

# Municipal Development Plan & Land Use Bylaw

Stage 1: Imagine  
Public Engagement Summary

July 2018



# Engagement Overview

The Town of Rocky Mountain House is preparing a new Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw to guide growth and development over the next 20+ years. These documents establish how Rocky Mountain House grows, what development looks like, and how to best support the daily needs of residents, visitors, and businesses alike.

The **Municipal Development Plan (MDP)** is the road map for long-term development of the town. It establishes a shared vision for the future and outlines a path for getting there.

The **Land Use Bylaw (LUB)** provides clear regulatory direction for land use and buildings to ensure successful implementation of the MDP. While the MDP provides the road map, the LUB provides the guidance to see it through by regulating use and development within the Town. It sets out various zoning districts, acceptable uses within each area, and how decisions on development applications are made.

As public and stakeholder input is vital for a successful planning process, this project includes three phases and engagement as outlined in the timeline below:

Stage 1: Imagine		Stage 2: Create		Stage 3: Review			
JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Q1 2020
	Public Engagement		Public Engagement		Public Engagement		Council Approval

*Preparing a new Municipal Development Plan presents an opportunity for the Town to re-visit what it wants to be, while the new Land Use Bylaw will help it determine how to get there.*

# Engagement Tactics

To reach a wide range of residents, a variety of engagement tactics were used throughout Stage 1. Using a combination of online, in-person, and place-based engagement, residents had several opportunities and formats they could use to provide their input to the project.

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## ONLINE SURVEY

Accessible through the Town of Rocky Mountain House website, the online survey included a short questionnaire and an online map to provide comments about specific locations throughout the town.

» Dates: July 9-22, 2019



## OPEN HOUSE

An open house was held at the Christenson Centre where attendees were provided information about the project, opportunities to talk with the project team, and several activity stations to provide feedback.

» Date: July 9, 2019, 5-8pm

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## POP-UP EVENTS

Project booths were setup at the Marketplace on Main on each Thursday during the engagement period to reach residents who otherwise may not have been aware about the project or taken the time to provide their feedback.

» Dates/Locations: July 11 + 18, 2019

## SOUNDING BOARD

A sounding board was placed at various locations throughout the community, offering an additional opportunity for residents to provide feedback. The sounding board gathered input on residents' vision for the future of Rocky Mountain House. It also featured a map where residents could place comments related to a particular area of town.

» Dates: July 9-22, 2019

## Communications Tactics

Stage 1 engagement events were promoted through a number of channels over the course of the engagement period, including:

- » Social Media Posts
  - » *Town of Rocky Mountain House Facebook and Twitter*
- » Newspaper Ads
  - » June 25 & July 2 editions of The Mountaineer
- » Digital Billboards
  - » City Facilities
- » Newsletter
  - » Town of Rocky Mountain House Newsletter

In addition to the tactics above, the sounding board and pop-up events also acted as advertising for the project engagement in unconventional places to reach a broader audience.





# Key Findings

The following pages summarize the insights and ideas collected throughout Stage 1 engagement. These findings will help to inform the draft MDP as well as proposed updates to the LUB.

## Future Vision

Throughout Stage 1 of public engagement, participants were asked a series of questions to help the project team identify what residents like about living in Rocky Mountain House, what the challenges are, what their vision is for the future, and what their priorities are with respect to the MDP and LUB.

The project team took all of the responses received through each of the engagement tactics and undertook a thematic coding exercise to determine the key findings and considerations for the MDP and LUB. This section summarizes the key findings identified for each of the questions and provides preliminary suggestions for how these can be addressed in the MDP and LUB.

### Q1: What do you like about living in Rocky Mountain House?

When asked about what they like about living in Rocky Mountain House, the most frequently occurring themes were:

- » *Quality of life*
- » *Nature*
- » *Recreation*
- » *Arts & Culture*
- » *Economy & Growth*

Each of these themes are discussed below:

#### Quality of Life

Most engagement participants feel that Rocky offers a fantastic quality of life. This is largely attributed to its geographic location, with many respondents suggesting that its proximity to both the West Country and to major cities such as Calgary and

Edmonton are the community's greatest asset. The small-town character and quiet atmosphere is also seen as a key contributor to quality of life. With the small-town character comes what participants often describe as a close knit and strong community with friendly residents who look out for one another.

#### Nature

Rocky Mountain House residents love nature. Many people reported that the area's many and varied natural assets are among the most liked attributes of living in Rocky. For these people, proximity to the mountains, the river, wildlife, and the views afforded from town all contribute to Rocky's appeal.

