ROCKY VIEW COUNTY

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

Proposed Rules and Regulations for Vacation Rentals

November, 2024

PUBLIC **PARTICIPATION**

Vacation rentals are short-term rentals that provide accommodation for guests for up to 30 days. They can support local economies, provide additional income opportunities for residents, and offer unique lodging options for visitors to the County.

Rocky View County is home to numerous vacation rentals, primarily located on the County's west side. To provide clarity and consistency for existing operators and to guide future applicants, the County sought public feedback on rules and regulations for vacation rentals from September 17 - October 15. Engagement focused on the following key areas:

- **Vacation rentals may only be offered by operators on parcels which are also their primary residence.**
- **The maximum number of guests allowed.**
- **The minimum parking requirements.**
- **A noise and issues mitigation plan.**
- **An annual permit renewal process.**

The engagement opportunity was widely promoted through various County communication channels, including social media, e-newsletters, and road signs. Letters were sent to vacation rental operators and their neighbours to encourage their participation.

Residents and operators submitted a total of 2,226 comments through 448 completed surveys and an online discussion forum. Participants from across the County took part, with the majority coming from the Bragg Creek, Springbank, and Bearspaw areas.

2,226
Comments

448
Surveys

EXECUTIVE **SUMMARY**

Throughout the engagement many themes emerged that shared insight into the feelings of residents and vacation rental operators. Below is a high-level summary of engagement feedback from participants.

Current or Future Operators

Operators generally expressed a desire for flexibility in vacation rental regulations and provided mixed feedback on proposed regulations.

Many operators advocated for multi-year permitting options for compliant operators, highlighting the need for stability and predictability in managing costs. They also shared concerns that regulations were too rigid and didn't consider circumstantial needs.

Nearly all participants emphasized the importance of considering neighbours' needs and maintaining high community standards through responsible operation and management.

General Residents

Overall, residents generally supported the proposed regulations, particularly those aimed at preserving the character of their neighbourhoods and ensuring greater accountability from operators.

There was support for different regulations in agricultural areas, and many residents shared their concerns about noise, large gatherings, and parking.

Some residents were against the proposed rules and regulations, citing concerns about government overreach and control. A small number of participants believed that the county should not permit vacation rentals at all.

ALL PARTICIPANTS: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THE COUNTY TO CONSIDER?

All engagement participants were asked the general question: What would you like Rocky View County to consider when implementing rules and regulations for vacation rentals?

Less Regulation (35%)

Many participants advocated for less government intervention, saying property owners should have the freedom to use their property as they wish.

Noise & Traffic (30%)

Participants raised concerns about noise, increased traffic, and the general impact vacation rentals could have on the community. It was important to many participants that the rural and quiet nature of Rocky View County be preserved.

Local Economic Benefits (20%)

Participants said vacation rentals bring economic benefits, particularly to tourism and local businesses in areas like Bragg Creek. They saw vacation rentals as a way to support local commerce and argued that these benefits should factor into regulatory decisions.

Enforcement (15%)

Respondents want vacation rentals to be well-regulated with a focus on noise, parking, and occupancy rules. They suggested that penalties should apply to vacation rentals that receive complaints from neighbours.

Service & Safety (10%)

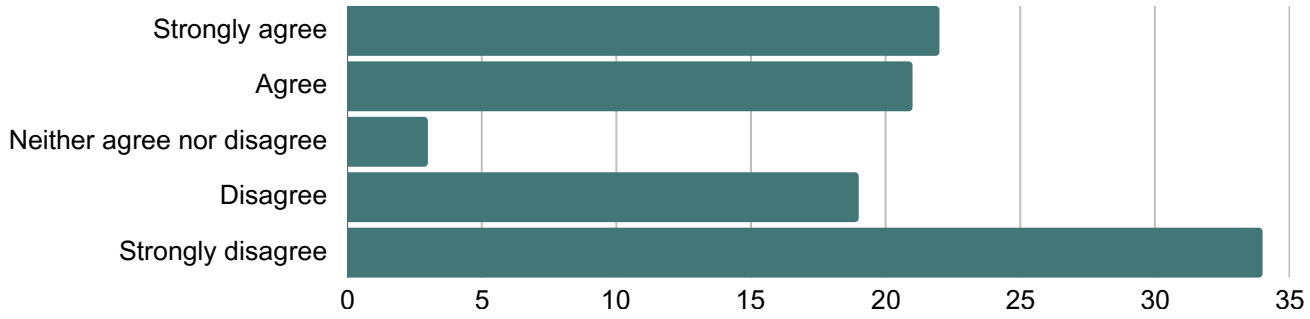
Respondents emphasized the potential strain vacation rentals could place on local infrastructure, such as water and wastewater systems. Additionally, respondents noted visitors might not be familiar with local fire bans or waste disposal regulations, which could increase risks to both the environment and community safety.

