Rocky View County

AGRICULTURE MASTER PLAN

PHASE 2

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT



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ROCKY VIEW COUNTY

AGRICULTURE MASTER PLAN
PHASE 2 WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

PREPARED SPRING 2025



Executive Summary

Rocky View County is updating its *Agriculture Master Plan* (AMP), a strategic guiding document that identifies the needs and priorities of the agricultural community, sets goals for future growth and innovation, and provides a roadmap for achieving objectives. To support the drafting of this revision, the County engaged with local farmers, agribusinesses and residents.

Throughout the combined phases of engagement, the project team has heard from more than **300 participants**, who spent a **collective 387 hours** sharing **over 2,000 comments** to guide the direction of agriculture in Rocky View County.

This report summarizes the feedback received during phase two of the engagement, which took place from December 27, 2024, to February 7, 2025. During this period, local farmers, agri-businesses, and residents had the opportunity to review and validate the proposed actions outlined in the draft AMP as part of the second phase of public engagement.

Feedback was obtained on the following draft elements of the AMP:

High level of support for AMP direction

There was significant agreement with all key priorities and action items presented in the draft AMP. All proposed draft elements received approval ratings between 77% and 91%.

Road infrastructure

The proposed actions for road and infrastructure improvements received a significant level of support **(91% somewhat agree or agree)**. In addition to the proposed actions, respondents highlighted the importance of improved road maintenance and public education on agricultural road use.

Sharing information

As above, the proposed actions to educate all residents on the values, priorities, and contributions of agriculture received a significant level of support **(91% somewhat agree or agree)**. Respondents shared their support for the key step of awareness campaigns, in particular targeting realtors, acreage/urban residents, and signage to build awareness.

Employee training

Proposed actions to integrate agricultural considerations into all large-scale policies and plans to ensure agriculture is recognized as a vital component of Rocky View County received strong support **(90% somewhat agree or agree)**. Respondents particularly supported creating an orientation package for new RVC staff and Council, and inter departmental collaboration with Agricultural Services within the County on matters that affect producers.

Environmental sustainability

Proposed actions to promote environmental sustainability and stewardship within the County were well supported **(84% somewhat agree or agree)**. Respondents highlighted the environmental importance of trees, animals, spray and soil considerations, as well as the need for increased information and research around sustainable land management practices.

Legislated programs

Proposed actions to increase awareness and understanding of provincially-legislated Agricultural Services Programs were well supported **(84% somewhat agree or agree)**. Respondents highlighted the need for increased public education and inter-municipal collaboration on pest and weed control, specifically from commercial and business developments.

Farm succession

Proposed actions to facilitate farm succession and long-term agricultural sustainability were well supported **(84% somewhat agree or agree)**. Respondents highlighted a preference to allow for smaller parcels removed from agriculture land, while ensuring flexibility within policy to enable agriculture landowners to continue practicing agriculture and trusting their expertise to determine the best use of land.

Protect agricultural land

Proposed actions to ensure the protection of agricultural lands were well supported **(80% somewhat agree or agree)**. Participants expressed their interest in learning more on how agricultural lands are classified and prioritized by the County.





Flexible land use

Proposed actions to build agricultural resilience by supporting value-added agriculture opportunities, agri-tourism, and diverse operations were well supported **(79% somewhat agree or agree)**, with a minority of participants in disagreement (11% somewhat disagree or disagree). Participants shared their support for more consideration on the potential implications of agri-tourism and agri-business operations, such as road infrastructure and water availability.

Renewable energy

Proposed actions to ensure renewable energy is strategically placed without compromising agricultural productivity were well supported **(77% somewhat agree or agree)**, with a minority of participants in disagreement (14% somewhat disagree or disagree) building on low support for active solar farm and renewable energy development on productive agriculture lands heard in Phase 1. Respondents raised concerns around the future land impacts from renewable energy, such as soil degradation and clean-up at the end of a development's lifecycle.

Rocky View County thanks all residents who participated in Phase 2 of public engagement and contributed their feedback on a revised AMP. This feedback will inform the final *Agriculture Master Plan* (Spring 2025), ensuring the plan meets the needs of our agricultural community.

1.0 Introduction

Rocky View County is in the process of updating its Agriculture Master Plan (AMP). This strategic document outlines the long-term vision and policy framework for agriculture and land use planning within the agricultural community.

