

What We Heard Report

County of Vermilion River Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw Modernization and Focused Review March 4, 2025

Purpose

This **What We Heard Report** summarizes the public engagement program undertaken by the County of Vermilion River as part of the County’s Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) Modernization and Focused Review. This report provides an overview of key public engagement milestones and summarizes community feedback identified at the February 2025 Draft MDP and LUB open house, as well as feedback received before and after the open house.

Summary of Public Engagement (to date)

Engagement	Date(s)	Details
Online Survey #1	Oct. 2022 – Jan. 2023	Online survey regarding residents’ opinions on broad land use and development matters in the County. A total of 160 responses were received.
In-Person Workshop	Jan. 26, 2023	In-person workshop for stakeholders and interested members of the public. The purpose was to gather participant feedback on the current MDP and LUB. A total of 25 participants attended the workshop.
Online Survey #2	Feb. 17 – Mar. 17, 2023	Online survey for residents to provide input on the questions asked at the January 2023 in-person workshop. A total of 52 responses were received.

In May 2023, an **Interim What We Heard Report** was prepared and shared with Council and Administration. This report included a summary of the comments received from County residents to this point through the surveys and in-person workshop. MPS included recommendations for policies and regulations to include in the draft MDP and LUB based on the feedback. The Interim What We Heard Report was presented to Council and Administration for their information and to provide MPS with direction for the preparation of the draft MDP and LUB documents.

Following the preparation of the draft MDP and LUB, additional engagement with County residents was undertaken by the County and MPS. The following is a summary of this engagement.

Engagement	Date(s)	Details
County Website	Nov. 22, 2024 Dec. 9 – 23, 2024 Jan. 22 – Feb. 6, 2025	The Draft MDP & LUB were posted to the project page in November (the link to the draft LUB was opened 571 times; the link to the draft MDP was opened 358 times). A notice about the draft LUB and MDP was posted as a pop-up on the County website’s main page.
Redistricting Letters	Jan. 15, 2025	Letters were sent out to all landowners affected by the proposed redistricting in the draft LUB. The majority of proposed mapping amendments affect landowners with properties currently in the CR-S – Country Residential – Single Lot and CR-A – Country Residential - Agriculture districts. The proposed amendment would redistrict these lots to the A – Agricultural district. County administration and the project planner received approximately 300 phone calls and emails in response to the letters. A summary of the comments provided has been included on the following pages of this report.
Email Notifications	Jan. 17, 2025	Information about the MDP and LUB project open house was emailed to 18 landowners who attended the January 26, 2023, In-Person Workshop and requested to be added to an email list to receive additional information about the project.
Engagement Invitations	Jan. 17 - 20, 2025	Information about the MDP and LUB project open house was mailed out with County gas bills to all landowners.
Social Media Posts	Facebook: Nov. 28, Dec.19, Jan. 9, Jan. 17, Jan. 27, Feb.5, and	Information about the MDP and LUB project open house was posted on the County’s social media accounts (Facebook & Twitter).

	Feb. 6, 24/25. Twitter: Jan. 16 and Feb. 6, 2025	
Newspaper Advertisements	County Corner: Dec., Jan., & Feb. 2025 editions Meridian Source: Jan. 30, 2025 Vermilion Voice: Jan. 28, 2025	Information about the MDP and LUB project open house was posted in local newspapers (County Corner, Meridian Source, and Vermilion Voice).
Draft MDP and LUB open house	February 6, 2025	An in-person open house was held at the Kitscoty Senior Centre from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Presentation boards highlighting the major changes to the MDP and LUB were set up for a come-and-go-style open house. 79 persons attended the open house, as well as members of Council, Administration, and 3 planners with MPS.
Additional feedback	February 7 – February 24, 2025	Following the open house administration, the project planner received additional phone calls and emails providing comments and requesting clarification regarding proposed MDP and LUB changes.

January 2025 Proposed Redistricting Letter Community Feedback

The following is a summary of feedback provided by County residents affected by the redistricting of land in the draft LUB from January 2025 to February 2025. As of the date of this report, approximately 300 residents provided their feedback on the redistricting of their land. Feedback recorded by County Administration and MPS is identified by topic; where applicable, recommendations are included for Council’s consideration.

Topic/Section	What We Heard	MPS Response and Recommendation(s)
Taxation Rates	Will taxes be affected by this redistricting?	Taxes are not affected by the redistricting. No changes recommended.
Reasoning for Redistricting	Why does the County want to do this?	The County is aiming to reduce red tape in the subdivision process and create equity between acreage landowners and owners of large agricultural parcels in the Agricultural Area. No changes recommended.
Property Changes	What does this change about my property?	The uses of the A - Agricultural district apply to lands being redistricted. Generally, the uses of the A-Agricultural district encompass landowners' use of the land. No changes recommended.
Keeping of Animals	Will I be able to keep livestock/horses on my property following the redistricting?	The keeping of animals is not restricted in the A - Agricultural District. No changes recommended .
Additional Dwellings	Will I be able to have a second dwelling following this redistricting?	The new LUB allows for secondary, garden, garage, and surveillance suites in the A - Agricultural district. No changes recommended.
Home Occupations	Will I be able to have a home business in the A - Agricultural district?	Home Occupations are discretionary uses in the A - Agricultural district. No changes recommended.
Country Residential Redistricting	When was my property put into the Country Residential District? There is no residence on this property, why is in this district?	Some landowners were unaware that they were not in the A - Agricultural district. Information was provided regarding the public engagement process for the current LUB and how information was shared with landowners at that time. No changes recommended.
Objections	I would not like my property to be redistricted, how do I object?	MPS explained to landowners that their current district is proposed to be deleted in the draft LUB. Once explained, the majority of respondents retracted their objection. 4 respondents remained in objection. No changes recommended.
Subdivision Regulations	What are the subdivision regulations in the new MDP and LUB?	The maximum parcel density is 4, unchanging from the current bylaws. The maximum size for a Rural Residential parcel is 15 acres, reduced from 25 acres in the current bylaws. A majority of