KEY FINDINGS: **OPERATORS**

We asked current operators and those considering becoming operators to share their views on proposed rules and regulations for vacation rentals. A total of 60 participants responded.

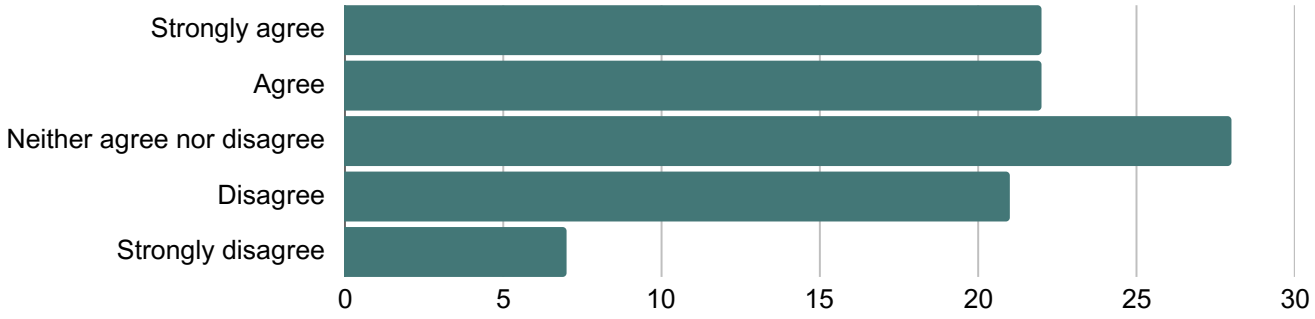
Q1: Please share your level of agreement with this proposed regulation: Applicants shall own the property and demonstrate it as their primary residence.

Fifty-three per cent of operators disagreed with this proposed regulation. Primary concerns were that the regulation was overly controlling and the County needed to consider snowbirds and individuals who owned multiple properties. Those who supported the regulation believed it would help maintain a neighbourhood atmosphere.



Q2: Please share your level of agreement with this proposed regulation: Operators shall provide one on-site parking stall per bedroom.

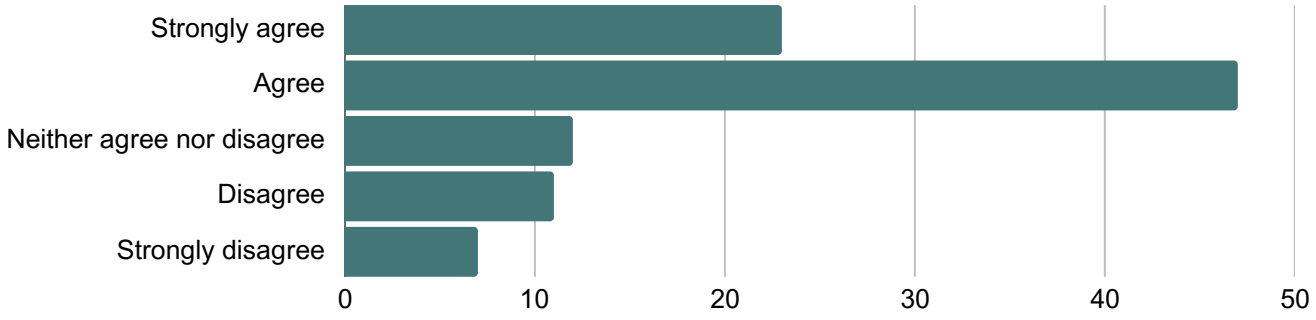
Forty-five per cent of respondents supported the proposed regulation, while nearly 30 per cent were neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Many participants raised concerns about linking parking spots to the number of bedrooms, citing issues such as extra beds in common rooms, lofts, or bedrooms with multiple beds or bunk beds. Additionally, some respondents expressed a preference for parking vehicles on the property instead of on the street. A smaller group of participants felt that the regulation was unnecessary, particularly in rural areas.