#### Parks & Recreation

Rocky's abundance of parks and recreation, both within and outside of town are another attribute liked by many. This is particularly true of trails, with many people identifying the walking path in town as one of their preferred assets.

#### Arts & Culture

People in Rocky are proud of the area's history and love to get together to celebrate their community. This is evident by the appreciation of the National Historic Site and the Marketplace on Main. Additional arts & culture amenities, including the library and the museum were identified as assets.

## Economy & Growth

Rocky's residents are feeling the economic downturn and concerned about the future of their town. Many people appreciate the local business offerings but would like to see more diversity in shopping opportunities. People are generally supportive of growth and development, provided the character of the community is maintained.

## Q2: What are the challenges Rocky Mountain House is facing?

When asked about the challenges Rocky Mountain House is facing, the most frequently occurring themes were:

- » *Economic Constraints*
- » *Politics, Health & Safety*
- » *Recreation Programming & Maintenance*
- » *High Costs for Services & Infrastructure Upkeep*
- » *Park Amenities and Trail Connectivity*

Each of these are discussed below:

### Economic Constraints

As mentioned above, residents are concerned about the economic downturn and eager to identify opportunities to improve the town's economic outlook. A primary concern is affordability and what residents feel are high tax rates in relation to the level of service they are receiving. Concerns related to local business were also frequently reported. For instance, people wish that there were more diverse shopping opportunities in Rocky to encourage people to spend their money in town rather than driving to nearby communities for shopping opportunities. One suggestion included a tax to vacant storefronts to encourage land owners to find tenants. Some respondents are disappointed that Wal Mart and other big box retailers have not opened in town, while others prefer to keep these retailers away. Many

participants are also concerned about the lack of economic and employment diversity in Rocky. These people view Rocky as too reliant on the oil and gas industry and feel that the town would be more resilient if the economy were diversified. Some people suggest that high taxes and over-regulation inhibit development, particularly industrial and commercial, encouraging these developments to locate in lower cost centres, like the County.

### Politics, Health & Safety

While quality of life was identified as a strength of Rocky, it was also identified as a concern. This was particularly true for safety issues. Many respondents indicate feeling unsafe in town at times and suggest that Rocky has an unacceptable amount of crime and drug use. Many respondents also lack confidence in the political system and the allocation of tax revenue. Last, some people are concerned that Rocky does not have adequate health care, particularly in light of an aging population. There are concerns that the hospital needs upgrading and that wait times for medical services are too long.

### Recreation Programming & Maintenance

People in Rocky value access to recreation amenities, both indoor and outdoor. Limited activities and programming, particularly for families, children, and youth was identified as a concern by many. Children and youth are seen as the future of the town and many people feel that enticing them to stay in town as they get older should be a top priority. There is also a feeling among residents that some of Rocky's recreation facilities require better maintenance. For instance, the skate park and the ball diamonds were both identified a number of times as needing attention.

### High Costs for Services & Infrastructure Upkeep

Many people are concerned that the cost for services, e.g. water, is high in Rocky Mountain House. In addition, some people feel that the town's infrastructure requires maintenance. This includes roads, the sewer system, and storm water system.

### Park Amenities & Trail Connectivity

Many people suggested that Rocky should strive to improve their park provisions. Ideas include establishing a new dog park, improving playgrounds and amenities for families and children, and developing/expanding upon park space near the North Saskatchewan River. Like parks, trails were identified as lacking in Rocky. People would like to see a more interconnected trail network that provides access to the river, the rodeo grounds, and nearby provincial parks.

## Q3: What do you think is most important when planning the town's future? Choose your top three priorities.

To get a sense of priorities to focus on in the planning process, engagement participants were asked to identify their top three priorities for Rocky's future. **Figure 1** illustrates the findings from this question and the top two selections are discussed below.

### Economic Development & Tourism

Economic development & tourism was the most frequently selected priority, with nearly 70% of engagement participants identifying it in their top three. People are concerned about the effect that the downturn in the oil and gas sector is having on Rocky and recognize that diversifying the economy is important. With proximity to the West County, many engagement participants are eager to see the town

capitalize on tourism and emerge as an established gateway to the mountains. Several people suggest that with a focus on tourism comes improvements to quality of life. Suggestions provided by participants that attract tourists and improve quality of life for locals include:

- » *Music in the park nights*
- » *Fall/harvest festival*
- » *Speaker series focusing on small-town innovation, sustainability, and opportunities*
- » *Vibrant and active downtown*
- » *Parks, recreation, and cultural amenities*
- » *Heritage buildings*
- » *Fibre optic internet*

### Parks, Recreation, & Trails

Parks, recreation, and trails was the second most frequently reported priority for the future of Rocky Mountain House. As indicated by engagement participants, not only do these improve the quality of life for local residents, but they can make an important contribution to economic development as well. Great parks, recreation amenities/events, and trails can entice people to visit, move to, and open businesses in Rocky Mountain House.

