



Council, Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report

RM of Pense No. 160
Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw
2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Part I – Project Background	4
Introduction.....	4
Environmental Scan Highlights	5
Part II -Engagement Strategy	7
Public Engagement: Purpose and Goal	7
Decision Statement	7
Major Areas of Interest – Focus Areas	8
Stakeholders Engaged	9
Part III – Community Engagement - Phase I Findings	10
Community Open House	10
Community Survey	12
Stakeholder Interviews	15
Conclusions and Next Steps	16

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the engagement process and associated findings regarding the RM of Pense No. 160 (the RM) new Official Community Plan (OCP) and Zoning Bylaw. The report aims to describe the community feedback received during Phase I of the public engagement process and help shape a comprehensive planning and development policy framework, as well as the vision for the municipality.

The new OCP and Zoning Bylaw shall comply with all current legislative requirements and serve as the development guidelines for the community, developers, Council and Administration.

The project began with an Open House, which focused on providing information about the project and gathering feedback from the community on its future, challenges, opportunities, and potential future development.

The online survey was the next step in the process and was distributed through engagement invitation posters, a dedicated project site on the RM's website, and through social media.

While limited feedback was received, the process provided a clear picture of where the community is currently and where participants envision the RM in the future. Based on the feedback, various recommendations are provided for consideration during the drafting of the new OCP and Zoning Bylaw and going forward.

Part I – Project Background

Introduction

The RM of Pense No. 160 (the RM) OCP and Zoning Bylaw were adopted in 2013 and are now in need of updating. The new OCP and Zoning Bylaw shall recognize the community's needs, meet the requirements of *The Planning and Development Act, 2007* (PDA), *The Statements of Provincial Interest* (SPI), and any other regulatory requirements. They should serve as tools to move the community forward, describing the municipality's vision and presenting themselves as a promotional tool to attract potential investors, visitors, and prospective residents.

The PDA enables municipalities to manage land use and development through the adoption of official community plans and zoning bylaws. In general terms, a municipality's OCP and Zoning Bylaw aims to meet the following objectives:

- Establish a framework for land use, growth and development for all parties to follow, thereby creating certainty for the future of the community;
- Set out a desired framework for development by defining goals, objectives & policies;
- Inform residents of a community about how Council intends to direct and manage the community's needs and expectations;
- Provide opportunities for input by all affected interests in community planning;
- Clarify the municipal role in the development process;
- Guide Council in making municipal decisions; and
- Empower Council to enforce land use decisions and reduce land use conflicts.

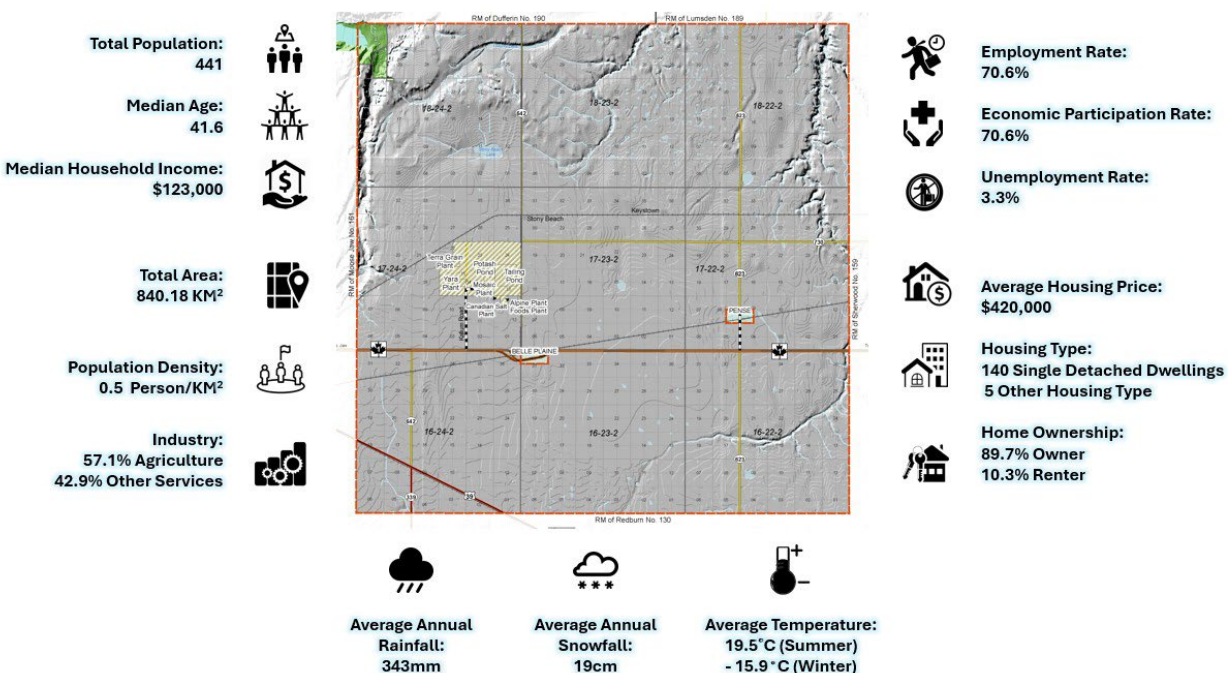
A Zoning Bylaw is the primary tool available to the municipality to implement the OCP's policies. It divides the municipality into zoning districts and regulates land use and development in those districts by setting local standards for the use of the lands or specific developments.