KEY FINDINGS: **OPERATORS**

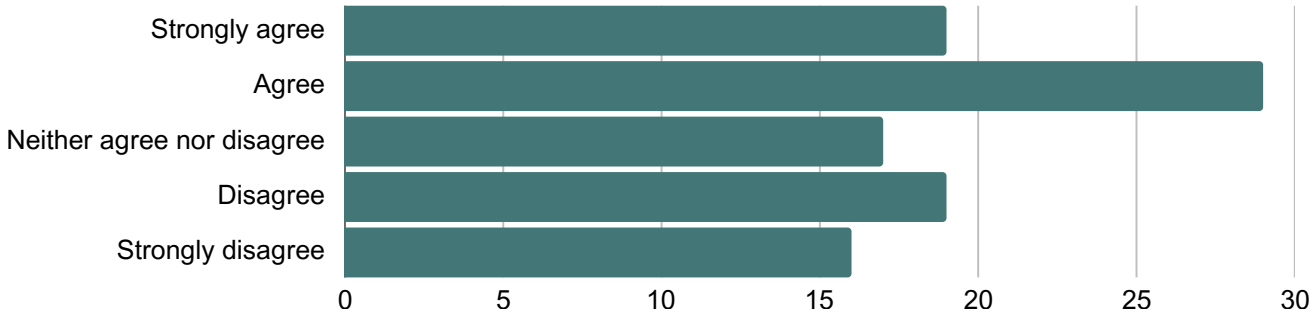
Q3: Please share your level of agreement with this proposed regulation: Operators will limit hours of operation for outdoor areas.

Seventy per cent of respondents agreed with this proposed regulation, stating the most important consideration is proximity to neighbours. Other respondents said vacation rentals should simply adhere to the noise bylaw already in effect.



Q4: Please share your level of agreement with this proposed regulation: The County will limit the number of guests allowed in a vacation rental based on the number of bedrooms provided.

Forty-eight per cent of respondents agreed with the proposed regulation, while 35 per cent disagreed. Participants urged the County to consider additional sleeping arrangements, such as extra beds in common rooms, lofts, or bedrooms that contain multiple beds or bunk beds.

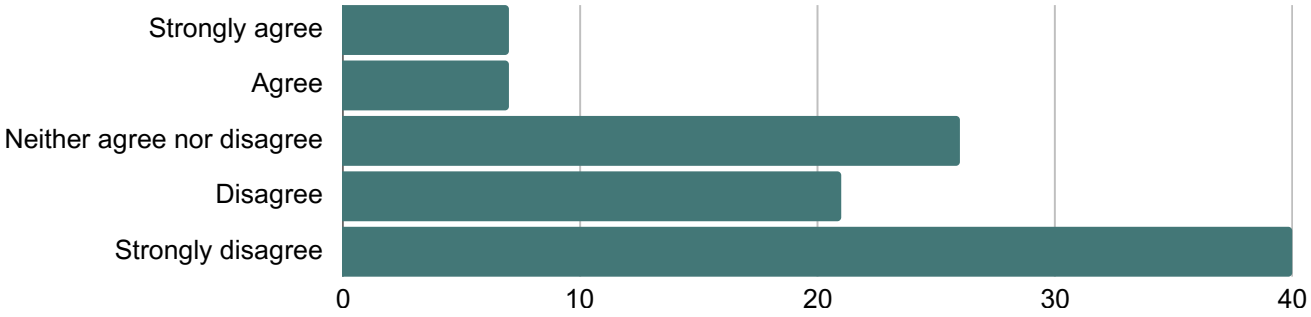


> We easily have four kids share a bedroom. Please consider large families use these rentals instead of hotels.

