

LAND USE BYLAW REWRITE
ENGAGEMENT #1 - WHAT WE
HEARD REPORT

TOWN OF EDSON

June 13, 2022



PREPARED FOR:

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BACKGROUND

The Town of Edson is rewriting its Land Use Bylaw (Bylaw) to ensure the Bylaw is an effective tool to help the Town achieve its overall vision. The project intends to better align the Bylaw with Town policies and reflects the current and growing needs of the community.

The purpose of the initial round of engagement (April 19 to May 3, 2022) was to understand how the Bylaw is working for the community and where there are opportunities to make it better. Using three approaches, engagement was designed to make talking about a Bylaw more accessible for residents:

1. Using plain-language and avoiding the use of technical jargon
2. Employing a 'go to the community' mindset
3. Considering the core issues of the Bylaw that impact the Town.

Throughout the engagement period, we used a variety of tactics including online surveys, pop-up booths at popular locations, and attendance at the local community tradeshow event to gather the perspectives of the community. Through this multi-pronged engagement approach and a variety of tactics, we heard from over one-hundred and thirty (130) participants. To reach a broad audience for this project, a variety of outreach tactics such as social media and press releases were used to get the word out to the community on how they could get involved.

RESULTS OVERVIEW

EDSON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TRADESHOW

A project booth was set up in the Edson Chamber of Commerce Tradeshow from April 29th to April 30th, 2022. Tradeshow attendees had the opportunities to review information, speak with a project representative, and have their say by filling out either an online survey or by participating in live virtual polling.

Online survey

Participants had the opportunity to provide their opinions about the project through an online survey. Participants accessed the survey using one of the provided laptops at the Tradeshow or by using their smartphones to scan a QR code to fill out the survey. Additionally, participants could access the survey through the [Town of Edson Planning webpage](#). The survey was available from April 19th to May 3rd, 2022, and was completed by ninety-two (92) respondents. The survey consisted of seven (7) questions, and we heard the following.

About our participants (Optional).

- The participants indicated that they were primarily between the **ages of 25 to 65 years** of age.
- Most participants shared that they had **lived in the Edson for over eleven (11) years**.

About the Bylaw.

- Most participants indicated that they were **supportive of the guiding principles** of the project.

- When asked what topics were working well in Edson, participants shared that **home based businesses, campgrounds, and secondary buildings such as garages, and sheds were working well** in Edson.
- When asked what topics should be improved in Edson, participants indicated that **secondary suites/ basement suites, parking, and residential renewable energy should be improved** through the new Bylaw.
- Additionally, participants shared that there should be **more flexibility** within the Bylaw for the permitted placement of fences and secondary buildings. We also heard that the Bylaw should be more **user-friendly**, with clear definitions for terminology and include thoughtfully laid out sections.

Live virtual polling

Using an online program known as Mentimeter, participants were able to quickly indicate the top three topics that mattered to them about the Bylaw. Participants were also able to understand what topics mattered to others in the community and see how their opinions impacted the project. We heard from thirty-six (36) participants through the live virtual polling. The following themes were identified from the virtual live polling.

- **Campgrounds.** Participants identified that having local campgrounds is very important for the community to access various recreation activities.
- **Parking.** Parking for unapproved secondary suites was a common concern for many who shared that street parking in neighborhoods is a challenge.
- **Temporary patios, food trucks.** Participants identified that it should be easier for businesses to get licenses for temporary patios, and food trucks.
- **Secondary suites/ basement suites.** We heard that there are many unapproved secondary suites in the community due to the cost of registering them or bringing the units up to the Bylaws'/building code's standards.
- **Shipping containers.** The community had mixed opinions about where shipping containers should and should not be permitted, although the aesthetics of them was a concern for many who selected this topic.

POP-UP BOOTHS

Pop-up booths were hosted at two locations in Town.

1. Braund's Independent Grocer from 12 pm to 2 pm on April 29th, 2022
2. Canadian Tire from 10 am to 12 pm, on April 30th, 2022.

The locations of the pop-ups were advertised on the Town's Facebook page. We spoke with about twelve (12) participants over the two days of pop-up booths. Participants identified the topics that mattered to them about the Bylaw including; **parking, shipping containers, and secondary suites.**

BUSINESS COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

Through the two (2) business community discussions that were offered, participants were asked to identify the opportunities and challenges that they face with the current Bylaw. Between the two (2) events, we heard from eight (8) participants. The main themes that emerged from these discussions include increasing **awareness** and transparency around proposed changes, a need for a **user-friendly Bylaw**, a discussion around how to manage **secondary suites**, an overall desire for **more flexible regulations** and prioritizing the **downtown area**, and rising **building vacancies.**



BUILDING PROJECT AWARENESS

To build community awareness of the project and encourage community participation, a variety of outreach tactics were used.

1. **Facebook posts.** To create excitement about the project, temporary posts, known as stories, were made on the Town's Facebook page from April 19th to April 30th. The posts promoted both the Tradeshow booth, the locations of both pop-ups, the project webpage, and the online survey.
2. **Website content.** A webpage was posted on the [Town of Edson Planning webpage](#), which included information about the project, information about the purpose of the Bylaw, project timelines, how the Bylaw impacts Edson, and ways to participate in the project.
3. **Town press release.** The Town put out a press release on April 12, 2022, to promote the project within the community and to let residents know how they could get involved. Please refer to *Appendix A* to review the press release.

ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1.1 TRADESHOW

A project booth was hosted in the Edson of Chamber of Commerce Tradeshow from April 29th to April 30th, 2022 at the Leisure Centre. As a popular event in the area, it provided an ideal opportunity for the community to get involved in the project. As event attendees visited the booth, they had the opportunity to review information, speak with a project representative, and participate through two (2) convenient methods: an online survey, and a live virtual polling station.

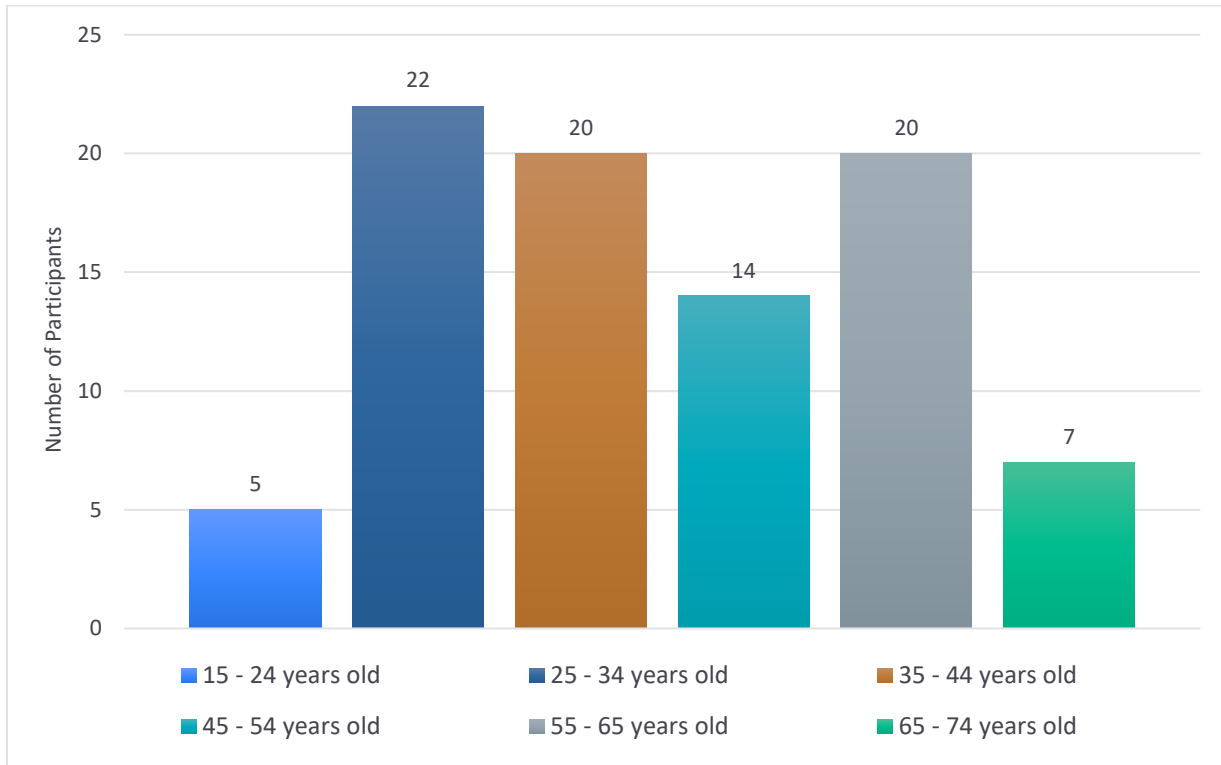
ONLINE SURVEY

The survey was hosted on Momentive and was available for participants to fill out between April 19th to May 3rd, 2022. Participants were able to access the survey through the Tradeshow booth laptop, by scanning a QR code with their smartphones that brought them to the survey, or by visiting the [Town of Edson Planning webpage](#). In total, ninety-two (92) participants completed the survey which consisted of seven (7) multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

About our participants (Optional)