Environmental Scan Highlights

The RM is located between the City of Regina and the City of Moose Jaw in the province of Saskatchewan. With over 840 sq. kilometres in area, the RM occupies a strategic location in an area identified as one of the province's major economic corridors, with direct access to the Trans-Canada Highway and major CN and CP rail lines.

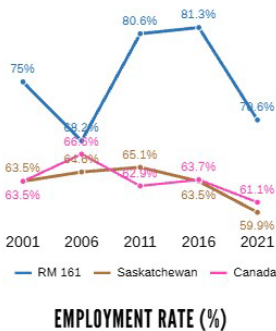
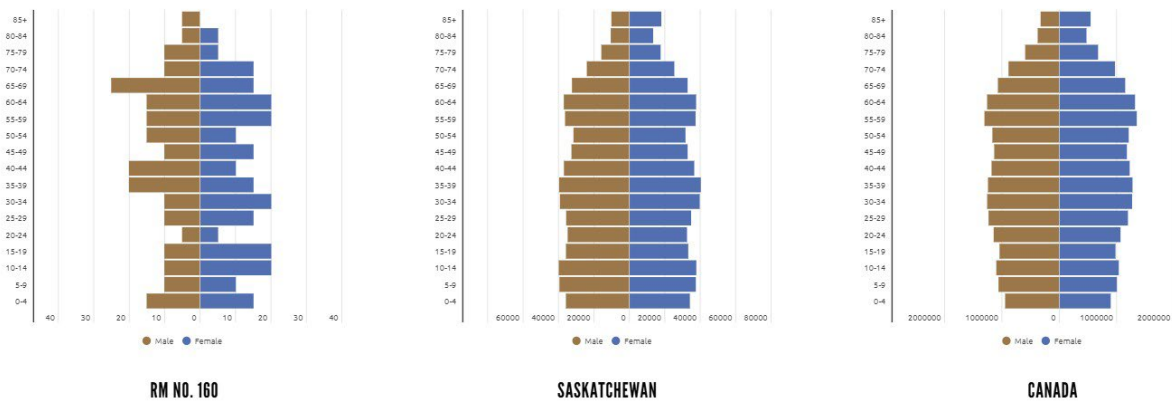
Since its beginnings, the RM has developed a strong agricultural base supported by high-quality prairie soils. These traditional agricultural land uses, along with various livestock operations, continue to define the rural landscape of the RM. In addition to its agricultural foundation, the RM is home to a significant industrial node near Belle Plain. All these combined operations are major contributors to local employment and are very significant to the economic profile of the municipality.



During the 2021 Population Census, the RM registered a population of 441, reflecting a 13.2% decrease from the 508 residents recorded in 2016. This change follows a stable period between 2001 and 2016, with a slight population growth from 494 to 508 people. The recent demographic shift in the municipality may be the product of a changing demographic age (ageing population) and its transition to nearby urban centres like the Cities of Regina and Moose Jaw, or the limited supply of residential development in the area in favour of agricultural land preservation. Furthermore, the RM is not immune to the ongoing trend toward larger, more mechanized farm operations and the continuous growth of farm land consolidation.

Limiting residential growth to preserve farmland is a sound policy for maintaining agricultural integrity and heritage, but it can produce several hidden or long-term challenges that may range from demographic imbalance, economic vulnerability, community disconnect, regional competitiveness, and missed opportunities for rural revitalization and increased tax revenue.

