of Red Deer.
- I feel a sense of belonging to my neighbourhood.
- Our community is welcoming to people of different cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, and identities.

2. In your view, what role should The City play in supporting diversity and inclusion in the community?

3. How often do you spend time volunteering or helping others in the community?

(Never, a few times a year, a few times a month, once or twice a month, daily or prefer not to answer.)

4. How much do you agree with the following statement?

Cultural activities (festivals, performances, exhibitions, public art, etc.) are important to life in our community.

(Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree or prefer not to answer.)

5. What kinds of cultural or arts activities do you think add the most value to our community? Are there any you feel are missing?

Parks & Spaces

6. How much do you agree with the following statement?

Red Deer parks and open spaces (natural and manicured) meet my expectations.

(Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree or prefer not to answer.)

7. What are some of the ways that parks and open spaces (natural and manicured), amenities (playgrounds, park benches, picnic tables, outdoor rinks, etc.), and trails can be improved?

Downtown

8. How much do you agree with the following statement?

Downtown plays an important role as a gathering place for our community.

(Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree or prefer not to answer.)

9. How frequently do you visit Downtown Red Deer?

(Never, a few times a year, a few times a month, once or twice a month, daily or prefer not to answer.)

10. What activities or businesses bring you downtown? Are there any you feel are missing?

Housing

11. Which of the following measures do you think should be used to increase housing inventory in Red Deer? (Check all that apply)

- Speed up development approval process
- Increase opportunities for backyard suites, basement suites, and other types of secondary units
- Relax regulations to allow more density in existing neighbourhoods (ex. allowing taller structures to accommodate more units)
- Encourage mixed use developments (ex. A building with businesses on the ground floor and apartment units on upper floors)
- Other (please specify)
- Identify specific areas in the city that are best suited for increased housing opportunities (ex. focus on increasing housing around popular public transit routes)
- Identify underutilized City-owned lands and buildings that can be made available for housing
- I don't support increasing housing inventory
- Unsure

Looking Forward & New Council

12. There is an upcoming municipal election on October 20, 2025. Do you know where to find information about the election?

(Yes/No)

13. What are your key topics for Council for the next four years?

14. Municipal property taxes are a primary way to pay for services provided by The City of Red Deer. Due to the increased cost of maintaining current service levels and infrastructure, The City of Red Deer must balance taxation and service delivery levels. To deal with this situation, which one of the following four options would you most like The City of Red Deer to pursue?

- Increase taxes – to enhance or expand services
- Increase taxes – to maintain services at current levels
- Cut services – to maintain current tax level
- Cut services – to reduce taxes
- None of the above

15. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree or prefer not to answer.)

- The City manages public finances responsibly and transparently.
- City Council makes decisions in the best interest of the community.
- City Administration makes decisions in the best interest of the community.

16. When thinking about The City's long-term financial health, which should be the higher priority?

- Investing in maintaining existing infrastructure and assets
- Reducing debt and building reserves
- Balancing both equally

Environment

17. How important it is for The City to dedicate resources (time, advocacy, money, etc.) to environmental initiatives?

(Not important at all, of little importance, of average importance, somewhat important, very important or prefer not to answer.)

18. What are the most appropriate ways that The City could support environmental sustainability?

Engagement

19. In the past 2 years have you participated in a formal public hearing? (At a formal public hearing, you will have sat in or spoken at a hearing in Council chambers.)

(Yes/No)

20. If yes, indicate how much you agree with the following statement: Public hearings are easy to access and participate in.

(Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree or prefer not to answer.)

21. Do you have any feedback for the public hearing process?

22. In the last two years, have you taken part in any of the following? (check all that apply)

- Filling in a City survey
- Other open house
- Online feedback form
- Talking to a member of Council
- Zoning open house
- Talking to a staff member
- Other (please specify)

23. How much do you agree with the following statement?

(Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree or prefer not to answer.)

I feel the feedback I have provided through public engagement is listened to and considered in decision making.

24. In what ways, if any, would you like to be more involved in municipal decision making?

25. Is there anything else you'd like Administration and incoming City Council to know about living in Red Deer?

Demographics

26. How old are you? (Younger than 18, 18-34 years old, 35-54 years old, 55+ or prefer not to answer.)

27. What is your postal code?

28. What is your gender?

29. Do you identify as a visible minority? (Yes, no or prefer not to answer)

30. Have you come to Canada in the last 5 years? (Yes, no or prefer not to answer)

31. Do you identify as Indigenous? (Yes, no or prefer not to answer)

32. How long have you lived in Red Deer? (Less than 5 years, 5-10 years, more than 10 years, or prefer not to answer)