1. Question: How old are you?

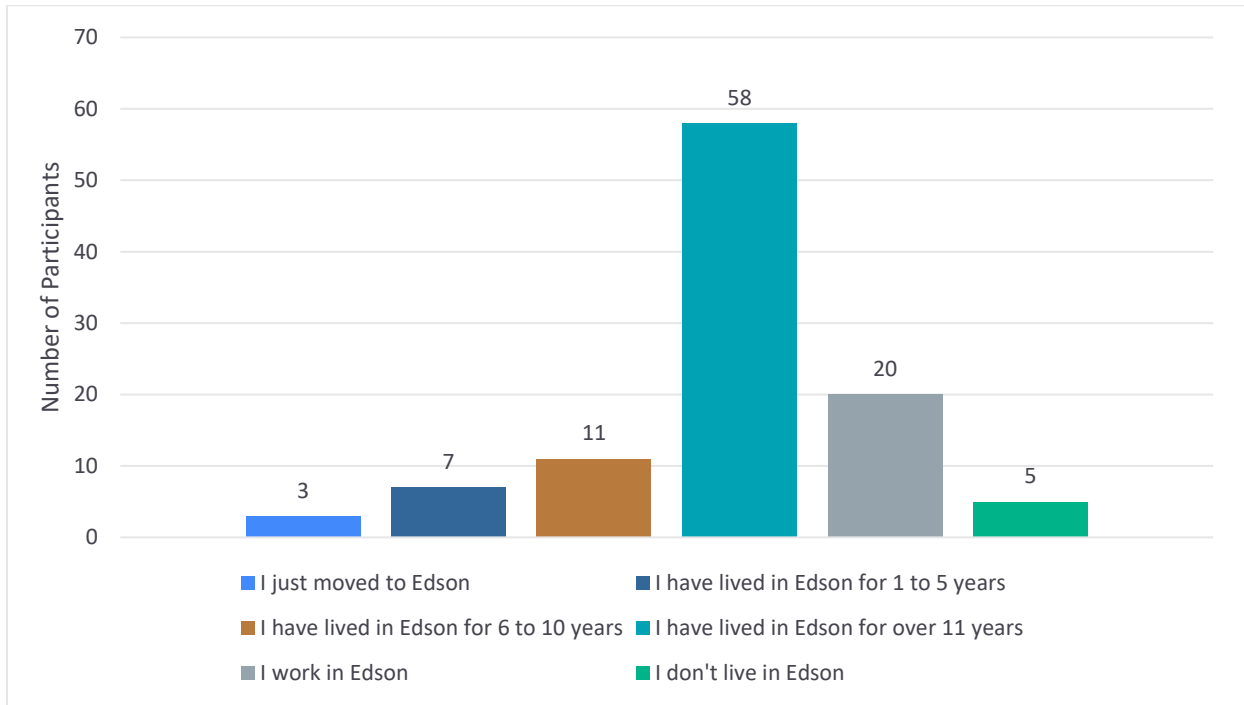
When asked to share their age most participants told us that they were between the ages of 25 to 65 years old. Some participants were between the ages of 15 to 24 years old or 65 to 75 years old. Notably, we did not receive input from participants that were 14 years or younger or 75 years of age or older.



Response rate: 88 responded, 5 skipped.

2. Question: What is your connection to Edson? Please select all that apply.

Most participants shared that they had lived in Edson for over eleven (11) years, and several shared that they worked in Edson (either owning a business, working at a business, or volunteering in Edson). Several participants shared that they had lived in Edson for 6 to 10 years. Some participants shared that they lived in Yellowhead County but visited Edson frequently. A few participants had recently moved to Edson.



Response rate: 89 responded, 4 skipped.

Land Use Bylaw.

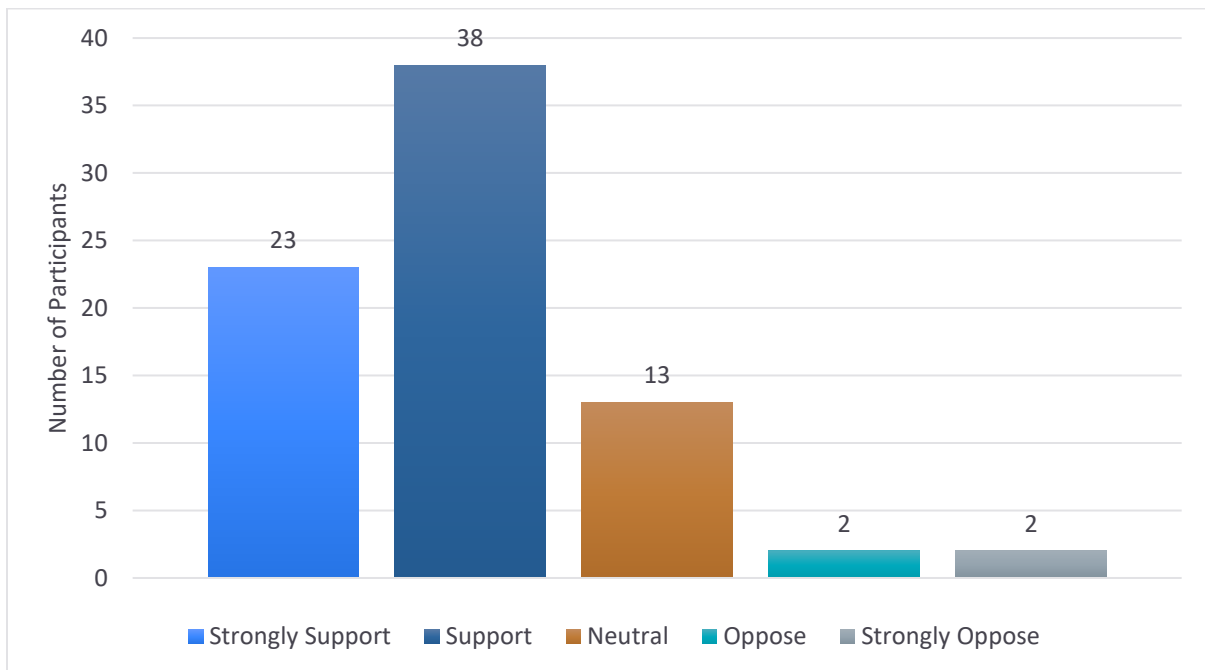
The following question is about the guiding principles of the project. Guiding Principles are used to guide the overall Land Use Bylaw rewrite process. The Guiding Principle were created by the Land Use Bylaw Project Team and shared with Council's Committee of the Whole in winter 2022.

The eight (8) guiding principles are:

1. Increase flexibility
2. Simple, concise & purposeful
3. Clear and easy to interpret
4. Visually pleasing and user friendly
5. Be enforceable
6. Follow best practice
7. Reflect the local context of Edson
8. Aligns with higher order documents (i.e., Municipal Development Plan, etc.)