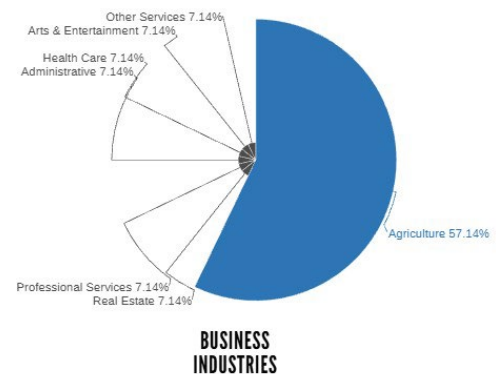
With an average population age of 41.4, the RM population is, on average, similar to that of Saskatchewan (39.8) and Canada (41.9). In terms of population ages and their distribution, the RM has a smaller younger and working-age demographic when compared to that of the province and Canada. At the same time, the RM appears to have a higher share of residents aged 55-74, which suggests a limited population renewal and a potentially limited workforce in the longer term.



Since 2001, the RM has consistently reported higher employment rates than both the provincial and national averages. In 2001, the RM had an employment rate of 75%, compared to 63.5% for both Saskatchewan and Canada. However, like many jurisdictions, the RM experienced a notable decline in employment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Saskatchewan and Canada also recorded their lowest rates of the period in 2021, at 59.9% and 61.1%, respectively. Despite the downturn, the RM maintained a higher employment rate than both the provincial and national levels.

The business industry composition of the RM reflects a highly concentrated economic base, with agriculture accounting for the overwhelming majority of business activity and representing almost 60% of all businesses. This highlights the RM's rural character and its reliance on primary sector activities, particularly crop and livestock production. However, a sizeable share of the economic activity in the municipality is linked to resource processing and heavy industry, which is not reported by Statistics Canada and therefore hard to compare.

Other industries, such as healthcare, administration, and other professional services, collectively represent the remainder of the total.



Part II -Engagement Strategy

Public Engagement: Purpose and Goal

Community engagement, participation, or consultation for this project aims to gather feedback on the community's priorities and aspirations and determine the RM's unified, overall direction for the future.

Throughout this project, Council aims to ensure that the interests of all ratepayers, stakeholders, and organizations are considered essential participants. All input and feedback gathered through the public engagement process will be considered during the drafting of the OCP and Zoning Bylaw.

Several engagement techniques were selected to effectively reach as many community members as possible, considering their interests and opportunities for involvement.



Decision Statement

The RM of Pense No. 160 intends to adopt a new OCP and Zoning Bylaw in 2025.

The OCP will describe the Council's vision and mission for the RM's growth. All policies and objectives of the OCP aim to coordinate municipal programs, manage land use and development, and illustrate the community's future. The OCP can be viewed as a growth management strategy that contains statements of policy relating to the municipality's physical, environmental, economic, social, or cultural development.

The Zoning Bylaw will be the primary tool available to the municipality to implement the OCP's policies. It will divide the municipality into zoning districts and regulate land use and development in those districts by setting local standards for the use of the lands or specific developments.

Major Areas of Interest – Focus Areas

Reducing all areas of community interest into a few concise major areas of interest helps keep the public engagement process focused and manageable. These buckets or major areas of interest should be inclusive, representative, and transparent, contributing to the overall project's understanding, driving the engagement process, and helping to narrow the direction of the municipality going forward.

Public Safety and Community Well-being

- Ensuring the safety of all community members is a priority for the RM going forward. Considering community concerns and feedback about traffic, crime, emergency services, and emergency preparedness is the goal of the future community plan and the RM
- Addressing infrastructure needs ensures access to essential services like healthcare, water, and sewer.
- Future developments must minimize environmental risks and support long-term community well-being.

Economic Development and Industry

- Economic growth must support local businesses and create job opportunities. Feedback during the development of the new Official Community Plan helps ensure that future development plans align with the community's needs for business growth and employment opportunities.
- Balancing economic development and industrial growth with community needs is a municipal priority to ensure the municipality's continued growth.
- Long-term planning for sustainable development helps forecast growth areas, infrastructure demands, and shifts in economic trends. It ensures forward-looking and sustainable land use.

Governance and Transparency

- Transparency in governance builds trust. When community members understand how decisions are made, they're more likely to engage in the process and support the outcome.
- The RM aims to promote and encourage more community involvement and aims to ensure transparency throughout the decision-making process and equal access to information.