The AMP is designed to support and promote the agricultural industry by addressing key issues such as land use policy, economic development, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. The plan identifies the needs and priorities of the agricultural community, sets goals for future growth and innovation, and provides a clear roadmap for achieving these objectives. Input from residents has significantly influenced not only the development of the last Master Plan but also resulted in:

- Policy changes in the County Plan
- Amendments to the Land Use Bylaw
- The creation of the Agriculture Boundary Design Guidelines
- Enhancements to programs in Agricultural and Environmental Services

The last plan was written in 2011, and the time has come to renew it to ensure the current environment in Rocky View County is represented, and direction is accurate. To facilitate this process, the County has conducted two phases of public engagement:

- **Phase 1:** From June 13 to July 21, 2024, over **170 participants** contributed a combined total of 160 hours sharing their feedback on the current state and future of agriculture in Rocky View County.
- **Phase 2:** From December 27, 2024, to February 7, 2025, over **130 participants** contributed a total of 227 hours to review the draft plan and share their insights on the proposed actions.

2.0 Process and Participation

From December 27, 2024 to February 7, 2025, a comprehensive public engagement was held to ensure local farmers, agri-businesses, and residents had the opportunity to share their insights and feedback on the draft Agriculture Master Plan. Throughout the public engagement process, **more than 130 participants** shared a **collective 1,078 comments** on the draft direction of agriculture in Rocky View County.

The County presented the public with specific actions addressing key agricultural issues such as land protection, farm succession, renewable energy, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. Participants were invited to review these proposed actions, indicate their level of agreement, and provide additional suggestions.

Community Conversations

A series of four community conversations about the draft Agriculture Master Plan were held throughout the County during the winter of 2025.

Over 100 community members shared their feedback on the proposed initiatives at the following four community events:

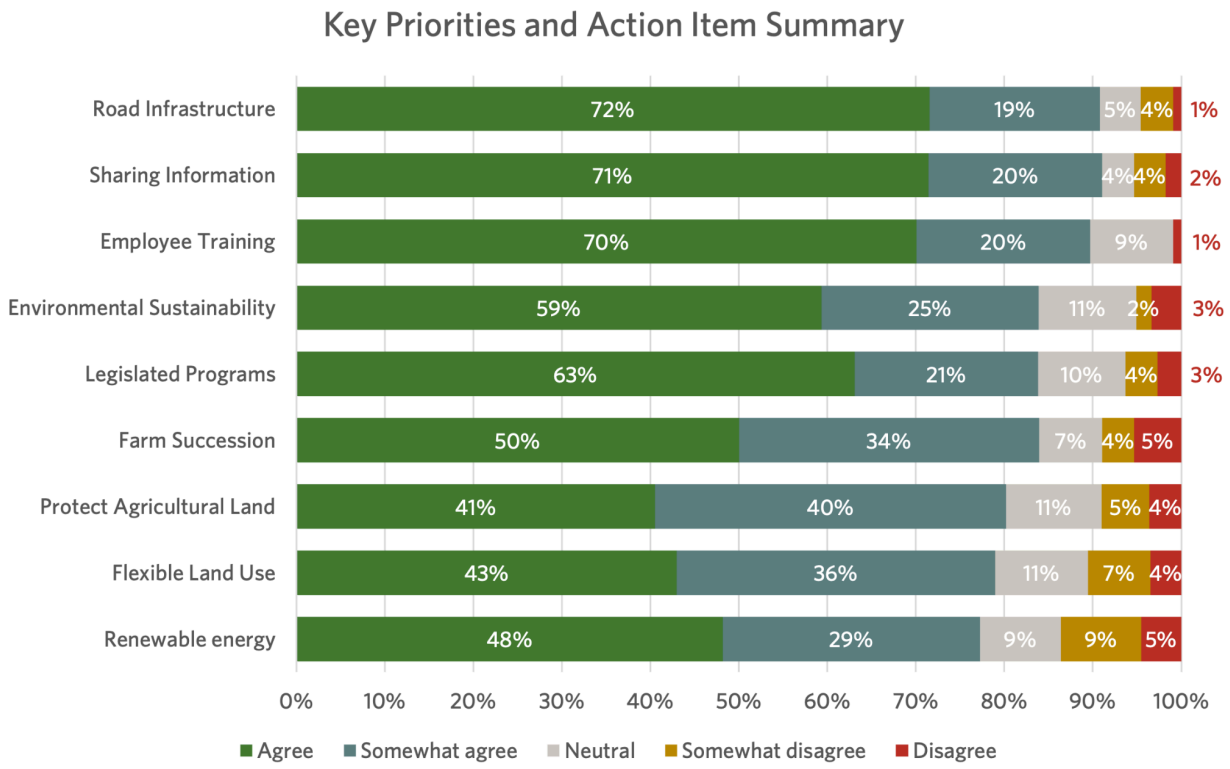
- Madden Community Hall: January 17
- Indus Rec Centre: January 27
- Jumping Pound Community Hall: January 30
- Irricana Hall: January 31