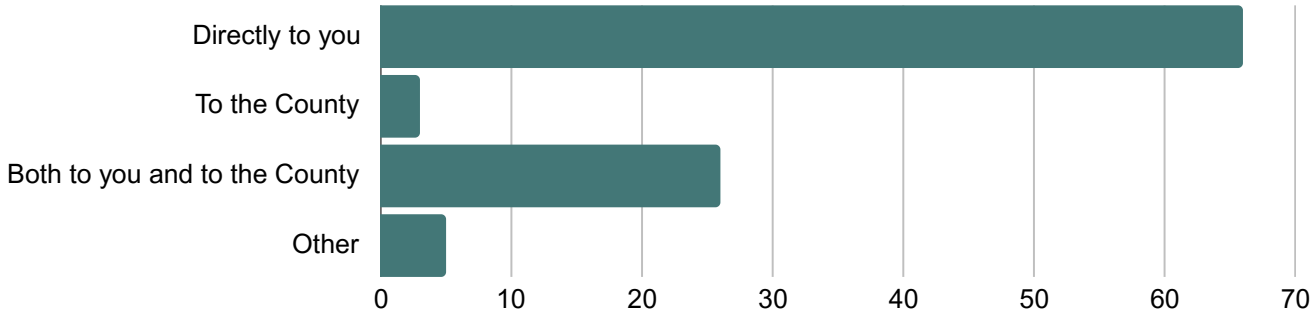
KEY FINDINGS: **OPERATORS**

Q5: Please share your level of agreement with this proposed regulation: The County will only grant a maximum one-year development permit?

Sixty-one per cent of respondents disagreed with the proposed regulation, while only 13 per cent agreed. Participants expressed a preference for multi-year options for operators who do not receive complaints, primarily due to concerns about costs.



Q6: If your neighbours have concerns with your vacation rental who would you like them to address their concerns with?



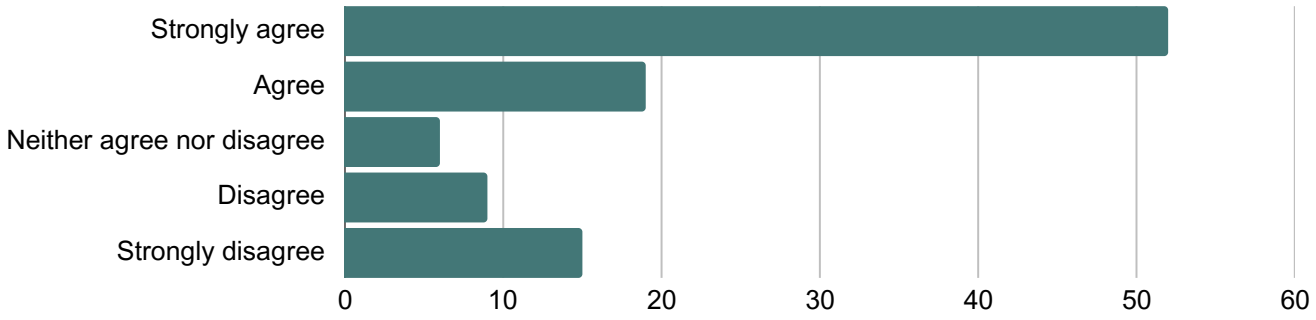
> Having to go through the application process annually is costly to vacation rental owners, and consumes a great deal of resources in the County's permitting department. It would be far more reasonable to have permits be valid for multiple years.

KEY FINDINGS: **RESIDENTS**

We asked County residents to share their views on proposed rules and regulations for vacation rentals. A total of 376 participants responded, with 75 identifying as living near vacation rental.