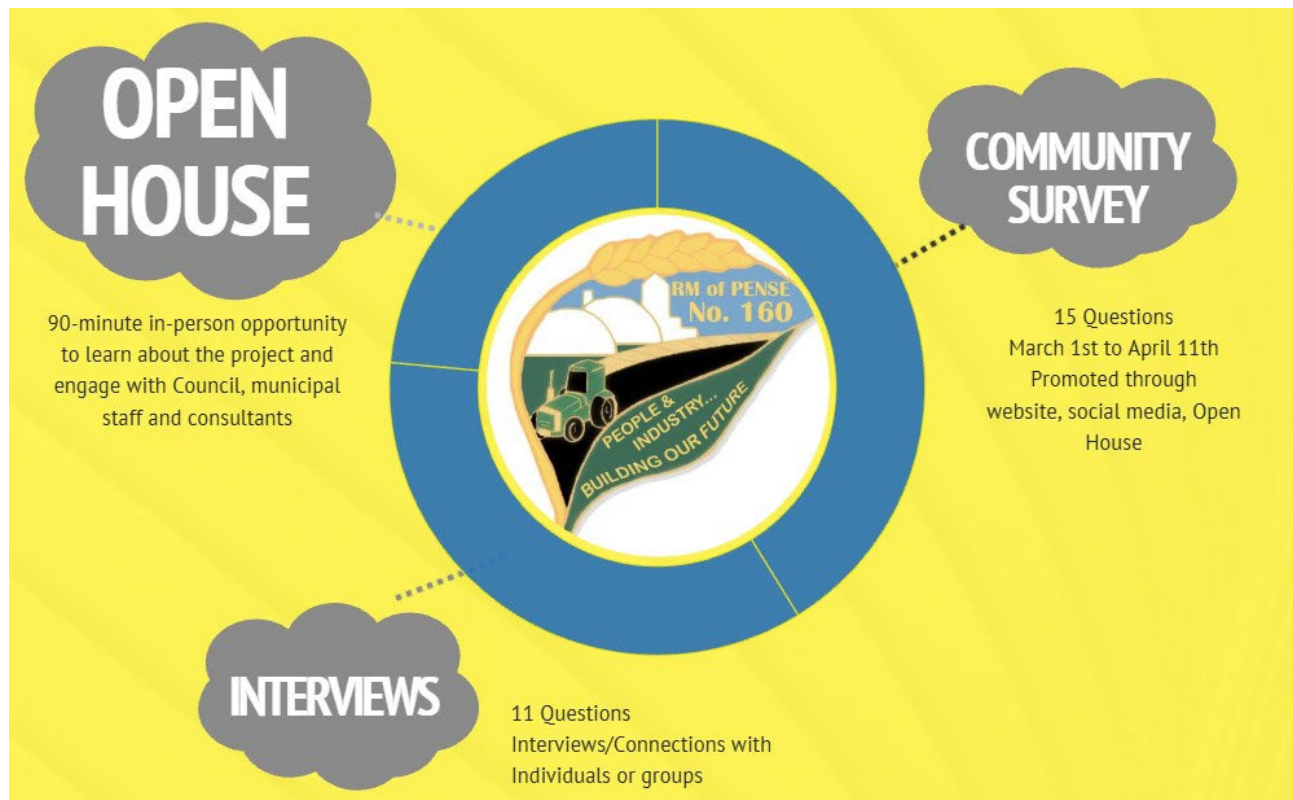
Stakeholders Engaged

Based on feedback from Council and Administration, the following stakeholder groups were identified as likely to be interested in and/or impacted by the proposed project.

- All RM and Surrounding Area Residents and Property Owners
- Town of Pense, Village of Belle Plaine, Adjacent Rural Municipalities and Provincial Regional Agencies
- RM Ranchers and Farmers
- Commercial Developments (Genesis, Hawk's Agro, Mosaic, Nachurs Alpine, Viterra Belle Plaine, Windsor Salt, Yara, etc...)
- Health and Recreational Groups, Religious Organizations, and Other Non-for-profit Organizations
- Real Estate and Financial Institutions
- Developers and Home Builders
- Other Relevant Institutions



Part III – Community Engagement - Phase I Findings



The community engagement activities are summarized below:

Community Open House

A Public Open House provided an opportunity for residents to engage, learn, and discuss the project with the consulting team and Council members. The open house was hosted by the RM and consultants and included information boards that included information on the context of the engagement, the purpose of an OCP and Zoning Bylaw, the RM's process to update these documents and a variety of activities aim to gather informatino about participants vision about the future of the RM, relavant issues to focus on and their hopes and fears going forward.