Online Survey

An online project page was created to outline the details of the project, and a survey asked participants to evaluate the actions proposed in the draft plan. The survey received 35 responses.

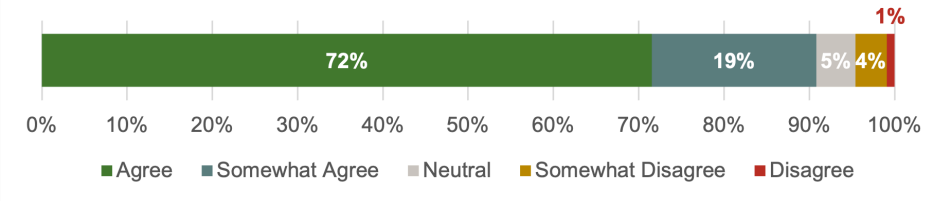
3.0 What We Heard

The following section shares the questions that were asked as part of the community engagement process paired with what was heard from participants in response to these prompts.



3.1 Road Infrastructure

Prompt: Please share your level of agreement with the key steps on road infrastructure improvements (*109 responses*)

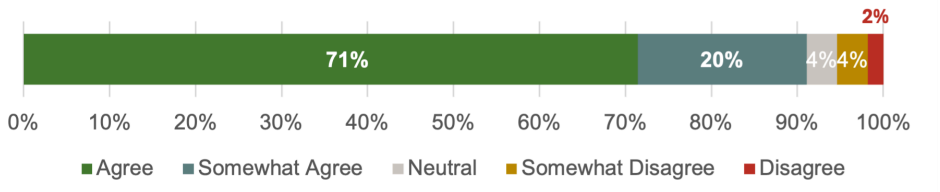


Prompt: Please share what you would like the County to consider regarding road infrastructure improvements (*144 responses*)

Theme	Indicative Quotes
Road condition/improvement	*"Major roads should be upgraded especially when service roads like Cochrane. Dust control is needed. All roads near towns become extremely busy and need better servicing or conversion to pavement."* *"Excessive dust issues, high traffic volumes, and roads might not be at a standard"*
Support Farm Equipment	*"Signage away from road surface to allow wide equipment. All roads have rounded shoulders so you can drive machinery on edge of road"*
Signage and Barrier Modifications	*"Seasonal signage on RV secondary and main highways regarding harvest and seeding equipment on the roads and to be aware and patient."*
Water drainage	*"Consider drainage for newly built or updating road right of ways, also consider that equipment will be bigger than it is now. It keeps growing."*

3.2 Sharing Information

Please share your level of agreement with the key steps to share information on agriculture within the County (112 *responses*)



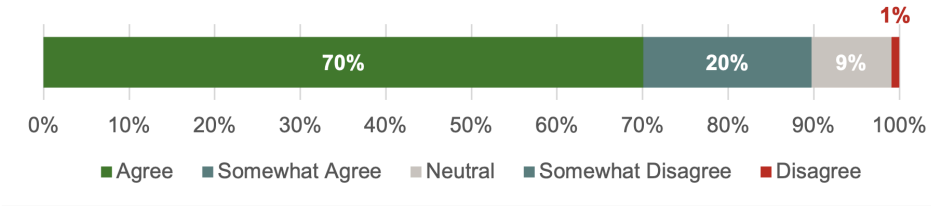
Please share what you would like the County to consider when sharing information on agriculture within the County (85 *responses*)