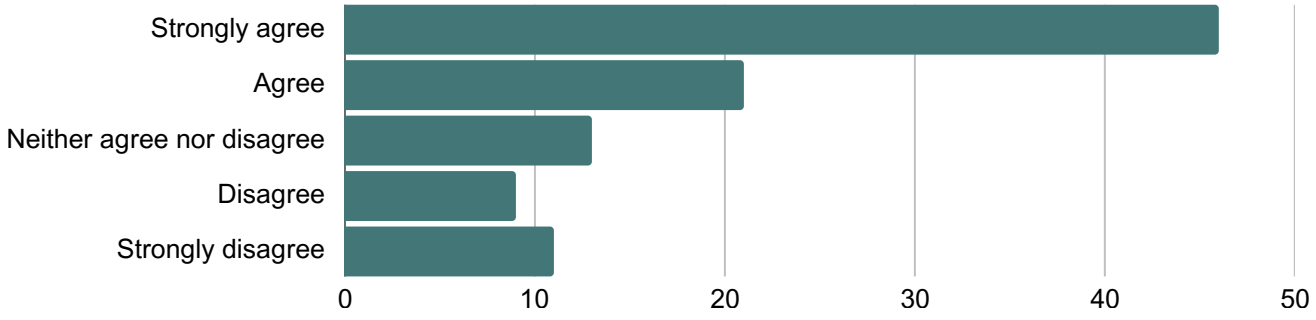
Q1: Please share your level of agreement with this proposed regulation: Applicants shall own the property and demonstrate it as their primary residence.

Nearly two-thirds of participants agreed with the proposed regulation. Residents want owners to be involved and accountable to maintain a neighbourhood feel. Those who disagreed with the proposed regulation primarily felt it was too controlling.



Q2: Please share your level of agreement with this proposed regulation: Operators shall provide one on-site parking stall per bedroom.

Sixty-five per cent of participants agreed with the regulations. Many felt vacation rentals should offer parking to keep renters from using on-street parking. Some participants expressed concern about tying parking spots to bedrooms. Those who disagreed with the regulation felt it was unnecessary.

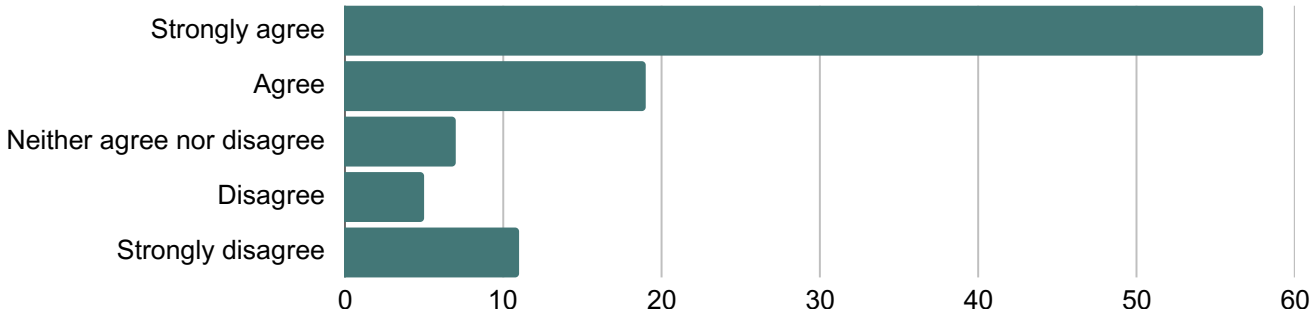


> I think the county should have regulations that stipulate that all parking should be on the owner's property.

KEY FINDINGS: **RESIDENTS**

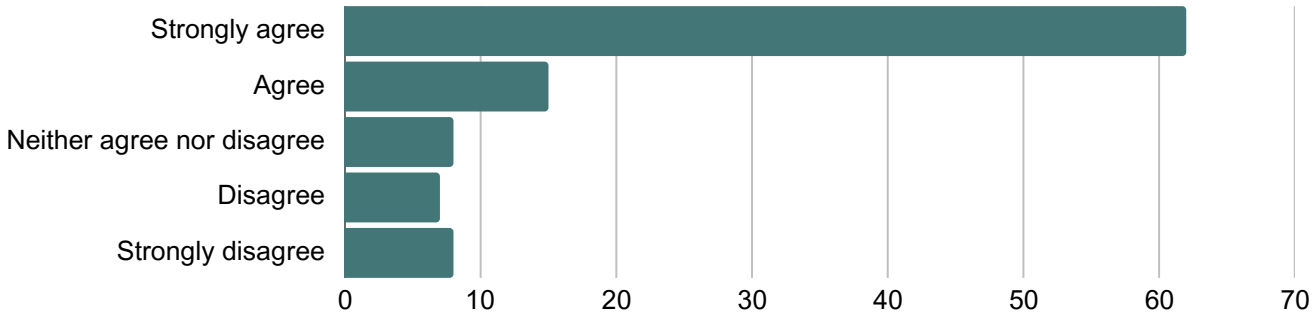
Q3: Please share your level of agreement with this proposed regulation: Operators will limit hours of operation for outdoor areas.