The key findings of this engagement can be summarized as follows.

What I love about the RM?

Unfortunately, no response was received.

What is the RM best known for?

Only two responses were received. The feedback received indicated that the RM is best known for its agricultural heritage and its industry. This is in line with the community profile and environmental scan highlights.



What do you think about the future use of land?

Unfortunately, no response was received.

My community should focus on

A couple of comments were received. The participant encouraged the RM to continue to focus on road maintenance, dust control and the construction of a new pool. This may suggest that infrastructure renewal and long-term capital planning are seen as critical to supporting quality of life and sustainability in the community.

My hopes, fears/and challenges

Unfortunately, no comments were received.

Community Survey

The community online survey was promoted through the RM's website, posters and during the Open House. Overall, the community survey was somewhat successful (26 responses), as participants had the opportunity to share their views and wishes for the community's future.

Overall, the survey was completed mainly by community residents or landowners (92%), with the rest of the respondents identifying themselves as "Others".

Over 65% of respondents indicated they have lived or worked in the RM for more than 10 years. Approximately 31% of the respondents indicated they have lived or worked in the RM for less than 10 years, and the rest noted as "Not Applicable", meaning they were from outside the RM.

Overall, the response of the community survey can be summarized as follows;

RM OF PENSE NO. 160 Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw

Community Feedback Survey!



Scan the QR Code
or visit:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3NJFPM8>

Take a few minutes
to complete the online
survey.

Help us update the Official
Community Plan and
Zoning Bylaw to better
manage our future for
years to come!

*We want to
hear and learn
from you!*

Visit the website for more information:
<https://pense160.ca/>



The RM of Pense No. 160 is best known for

The feedback from participants in response to this question was very defined, with almost 85% of the respondents indicating the RM is best known for its agricultural, farming and ranching heritage. A large number of respondents indicated that the RM is also known for its sense of community and its commercial/industrial opportunities.

On the other hand, respondents indicated that the RM is not known as a tourist destination, even though popular recreational areas such as Buffalo Pound and Nicole Flats can be found within the RM. This may suggest an underutilized opportunity to enhance the RM's profile as a destination.

Current Direction and Land Use Policy

The feedback from participants in response to questions about the current direction of the RM and the knowledge and effectiveness of current land use policies is described as follows.

- In terms of services provided by the RM, approximately 60% of the respondents indicated that the services are good, and about 35% indicated that the services are excellent. About 8% indicated that the RM has a poor quality of service.
- When considering the overall current direction of the RM regarding zoning and land use management, 55% of the respondents indicated that they feel neutral about it, 25% indicated they are somewhat positive, and 15% feel somewhat negative about the subject.
- In terms of familiarity with the RMs' OCP and Zoning Bylaw, about 55% of the participants noted that they are somewhat familiar with the OCP, 45% of them indicated that they had never heard of the OCP, 75% of the participants are somewhat familiar with the Zoning Bylaw and 25% had never heard of the Zoning Bylaw.
- Participants were asked to rate a number of economic development-related services, along with infrastructure, planning and culture or heritage-focused services. While most municipal services are viewed as adequate, recreational facilities, transportation investment, and aspects of development (residential and commercial) are some of the areas where residents most clearly see room for improvement. High satisfaction with bylaw enforcement and heritage conservation suggests strong performance in regulatory and conservation functions. The responses highlight a need to prioritize infrastructure renewal, community amenities, and strategic growth planning to meet evolving community expectations.

Future Land Use Direction and Land Use Policy

The feedback from participants in response to questions about the future direction of the RM, the importance of land-use policy, and goals for residential, commercial, and industrial development is described as follows.

- When considering future residential development in the municipality, most participants indicated that it is essential to ensure that residential development is integrated, accessible and well-planned. Proximity to services or full-service areas is not seen as relevant by participants.
- In terms of commercial and industrial development, participants favour small-scale, well-integrated, and strategically located commercial and industrial development over large-scale expansion. There was also a strong emphasis on safe, fully serviced areas and proximity to transportation networks, which suggests a preference for growth that supports economic activity while minimizing land use conflicts and infrastructure strain. There is little appetite for unchecked additional development, underscoring the community's desire for thoughtful, planned growth.
- Going forward, participants indicated the RM should focus on ensuring safety through improved traffic management, crime prevention, and emergency services. Long-term planning for sustainable growth and infrastructure development, and ensuring the municipality remains adaptable to shifting economic trends, is also a priority for the community.