Theme	Indicative Quotes
Awareness Campaign	*"Work with realtors to distribute info packages for new owners"* *"The urban-rural divide only keeps growing. People don't understand or appreciate what the farmers are doing in the country. We are not trying to poison their food just to make a buck"*
Farm and Ranch Education Campaign	*"Rocky view county should work with the rocky view school board on an ag program to be in class curriculum"*
Outreach Program	*"County should send information packages on agriculture so acreage owners understand smells, animals, to limit conflict"*

3.3 Employee Training

Please share your level of agreement with the key steps regarding employee training

(107 responses)



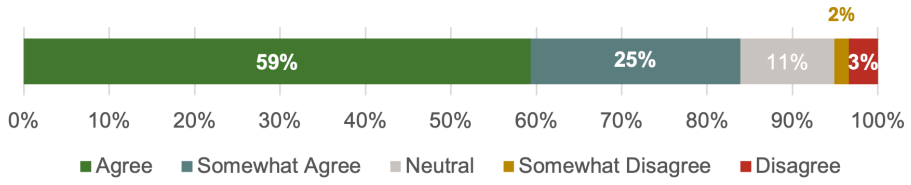
Please share what you would like the County to consider when training employees

(75 responses)

Theme	Indicative Quotes
Orientation Package for New Staff and Council	*"Make the ag tour mandatory for all new councillors and ag planners"* *"Many County administrative staff and council don't understand agricultural business needs/concerns."*
County Operations	*"When you phone and ask for a dep and you get a person, and they tell you one thing and you get a different person and they tell you something different"* *"Sometimes it feels like ag and planning aren't consulting each other."*
Farm Visits/Introductions	*"Create interactions between staff and farmers and create a list of farmers willing to answer questions for staffers and councillors"* *"Visit farms and introduce yourself."*
Field Experts/Education	*"Would love to see more agriculture people on boards, committees and general employees so that they can bridge the gap in the office."*

3.4 Environmental Sustainability

Please share your level of agreement with the key steps regarding environmental sustainability (118 *responses*)

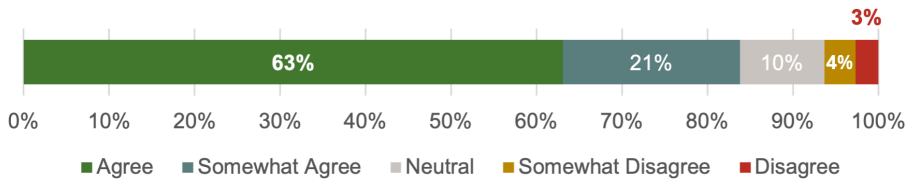


Please share what you would like the County to consider when supporting environmental sustainability (94 *responses*)

Theme	Indicative Quotes
General Comments/Concern/ More information	*"There is no advantage to farmers in having the natural assets on their property categorized. They already know which are those lands. By conducting a costly study, it just provides the acreage people with an opportunity to sterilize or restrict operations on those lands."* *"(we want) More information readily available"*
Support Environmental Protection/Sustainability	*"More rental equipment, sprayers, etc"* *"The County needs to be protecting the land and the health of our futures, not individuals or corporations trying to make a buck irrespective of the damage to the environment, wildlife and citizens."*
Collaboration	*"That would be helpful for the county to have an engineering technologist who could help with applications. As an individual it is completely cost prohibitive"* *"Collaboration between DuC, WID, VC, GOA and Govt of Canada"*
Public Education	*"More awareness on community ag benefit of program"*
Cost	*"More county staff that can help mitigate some costs for projects"*

3.5 Legislated Programs

Please share your level of agreement with the key steps regarding legislated programs (111 *responses*)

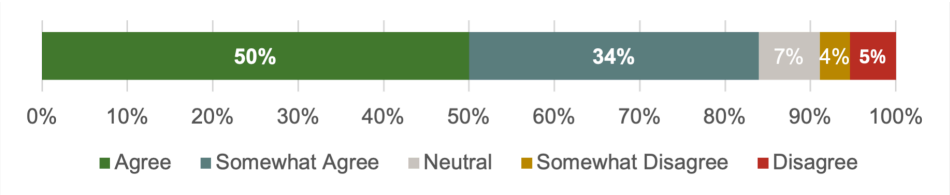


Please share what you would like the County to consider when working on legislated programs (103 *responses*)