3. Question: Overall, do you support these guiding principles outlined above?

Most participants were supportive of the guiding principles for the project. Some participants were neutral to the guiding principles, while only a few participants were opposed.



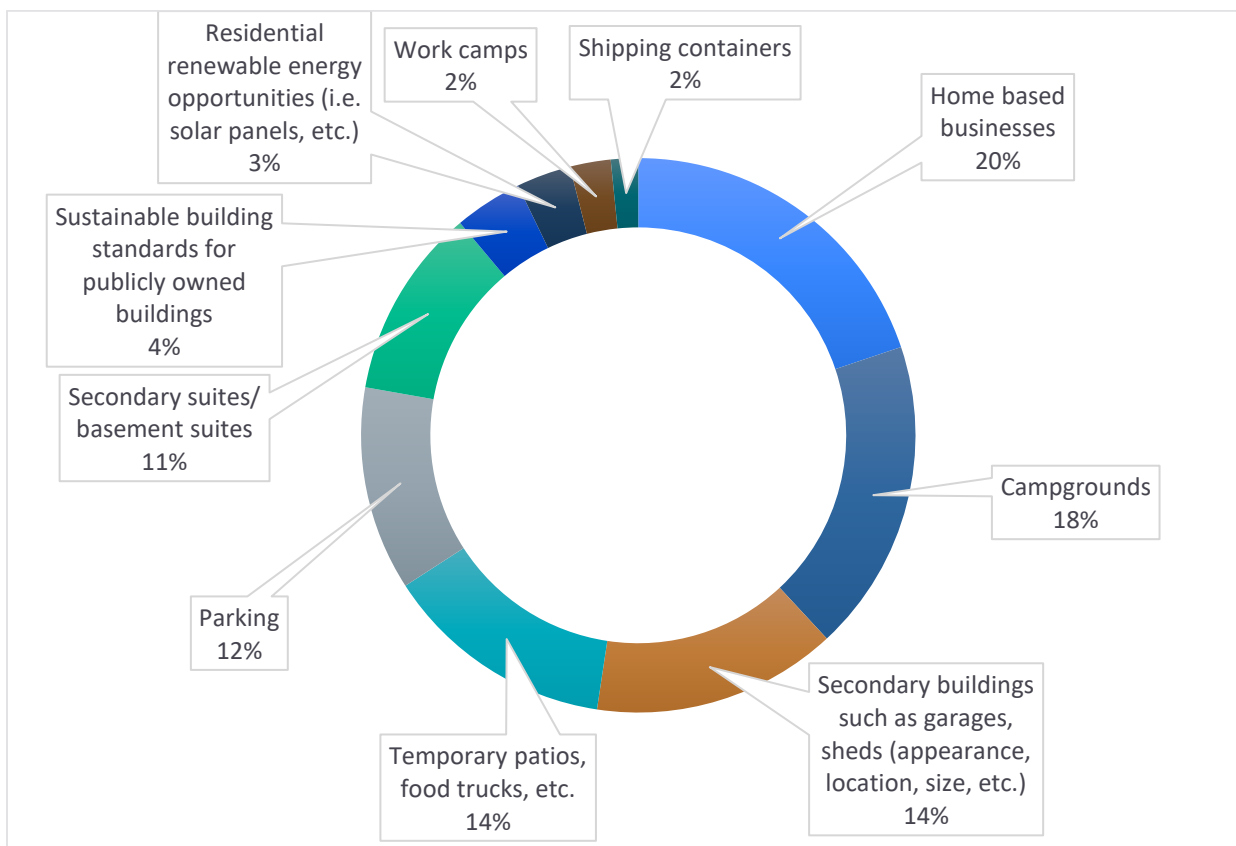
Response rate: 78 responded, 15 skipped.

4. Question: From the provided list of topics, please select the top three (3) items that are working well in Edson currently. Please select no more than 3 items.

Participants had the opportunity to select up to a maximum of three (3) items that were working well in Edson. We learned that according to many participants that the following topics were working well in the community.

1. Home based businesses (20%)
2. Campgrounds (18%)
3. Secondary buildings (14%)
4. Temporary patios, and food trucks (14%)

Two (2) topics received a moderate amount of interest from the community including parking (12%), secondary suites/ basement suites (11%). A few topics were only selected by a few participants, including sustainable buildings standards for publicly owned buildings (4%), residential renewable energy opportunities (3%), work camps (2%) and shipping containers (2%).



Response rate: 58 responded, 35 skipped.

Participants had the opportunity to share additional comments about what was working well for the community, and one (1) participant provided a comment.