Seventy-seven per cent of respondents agree the County should enforce the rules and regulations outlined in the existing noise bylaw. The majority believe disruptive activities, such as parties, fireworks, and other disturbances, are not acceptable. However, those who disagreed with the regulation felt it was too controlling and unnecessary for rural areas.



Q4: Please share your level of agreement with this proposed regulation: The County will limit the number of guests allowed in a vacation rental based on the number of bedrooms provided.

Seventy-six per cent of respondents agreed. Overall feedback highlighted the importance of considering children, parties, and the implications of having multiple beds in one room. Some respondents were uncertain whether this regulation would effectively manage parties.

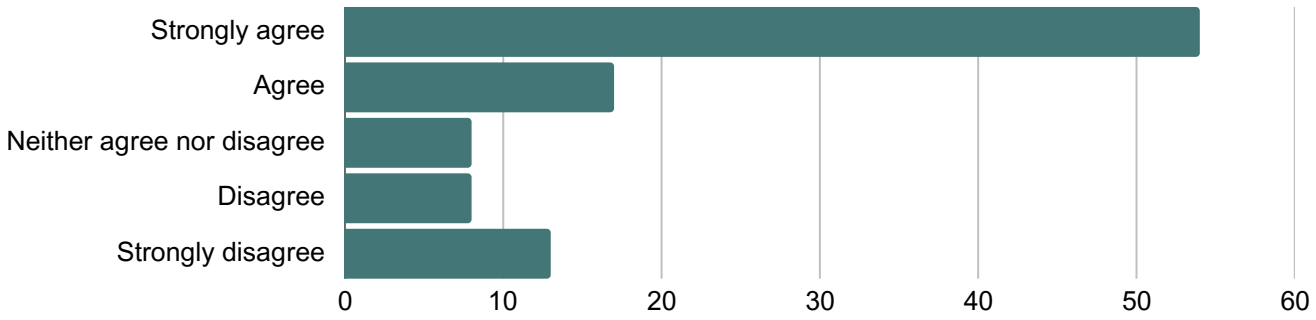


> Minimizing road parking is key to keep the feeling that people want and one of the reasons they live in the country.

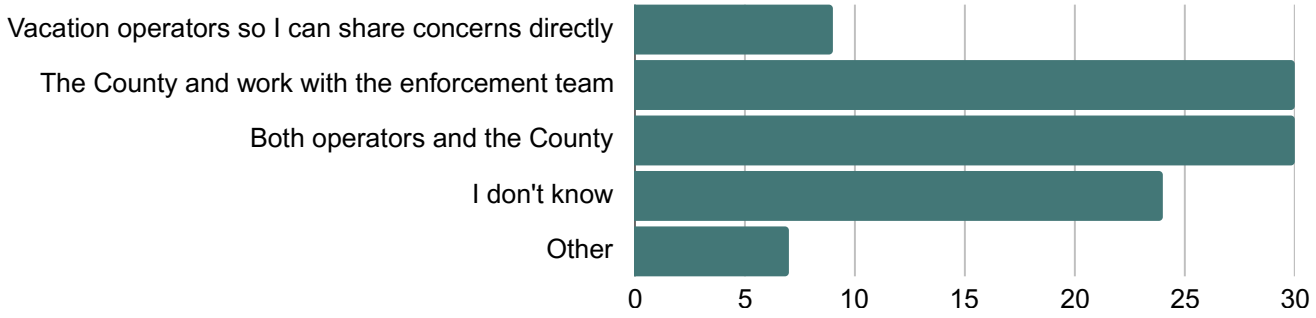
KEY FINDINGS: **RESIDENTS**

Q5: Please share your level of agreement with this proposed regulation: The County will only grant a maximum one-year development permit?