Theme	Indicative Quotes
Public Education	*"Create an educational program that every new acreage owner must take that covers the key areas mentioned."* *"I find short bursts of information in the county review to be a good way to be brought up to speed on information"*
Weed Control	*"How do we help acreage owners partner with county and neighbours to decrease weeds and maximize eco-benefits"* *"Need to educate all landowners on weeds and weed control. Apply pressure to province and railroad companies to be more responsible for right of ways"*
Enforcement	*"Enforcement - soil disposal, especially adjacent to urbanizing areas is a concern; changing land elevation"*
Water	*"More info on water act"*

3.6 Farm Succession

Please share your level of agreement with the key steps on farm succession (112 *responses*)



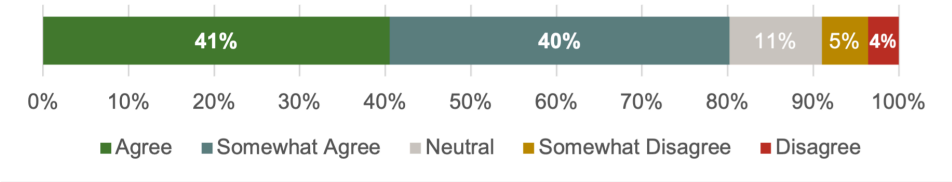
Please share what you would like the County to consider when working to support farm succession (135 *responses*)

Theme	Indicative Quotes
Infrastructure Needs/Costs For Two Plus Dwellings on Agricultural Parcels	*"flexible first parcel out. most don't need to be 20 acres. consider pressure on roads and ground water supply septic fields?"*
Housing for Family/Worker Accommodations	*"Whats the purpose of the housing and how is that enforced? Ensure housing doesn't turn to an acreage subdivision but still have the ability to have family on the farm."*
Farmer Input/Rights/Support	*"Let the operating farm figure out what is best for them as opposed to dictating. "*
Flexibility	*"It's hard to blanket this with a bylaw as every situation is different. Allowing for more flexibility for farm families is welcomed but not for additional recreation or businesses. Ie. VRBO or wedding venues etc."*

3.7 Protect Agricultural Land

Please share your level of agreement with the key steps to protect agricultural land?

(111 *responses*)



Please share what you would like the County to consider when protecting agricultural land

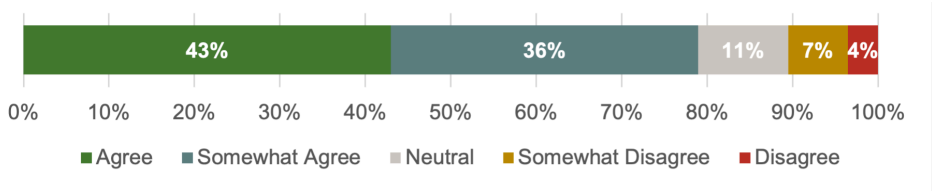
(139 *responses*)

Theme	Indicative Quotes
High Agricultural Significance	*"Very much agree with protecting ag land. Feel it is a mistake to limit the definition of "high agricultural significance" farms and ranches need all lands, marginal lands are very important to cattle producers."*
Subdivisions/Land Use Changes	*"Please consider keeping Ag parcels joined together without allowing smaller subdivisions to pop up (through rezoning / redesignating the land use, or subdividing into smaller acreages) which breaks up the farming community landscape and functionality"*
Water Availability/Sustainability	*"The water thing is a really big thing. If they keep approving land for development for large acreages that are not agricultural. Water is crucial."*
Native Range/Grass Land	*"Cultivating native grasslands should not be acceptable, instead every opportunity to maximize the best use of existing ag land should be explored. Land trusts should be encouraged as a measure to protect natural lands with the chance to protect native plants (including grasses) and wildlife. Resource extraction I.e. gravel, oil & gas, coal, etc. should not be acceptable uses of native lands."*
Agricultural Boundary Design	*"Flip policy/guidelines so that setbacks are from the "ag land"* *"Consider placing buffer zones within rural subdivisions to protect ag producers from pests"*