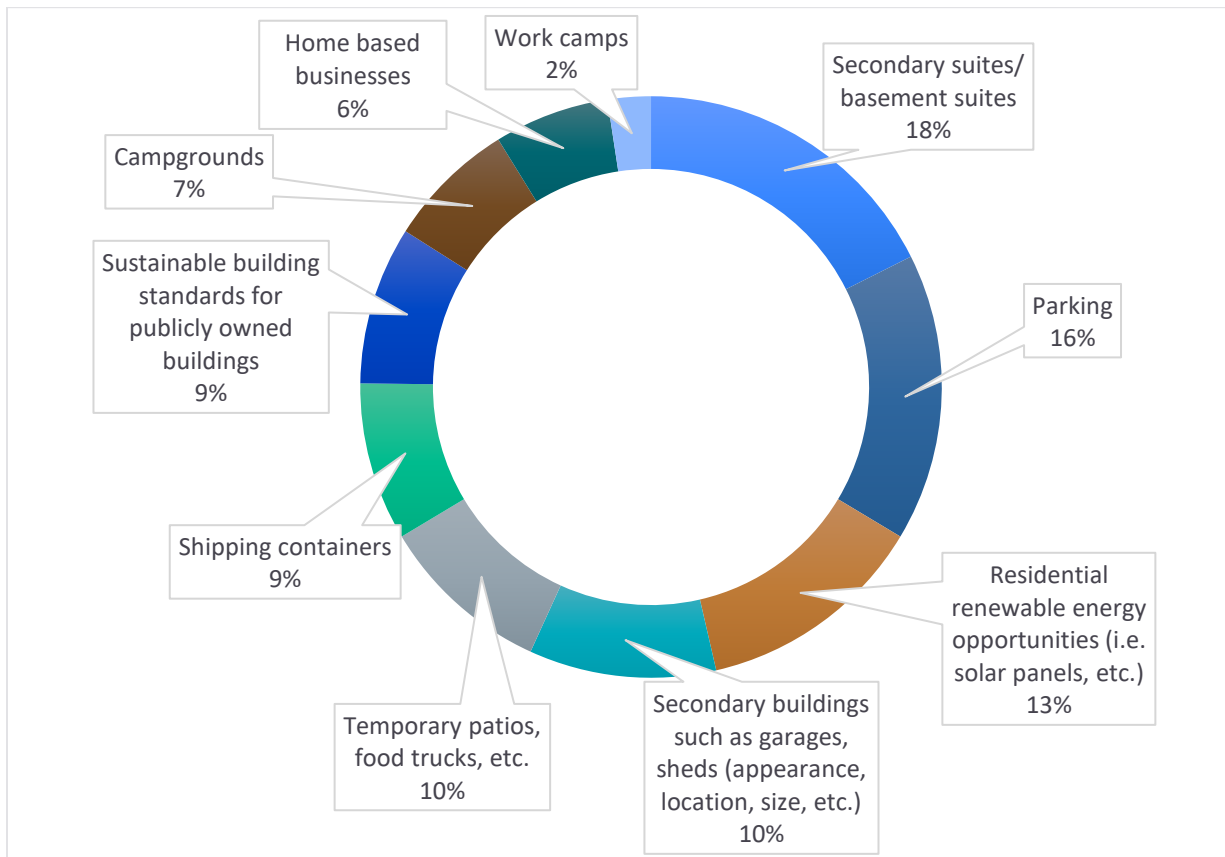
Online tools. One participant shared that the online tools that the Town offers including online permits and taxes for properties were useful.

5. Question: From the provided list of topics, please select the top three (3) items that should be improved in Edson. Please select no more than 3 items.

When participants were asked to indicate what three (3) topics should be improved in Edson, the most common selections included,

1. Secondary suites/ basement suites (18%)
2. Parking (16%)
3. Residential renewable energy opportunities (13%)

Other topics that the community shared could use improvements included temporary patios and food trucks (10%), shipping containers (9%), sustainable building standards for publicly owner buildings (9%), campgrounds (7%), home based businesses (6%). Notably workcamps were not popular response for this question, receiving only 2% of the responses.



Response rate: 58 responded, 35 skipped.

Participants were asked to explain why they selected their choices or to specify additional topics of importance for this project to consider. Seventeen (17) participants provided a response and some of the themes that emerged include:

More flexible regulations. Some participants shared that they had experienced challenges with the current Bylaw because it was too specific about details such as fence locations, garage placement, and front vs rear drive placements. Respondents shared that the restrictive nature of the current Bylaw made it difficult to renovate or modify their properties.

Creative homes. A few participants shared that they would like to see the Town explore alternative home types including tiny homes, and modified shipping containers for homes.

Design guidelines. We heard from participants that they felt the Town appeared 'mismatched' with different setbacks being applied within the same residential areas.

Safety in secondary suites. The overall lack of safety of secondary suites was raised by a few participants who shared that many secondary suites are unapproved and do not have sufficient safety features.

6. Question: Is there anything more about the current Land Use Bylaw that you would like to share with us? Please explain your response fully.

Several participants chose to provide a response to this question and a range of topics were raised about the current Bylaw, including:

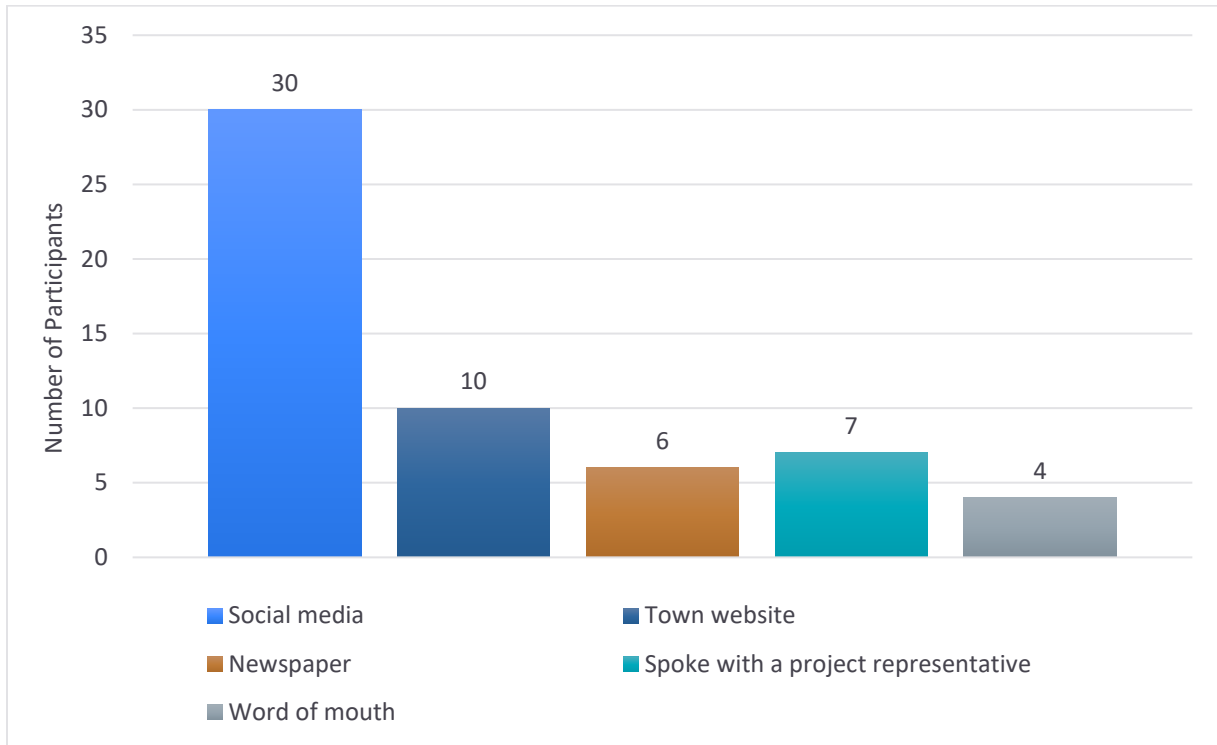
More flexibility is needed. Many participants highlighted that they found the current Bylaw to be too restrictive and shared that more leeway is needed around topics such as setbacks, fencing, driveways.

User-friendly. We heard from participants that the current Bylaw is too long, too technical, and too complex and many do not understand how to use it.

Consistency. A few participants shared that they felt that the current Bylaw is not being applied equally throughout the community, with some people receiving approvals for development permits while others are denied permits for the same things.

7. Question: How did you hear about the project?

Many participants heard about the Bylaw project through the Town's Facebook stories. Several participants indicated that they heard about the project through the Town website. A few participants said that they learned about the project by speaking with a project representative or through word of mouth in the community.



Response rate: 52 responded, 41 skipped.

LIVE VIRTUAL POLLING.

Participants had the opportunity to have their say about the topics that matter to them using a live polling feature, called Mentimeter which displayed their input in real time. On the first day of the Tradeshow, participants were asked 'what 3 items are most important to you about Edson?'. To make the question more accessible, the wording of the question was modified for the second day of the Tradeshow to 'What 3 topics should we focus on in the new Land Use Bylaw?'. Additionally, the option for selecting 'work camps' was removed as an option on the second day due to low interest from the community. In total, thirty-six (36) individuals participated in the polling.

The outcomes of the live virtual polling, which participants saw at the Tradeshow can be reviewed in *Figures 1 and 2* below. After making their selections, participants were asked to explain why they had made their selections and following themes emerged.

Campgrounds. Participants shared that it is important to have a variety of local campgrounds near Town to access recreation activities.

Parking. Several participants highlighted that parking is an important issue for businesses on the east end of Town. Additionally, we heard that there is insufficient neighbourhood parking due to approved and unapproved secondary suites in the community.

Temporary patios, food trucks. Participants shared that the regulations for having temporary patios and food trucks should be streamlined, to make it easier for current and future businesses to access this type of use.

Secondary suites/ basement suites. We heard from many participants that there are numerous unapproved secondary suites in the Town, and they speculate that this is due to restrictive regulations in the current Bylaw and the high cost of retrofitting homes to meet the regulations. Participants who shared that they had unapproved secondary suite were concerned that they would be penalized by the Town for having an unapproved suite by the Town when the Bylaw is rewritten.

Shipping containers. The participants were undecided on the issue of shipping containers and where they should be permitted in the community; some were in favour of them in residential areas, while others only hoped to see them in commercial areas. Largely, participants were concerned about the aesthetic elements of shipping containers in the community. Some mentioned that they found it confusing to know where to go to get an application for shipping containers.

Secondary buildings such as garages, sheds. We heard from several participants that they had negative experiences trying to get permits for building sheds or garages through the current Bylaw because it was too restrictive.