Seventy per cent of respondents agreed with the regulation. Many respondents indicated that development permits should be revoked if complaints persist. Additionally, some felt that operations without complaints should be allowed to opt for multi-year permits.



Q6: Who would you like to contact if you have concerns regarding a vacation rental?



> I think either a one or two year renewal makes sense. It allows operators to plan in advance but problem operators can be shut down relatively quickly.

HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS
& COMMUNITY GROUPS

Twelve representatives from Homeowners' Associations (HOA) and Community Associations participated in the engagement to express their opinions on the proposed regulations.

Participants shared support for all the proposed regulations, with the exception of the proposed annual renewal process, which some participants felt could be shortened based on the number of complaints or infractions.

> "The County needs to ensure ongoing compliance, which is best accomplished by limiting the tenure of the development permit."

Additional Feedback

Overall, community groups stressed the need for strict regulations to address safety risks associated with large gatherings and noise. Participants voiced concerns about noise, disturbances, and absentee property owners, which can disrupt the peace of neighbourhoods. There were calls for more enforcement from the County and adherence to HOA bylaws in managing vacation rentals. Parking congestion and occupancy limits were mentioned as concerns, as well as the potential for strain on local infrastructure and emergency services.

Participants advocated for clear occupancy limits and requirements for on-site management to mitigate potential problems. There was strong support for limiting or prohibiting vacation rentals in residential communities to protect the quality of life and ensure accountability.

How should the County work with Homeowners Associations?

All participants were asked how they would like the County to work with Homeowners Associations (HOAs) and Community Associations.

General Residents

Support for HOAs involvement in vacation rental regulations varied among participants.

Some participants called for approvals from HOAs to maintain community standards, while others preferred a mixed approach, allowing HOAs to mediate without having full authority.

Some participants opposed HOA involvement, believing that decisions should be made privately or managed at the County level to avoid additional restrictions.

Additionally, some participants suggested a case-by-case approach, highlighting the need for rules tailored to the unique needs of individual communities.

Vacation Rental Operators

Respondents shared a range of perspectives on the involvement of Homeowners Associations in the vacation rental approval process.

Many believe HOAs should have minimal or no involvement to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.

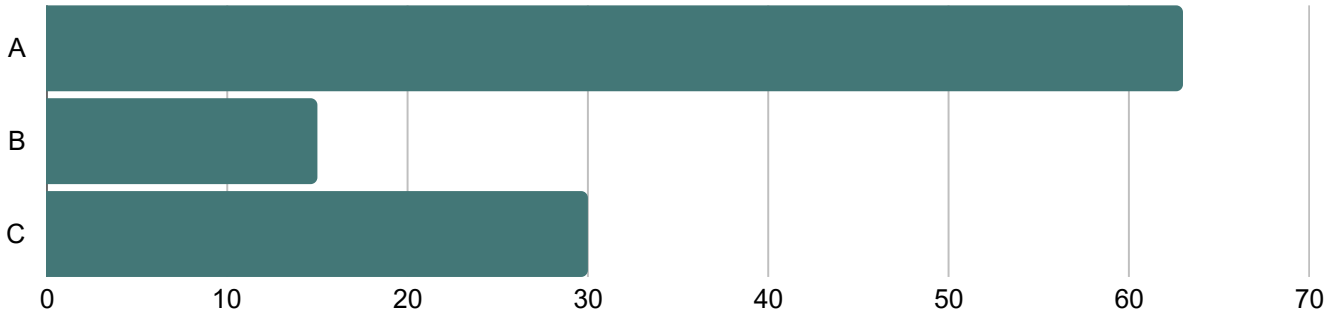
Some feel these associations should act solely in an advisory capacity, providing feedback without the authority to approve or deny permits.

There was also support for allowing gated or condo communities to establish their own rules, emphasizing community-specific autonomy.

Where should vacation rentals operate in the County?