		respondents expressed support for the proposed reduction. No changes recommended.
Fire Training Facility in the A - Agricultural District	Our property hosts a fire training camp for Lakeland College. Will this be allowed in the A - Agricultural district?	County Administration confirmed that this use would fall under an institutional use in the permitting process. Institutional uses are a discretionary use in the A - Agricultural District. No changes recommended.
Environmentally Sensitive Area Overlay	What is the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) Overlay in the draft LUB and what does that change about my property?	The purpose of the ESA Overlay is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To disclose information about known or potential development constraints. To share with County residents and development proponents information that could affect project times or project costs. To clarify what types of supporting information may be required when a subdivision or development is proposed in an area with a known or potential development constraint. In reviewing the overlay area data on included on the draft LUB map we noted the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ESA data shown on the draft LUB map is generally consistent with the ERE Overlay data identified in the current, approved LUB. The areas included in the overlay appear to have been based on out of date provincial data plus an additional buffer area. The following changes are recommended to the ESA Overlay: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> That the ESA Overlay be removed from the draft LUB; or That the ESA Overlay be revised to remove the buffer area and update the data to incorporate the most current provincial “Environmentally Significant Areas” data set (2014 data layer) as shown on Schedule A. Further, that the regulations in the overlay be revised to provide greater clarification regarding what types of additional information may be required at time of application when a subdivision or development is proposed within the ESA Overlay area. (Examples: Biophysical Assessment, Flood hazard assessment, Slope Stability Assessment, Geotechnical Study, etc.) (See Schedule B).

February 2025 Open House Community Feedback

The following is a summary of feedback provided by County residents at the February 6, 2025 Open House. Feedback is identified by topic; where applicable, recommendations are included for Council’s consideration.

Topic/Section	What We Heard	Recommendation
LUB: Rural Industrial	There are existing small welding and fabrication businesses within the Agricultural District and CR-S – Country Residential – Single Lot District. (Pt. SE 36-50-5-W4 and Pt. SE 6-51-5-W4). The business had an approved development permit before operation began. The landowners requested clarification regarding whether the business would be allowed under the new LUB.	Changes approved under the previous LUB impact the operation of welding and fabrication uses in both districts. Under the current LUB a new welding and fabrication business would not comply with the special provisions for home occupations. To enable this type of use as a home occupation the following changes would be required as part of this LUB review: The following changes are recommended: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Section 10.19 – Home Occupations to accommodate home occupations involving small-scale welding and fabrication businesses in the A - Agricultural District (See schedule C): Redistrict SE 6-51-5-W4 to the RM - Rural Industrial District.

		<p>3. Insert Light Industry as a discretionary use in the RM - Rural Industrial District.</p>
LUB: Agri-Tourism	<p>A landowner lives beside someone who wants to put guest cabins adjacent to a lake. They asked if this would be allowed in the A - Agricultural District and indicated that they prefer it to not be allowed.</p>	<p>In reviewing the definition of agri-tourism, we note that it appears that guest cabins would be potentially allowed as part of the use. If Council would prefer to exclude that from the use, then the following change is recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revise the definition of “Agri-Tourism” as follows: 2.4.2(21) Means an agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm or ranch. Agri-tourism includes, but is not limited to, buying produce directly from a farm stand, navigating a corn maze, picking fruit, or feeding animals and may include overnight accommodations as secondary uses with appropriate permits.
LUB: ESA Overlay	<p>Landowners expressed concern that being in this area will limit what they can do on their land.</p>	<p>The purpose of the ESA overlay is not to restrict development on all lands within the overlay. Rather, the purpose of the overlay is to disclose to landowners that there may be environmentally significant features present that trigger the need to provide additional information in support of a subdivision or development application.</p> <p>The following changes are recommended to the ESA Overlay:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the ESA Overlay be removed from the draft LUB; or 2. That the ESA Overlay be revised to remove the buffer area and update the data to incorporate the most current provincial “Environmentally Significant Areas” data set (2014 data layer) as shown on Schedule A. Further, that the regulations in the overlay be revised to provide greater clarification regarding what types of additional information may be required at time of application when a subdivision or development is proposed within the ESA Overlay area. (Examples: Biophysical Assessment, Flood hazard assessment, Slope Stability Assessment, Geotechnical Study, etc.) (See Schedule B).
LUB: Dwelling Units on a Parcel	<p>Landowners expressed a desire for additional dwelling units.</p>	<p>The draft LUB allows for 1 additional dwelling unit as a garage, garden, surveillance, or secondary suite.</p> <p>No changes recommended.</p>
MDP: 40 Acre Agricultural Parcels	<p>Landowners expressed support for the allowance of 40 acre parcels for extensive agriculture, value-added agriculture or hobby farms.</p>	<p>No changes recommended.</p>
MDP: 80 Acre Agricultural Parcels	<p>Landowners expressed a desire for 80 acre parcels.</p>	<p>No changes recommended.</p>
MDP: Rural Residential Subdivisions	<p>Landowners expressed support for the reduction of rural residential parcel size from 25 to 15 acres to support agricultural land preservation.</p>	<p>No changes recommended.</p>
MDP: Area Structure Plans	<p>Landowners expressed support for requiring ASPs for more than 4 parcels out of a quarter section.</p>	<p>No changes recommended.</p>