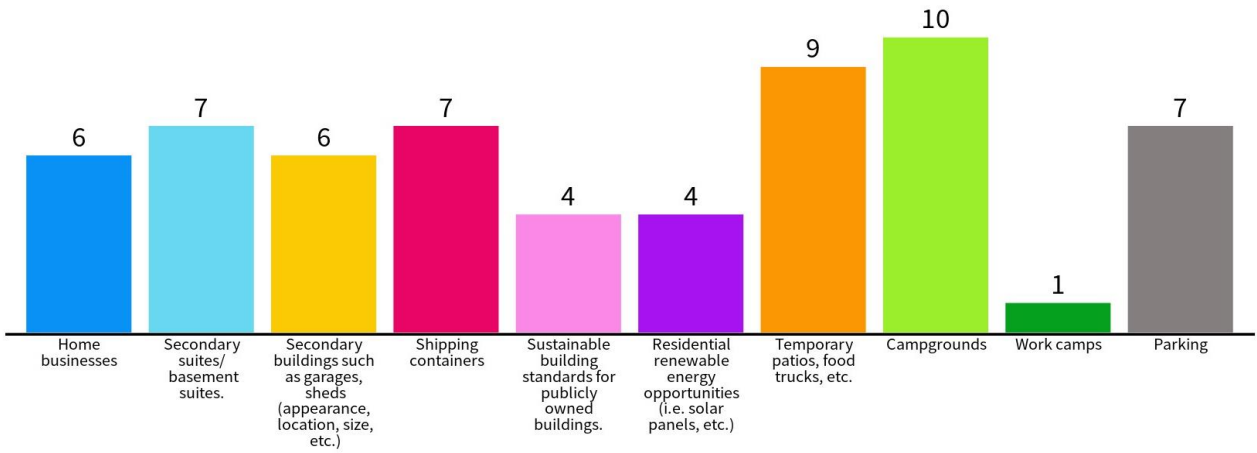


Figure 1: April 29th Live Virtual Polling Results

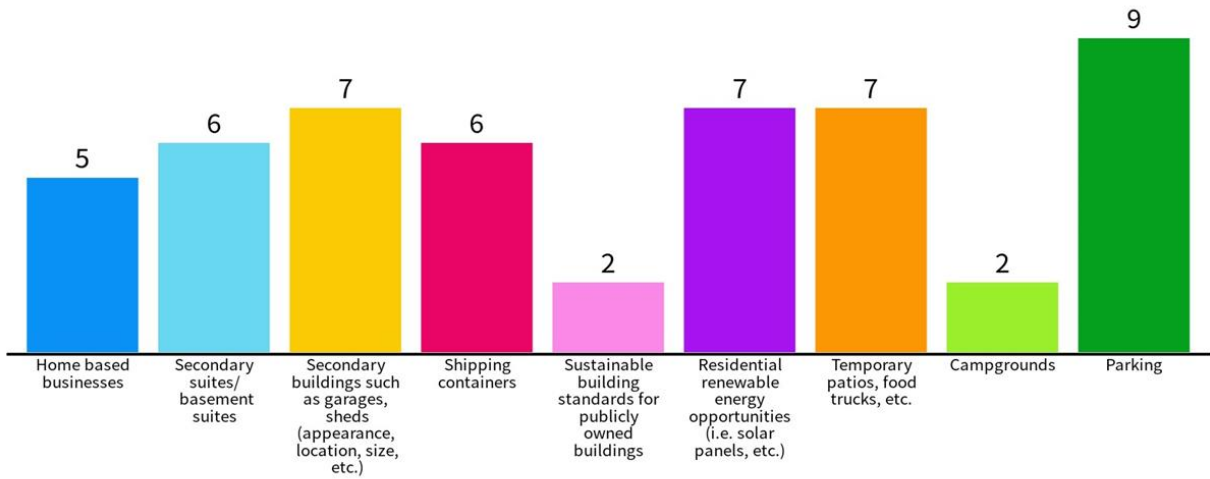


Figure 2: April 30th Live Virtual Polling Results

1.2 POP-UP BOOTHS

A critical part of the initial engagement for this project was to go to the people of Edson to understand what matters to them. Two (2) pop-up booths were held throughout Edson to connect with the community,

1. Braund's Independent Grocer from 12 pm to 2 pm on April 29th, 2022
2. Canadian Tire from 10 am to 12 pm, on April 30th, 2022.

The locations of the pop-ups were advertised on the Towns Facebook page. Approximately twelve (12) participants spoke with project representatives and had their say about the topics that mattered to them by taking marbles and placing them into the labeled jars as shown in *Figure 3* below. Some participants indicated that they had specifically come to the pop-up booth venue locations to speak with the project representatives about the Bylaw rewrite project.

Participants informed us that **parking, shipping containers and secondary suites/ basement suites** were important to consider for the future of the Bylaw.

Please refer to *Figure 4* for an understanding of how the event was facilitated.