3.8 Flexible Land Use

Please share your level of agreement with the key steps regarding flexible land use

(114 *responses*)



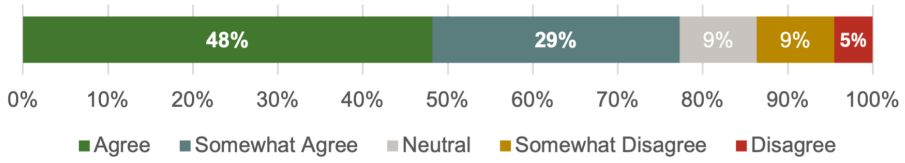
Please share what you would like the County to consider when working on flexible land use

(112 *responses*)

Theme	Indicative Quotes
Agri-Tourism/Agri-Business	*"Community implications-neighbours having to manage challenges. Define value added vs agri tourism-scale has large impact"* *"It is really important that the county broker that space between the rural and urban areas. Don't let parking be a barrier"*
Flexible Policies	*"Flexibility of land use has everything to do with its designation. Flexibility around re-designation without $6500 applications and multiple technical documents should be present"* *"Red tape, one complaint shuts everything down. Investment is high but the County needs to support the opportunity or not."*
General Comments/Concern	*"As long as the owners of land want to explore the ag-business options and are not forced to do so then fine. Land should have the highest and best use. Sometimes that is commercial and res development. Listen to land owners, not neighbours."*

3.9 Renewable Energy

Please share your level of agreement with the key steps on renewable energy (110 *responses*)



Please share what you would like the County to consider when working to manage renewable energy (125 *responses*)

Theme	Indicative Quotes
Prioritize Agricultural Land	*"Ag land should never be taken out of production, especially for solar farms or other renewables. This is a massively huge mistake if it happens."* *"It makes more sense to install solar panels on existing building and parking lot roofs, rather than on open land. Any renewable energy projects considered on agricultural land should be designed to be "both/and"; i.e. so that agricultural activities can be continued at the same time (for example, growing crops beneath solar "roofs")."*
Potential Impact/Risk	*"Consideration of native pastures, especially in the east. Key considerations, after it is done, clean up requirements, soil sterilization, and weed control."* *"Seek to optimize shared use where both developers should have remediation plans/requirements to manage end of life, Do better than oil and gas reclamation"*
Farmer Input/Support/Rights	*"Some farming, depending on the crop, can benefit by installing solar for power generation, but additionally as a means of shading for crops which can't always have direct sun. This already exists in practice. Of course solar mounted on ag structures, or as a canopy to cover equipment etc. is a good idea first. I support renewable energy sources as a means of power generation over oil, gas and coal."* *"Personal use of solar should be unlimited. This should apply only to utility level renewables"*

3.10 Other Thoughts

Do you have any other thoughts on the draft plan you would like to share with the County?
(*42 responses*)

Theme	Indicative Quotes
County Operations	*"Thanks for taking the time to get community engagement"* *"Its great to have a master plan. I look forward to seeing the KPI's and measurements to understand that when it comes to the end of the plan, we know how successful it was"* *"There was good discussion however not enough time to hear all the impacts/ideas"*
Question /Information /Comment	*"While I agree with most of this, it is difficult when the actions speak to recommendations which have not been written yet. Additionally, the MDP has not been written so it's unclear what will come of this. More engagement is needed as drafts are created."* *"Perhaps having smaller counties to help promote and secure issues."* *"Try to lessen grip and control from the County. Intentions are good but its crippling residents."*
Farmer Input/Support/Rights	*"Farm land near urban needs a future view. Currently many think being close to urban is not sustainable. But ag close to urban is the only option in future. Don't be short sighted. Frankly I often hear short sighted for the future generations. Protect western Canada's food growing potential"* *"Protect our right to farm"*

4.0 Next Steps

Thank you to the agriculture community members in Rocky View County who shared their views, thoughts, and ideas to contribute to a revised Agriculture Master Plan. The County truly appreciates the quality and depth of discussions, comments, and views shared between participants and the project team.

The final Agriculture Master Plan will be revised with the feedback gathered through this second phase of engagement and will be shared with the public Spring 2025.

For more information on the project and to stay in touch with the process, please visit: www.rockyview.ca/agriculture-master-plan