



Youth Photo Contest

Strathcona County is holding a photo contest designed to involve youth in the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) update. The theme of the contest is **“What’s your favourite place in Strathcona County?”**

“It’s important our youth know they have a stake in planning our county’s future and adding a fresh, relevant perspective that will guide Council’s decisions,” says Mayor Roxanne Carr. “That’s why we are working to encourage youth participation, by offering them an opportunity to contribute as we update our Municipal Development Plan.”

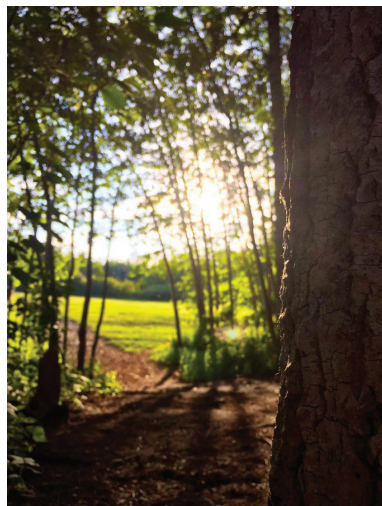
The contest is open to all Strathcona County youth and runs from July 1 to August 31. Photos will be featured on the MDP engagement HUB (available online through www.strathcona.ca/MDP) and hosted by the Art Gallery in the Community Centre Atrium. Select photos will be used in the County’s updated Municipal Development Plan. Prizes include gift cards for Galaxy Cinema, iTunes, Subway, Booster Juice and West 49.

Full contest details are available at www.strathcona.ca/MDP.

What We Heard in Phase 2

In the first phase of the project we engaged participants on their core values as well as a range of topics including sustainable development, agriculture, industry, environmental management, affordable housing, rural residential and nature-based & agri-tourism.

In Phase 2, we dove deeper into these key topics to better understand why they are important to the future of the County, which topics align or clash with each other, and what other topics may be important for the MDP to address. The County hosted interactive workshops in 3 locations to hear from a range of urban and rural residents.



An early entry in our photo contest. Photo of Deermound Offleash Park by Jenna H.

Shaping Our Future

Strathcona County is updating its Municipal Development Plan (MDP) which is the County’s plan for the future. It sets out a clear vision for how Strathcona will grow and develop over the next 20 years or more, and guides decisions on key issues like conservation of the natural environment and investment in infrastructure and services.

Over a 10 month period, we are asking residents, business owners, and community stakeholder groups to share what they value most about Strathcona County and to weigh in on how the County can build on our strengths while planning for the future.

Stay Up to Date

The best way to stay up to date on the MDP Update project is to sign up to the mailing list at www.strathcona.ca/MDP.

You can also visit this website and the online engagement hub to learn more about the MDP update, check out our whiteboard video, find out about upcoming engagement activities, and view input as it is gathered.

Participants emphasized the importance of creating more **sustainable, walkable communities** in both urban and rural areas. They challenged the idea that “bigger/newer is always better” and suggested the County focus on promoting and improving the great assets we already have.

Residents noted they would like to see **growth concentrated** in key “nodes” with existing infrastructure (such as urban areas and hamlets) to prevent sprawl and preserve prime farmlands and natural areas. Participants stressed the importance of and need to protect and maintain **agriculture and natural areas** for the County’s history and identity as well as the local economy and health and well-being of current and future generations. However, some residents indicated challenges associated with farming and environmental protection. Some landowners whose lands have been designated as “environmentally sensitive” felt that they should be compensated for the loss in property value while other participants felt there should be greater flexibility to allow for innovative and sustainable development projects in these areas.

Urban residents suggested increasing **density** with “European village-style” neighbourhoods that are **designed for pedestrians rather than cars**. Rural residents also suggested adding more density in hamlets (but acknowledged that infrastructure is a significant challenge) as well as **small local amenities** such as coffee shops, corner stores, and churches where residents could walk to meet their day-to-day needs and socialize with their neighbours. Residents in both urban and rural communities noted they would like to see more small, locally-owned shops rather than “big box” retailers or strip malls.

Affordable housing was a key topic; both urban and rural residents emphasized the need for more affordable housing, particularly for **seniors** who wanted to remain in their communities close to friends and neighbours, but also for **youth** to remain in the community and for **younger families** looking for starter homes. However, participants also noted the challenges of **high land costs**, particularly in rural areas, and that municipal requirements can be a contributing factor in making affordable housing unfeasible for developers. Participants noted that **creative and innovative solutions** would be needed to address the affordable housing gap, in both urban and rural areas.

Ideas for **tourism** focused on building on the amazing assets the County already has and promoting them to visitors, but also to local residents. Participants emphasized the need for **education and promotion** to re-connect people (especially youth) with nature and local food. Residents stressed that any new tourism development should be **small-scale and carefully designed** so it does not detract from the area’s natural beauty.

To read the complete Phase 2 Engagement Summary, please visit www.strathcona.ca/MDP.

What’s Next?

Over the summer the planning team will begin to develop policy options based on the feedback received to date as well as information from existing County plans and background research completed in Phase 1. These options will be summarized in a “Setting Directions” report that will be available for the public to review and provide feedback on in the fall.

In Phase 3 we will host another round of public engagement to dive deeper into these policy options and directions to make specific choices about where the County can go. This phase will result in draft policies that will shape the updated MDP. These will be refined further into a complete draft plan in Phase 4. **Stay tuned** for more information about engagement events in the fall.