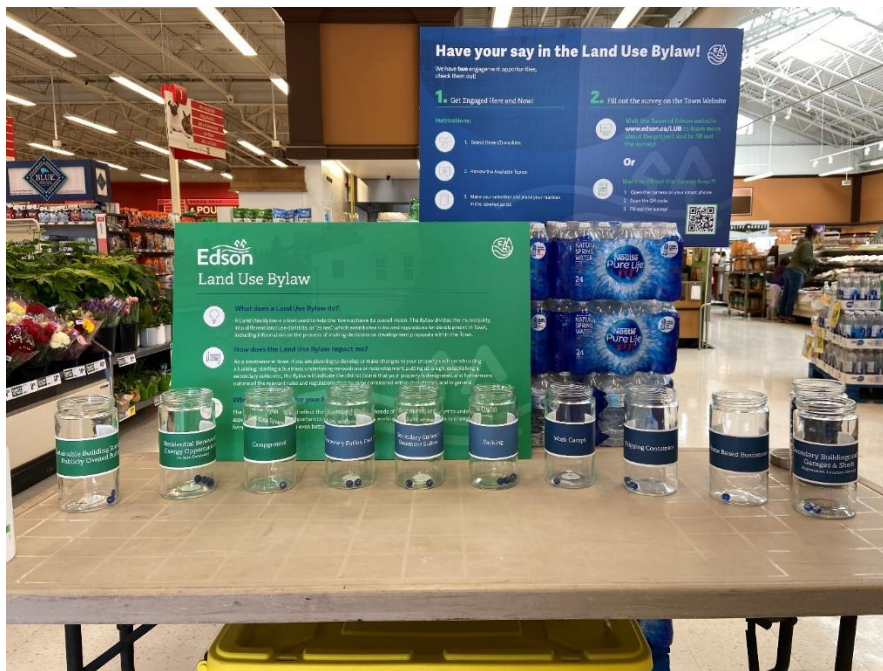


Figure 3: Pop-up booth input



Figure 4: Pop-up at Braund's Independent Grocery

1.3 BUSINESS COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

At this point in the project, it was important to connect with the business community about the rewriting of the Bylaw to understand the opportunities and challenges they have experienced with the current Bylaw. Two opportunities were available for participants to get involved with the project, including an in-person event at the Galloway Station Museum & Travel Centre on April 29th from 9:30 am to 11 am and a virtual event on May 2, 2022, on Zoom from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm.

Businesses were invited to participate through a variety of methods, including:

1. **Email invitations.** An email invite was distributed by the General Manager of Infrastructure and Planning using the contact list of the Town of businesses.
2. **Phone invitations.** The Town of Edson Department of Infrastructure and Planning called over two hundred (200) businesses throughout Town inviting them to attend either the virtual or in-person events.
3. **Personal invitations.** Throughout the Tradeshow, a project representatives spoke with many fellow tradeshow booth hosts and invited them to participate in the virtual event.

In total, eight (8) participants from the business community participated in the sessions to share their experiences with the current Bylaw. Four (4) participants from the business community attended the in-person event and four (4) participants were involved in the virtual event. Participants were asked by project representatives to share their thoughts on the current Bylaw and how it could be improved to better serve the community. Some of the key themes that emerged from the conversations included:

Awareness. Participants expressed a desire to be kept informed of all changes being proposed in the new land use Bylaw and to understand how updates will impact future rezonings or related policy updates.

Improving processes and user-friendliness. Overall, there was a strong desire from participants to improve the user-friendliness of the Bylaw. It was suggested that this could be achieved through streamlining processes, introducing visuals, and using clear language. Additionally, participants expressed that there would be value in creating more awareness on how to access the Bylaw and how it ties in with other policy documents through educational sessions/materials.

Owner-occupied dwellings and secondary suites. Participants shared that the current regulations for owner-occupied dwellings are too restrictive and have led to a considerable number of unapproved secondary suites being built. It was suggested that regulations around different types of secondary suites should be explored.

More flexibility is needed. Many participants shared that they felt the current Bylaw was too restrictive and have experienced challenges when changing property uses.

Downtown vacancies. Participants raised concerns about downtown vacancies and how to fill them. It was also noted that special consideration should be given to downtown to allow for more flexible zoning.

In addition to the main themes identified above, the following topics were also raised by business community members on a few occasions:

Setbacks. Participants shared feedback that current setback regulations should be re-evaluated to consider challenges with accessibility and seasonal conditions. Other participants felt that rear and side setbacks were unnecessarily large.

Parking. Participants noted that current parking requirements were too high. Some participants felt that rear parking is being underutilized and that there is a lack of storefront parking. Other participants shared that while a consideration of mixed used developments would be beneficial, a solution for parking for these developments would need to be addressed.

Home based businesses. We heard from participants that there is a higher demand for home based business opportunities emerging. It was noted that the number of empty offices has increased, signifying a desire for people to work from home.

Mixed uses. Throughout the in-person event, participants emphasized the desire for more mixed-use developments for live/work opportunities and flexible spaces.

Offsite levies. Participants raised concerns with the current approach to offsite levies. Project representatives clarified that a review of offsite levies was not within scope of the land use Bylaw renewal.

NEXT STEPS

The initial round of engagement saw community interest from a wide range of stakeholders. The input gathered during this round of engagement will aid in the development of high-level approaches to resolving the key themes that were identified as issues by the community. The community will have additional opportunities to get involved with the project, including the second round of engagement, which will take place in the Fall of 2022.

APPENDIX A: TOWN OF
EDSON PRESS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release

News Release

Land Use Bylaw Rewrite

Edson, Alberta, April 12, 2022 – The Town of Edson is asking everyone to get involved in the Land Use Bylaw Rewrite.

As a landowner in Town, if you are planning to develop or make changes to your property like constructing a new building, installing solar panels on your home, or establishing secondary suites, the Land Use Bylaw indicates what is permitted on your property. As the bylaw is updated, it's critical to know what is important to you!

What is a Land Use Bylaw and why is it important? The Land Use Bylaw is one tool that helps the Town turn its vision for development into reality. The current Land Use Bylaw was initially written in the 1990s. Despite many amendments over time, the Town is undertaking a rewrite of the Bylaw to make the document relevant to the community, and development in Edson today. It is time to fix the root of the issue with a new Land Use Bylaw that can address the current challenges and better adapt to the future needs of Edson.

The Town of Edson wants to understand what topics matter to you as we undergo the rewrite of the Land Use Bylaw, and there are several upcoming opportunities for you to have your say! The first round of engagement for this project kicks off on April 18th until early May and includes a stop at the Trade Show April 29th and 30th. Check out the Town website www.edson.ca/LUB to stay updated and learn more about how you can get involved in the Land Use Bylaw project.

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