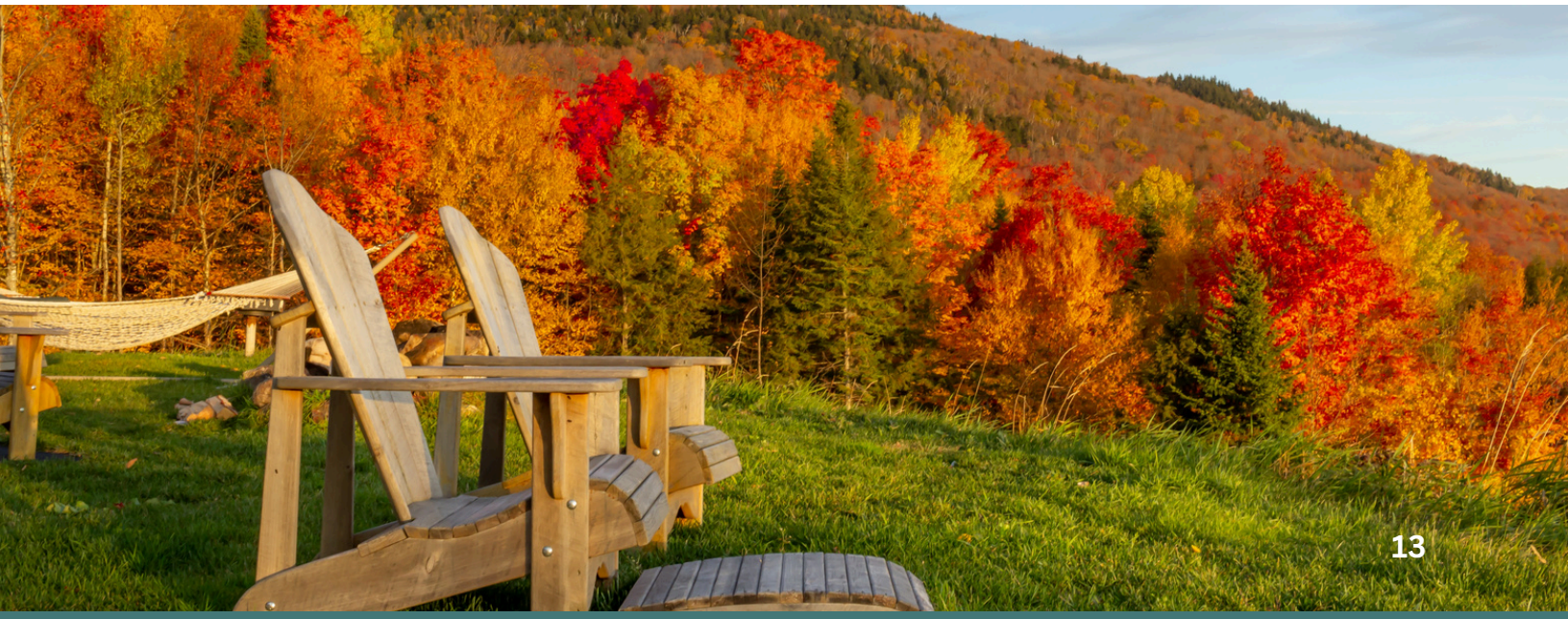
Through the upcoming Municipal Development Plan (MDP), the County is asking residents to share their views on where vacation rentals should be allowed to operate in the County. Thank you to the 404 residents who responded to this question.

**Please note that feedback received from this question will not support regulations under the Land Use Bylaw; feedback will be shared with the County's regional planning team to support the MDP and will be available for review in the final summary report for that project, available for public review in March 2025.*



A) Vacation rentals are appropriate in any area of the County, given they meet certain criteria under the Land Use Bylaw.
B) Vacation rentals make the most sense to locate in hamlet areas, or co-located close to existing business and commercial areas of the County.
C) The MDP should identify tourism destinations that are best suited to accommodate vacation rentals, limiting this use to those areas only.

For more information on the Public Engagement on a new Municipal Development Plan, visit engage.rockyview.ca.



THANK YOU

Thank you to all who participated in public engagement on proposed rules and regulations for vacation rentals in Rocky View County.

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