Other Important Notes

- Participants indicated that they would like to see clear decision-making and open communication from the RM, along with more opportunities to participate and be engaged.
- A participant indicated an interest in more focus on residential development and perhaps more country residential development in appropriate areas of the municipality. Allowing for *more development of this nature may bring more residents to the RM (in balance with agricultural land use), which would benefit not only the RM but the community in general, i.e. boost school enrolment, etc.* This sentiment aligns with additional comments noting that the RM needs to be open to all types of development and not just large-scale industrial projects.
- Participants also noted a desire for streamlined regulatory requirements for low-risk developments, such as accessory outbuildings on farms and acreages. For example, the placement of shipping containers or the construction of small storage structures on agricultural properties could be exempt from permitting processes, while maintaining permitting requirements for dwellings and structures within residential areas to ensure safety and compliance with applicable standards.
- A participant also noted that the RM should recognize the RM's proximity to three major employment centres — Regina, Moose Jaw, and Belle Plaine — and leverage this advantage by supporting incentive-based urban development in small communities within the RM, such as Stony Beach and Keystown. Reducing regulatory barriers for permitting and development can help stimulate growth in these communities, providing more affordable living options for those working in adjacent employment hubs. At the same time, encourage acreage development along the river valley and highway corridors, while prioritizing the preservation of agricultural lands in other areas of the RM.



Stakeholder Interviews

Various attempts were made to connect with interested stakeholders, and a list of questions was mailed to them as a last resort. Unfortunately, only one response was received.

The Mosaic Company expressed a desire for all review or amendments of the Zoning Bylaw to carefully consider the implications for business development, particularly for Mosaic's new or expanded well sites and mining operations. This includes evaluating setback requirements and other relevant provisions to ensure alignment with provincial legislation, regulations, and industry best practices, thereby supporting continued economic development and operational growth. They also expressed an interest in public safety as a priority for community development and growth of the municipality.

Stakeholders are invited to provide their feedback as the process moves forward and are encouraged to participate during the second phase of the engagement.



Conclusions and Next Steps

Overall, we believe the survey has provided a clear picture of where the community is currently and where participants envision the RM in the future. Based on the feedback, the following recommendations are provided for consideration during the drafting of the new OCP and Zoning Bylaw and going forward;

- Consider the possible exemption of low-risk accessory structures on agricultural properties (e.g. storage sheds, shipping containers, equipment shelters) from requiring a development permit (if applicable), while continuing to regulate dwellings and residential structures to maintain safety, clearance, and site integrity.
- Consider the introduction of zoning regulations or special policy areas that incentivize small-community development (e.g. in Stony Beach, Keystown), linked to affordable housing and commuter accessibility.
- Evaluate the possibility of prioritizing small-scale, well-planned commercial or light industrial businesses in designated zones, preferably along major road or highway corridors or in fully serviced areas.
- Developed a comprehensive Future Land Use Map with preferred growth nodes or clusters to support and incentivize efficient infrastructure investment and require new commercial/industrial developments to be located in areas with adequate servicing in order to mitigate infrastructure strain and promote long-term capital efficiency.
- Require developments to be well-integrated and carefully planned, with servicing standards and separation from incompatible uses.
- Review and improve zoning regulations and zoning standards to explicitly address site-specific impacts related to well sites and mine operations (e.g. setbacks, noise, access), ensuring compatibility with provincial regulations, mitigation best practices, and economic development considerations.
- Continue to promote agricultural preservation in core farming areas, while considering controlled acreage or rural residential development in less productive zones or along infrastructure corridors (e.g. river valley, highways) to encourage balanced land-use and diversification.
- Improve public education and outreach around the OCP and Zoning Bylaw to address the knowledge gap and consider the incorporation of provisions in the bylaws to require regular communication and public consultation when major zoning changes or development approvals are proposed. This would reflect the community's desire for open decision-making and participation.
- Reinforce and build on positive perceptions of RM services by following through on planning decisions and ensuring transparent communication with residents on development matters.

We thank everyone who participated in the Open House and completed the survey. The feedback received during the process will contribute to the drafting of the OCP and Zoning Bylaw, as well as the policies that need to be implemented to guide the community forward.