## Q4: What is your vision for Rocky Mountain House?

When asked about a vision for the future of Rocky Mountain House, the most frequently occurring themes were:

- » *Growing, Diverse & Vibrant*
- » *Safe, Inclusive, & Family-Friendly*
- » *Family/Youth-Specific Recreation*
- » *Connected Park & Trail Network*
- » *Mobility Upgrades for all Modes*

Each of these are discussed below. For location specific feedback, see **Figure 2**.

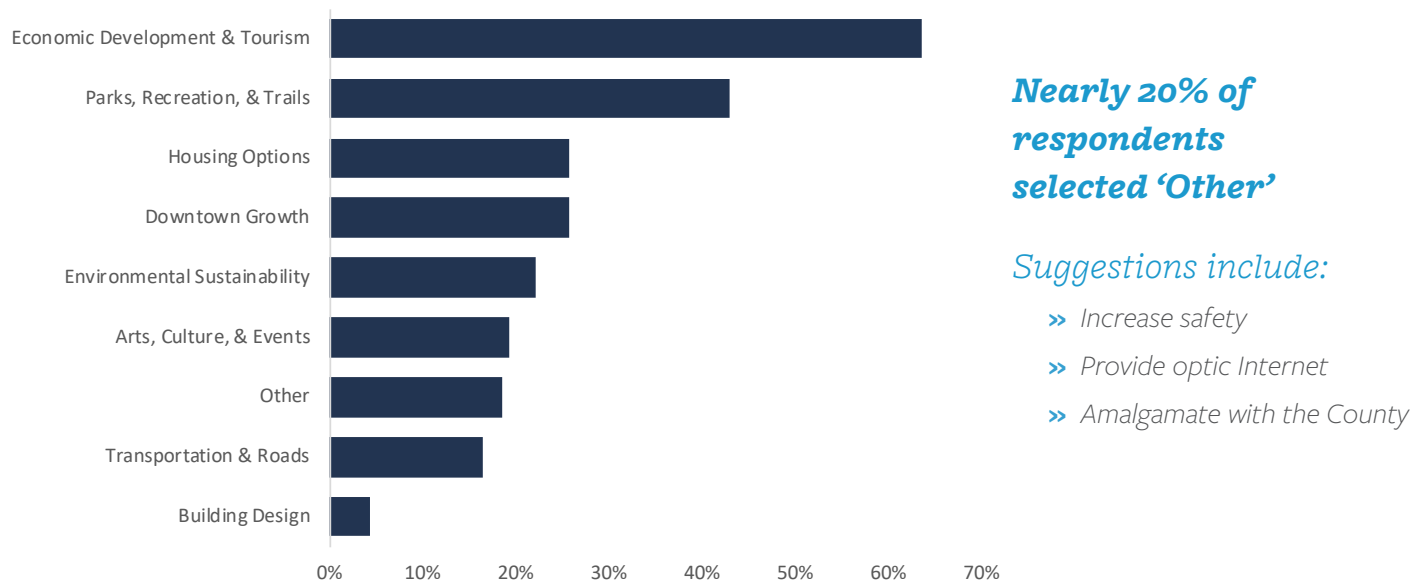


Figure 1: Priorities

### Growing, Diverse, & Vibrant

Many people identified the desire to see Rocky grow, both in terms of the economy and the population. Regarding the economy, residents would love to see more diverse and affordable shopping opportunities. For some, this includes big box retailers such as Wal Mart. Many people feel that this type of retail outlet would encourage more residents to do their shopping in town which would in turn benefit the smaller local businesses. There is also a strong desire for Rocky to diversify its economy and create new and reliable employment opportunities. This would help encourage younger residents to stay in town rather than take jobs elsewhere, which is the current trend. Additionally, many engagement participants support the growth of tourism and feel that Rocky is well positioned to become a significant tourism destination in Alberta.

### Safe, Inclusive, & Family-Friendly

With respect to quality of life, people are eager to see Rocky Mountain House expand its amenities while maintaining its small-town charm. Central to this is the desire for more family-focused amenities, activities, and programming. Many people recognize that Rocky's youth are its future and that if the town can't appeal to them they are unlikely to stay. Improving and creating new amenities for families and youth will encourage existing residents to stay and new residents to move to Rocky. Several people indicated the desire for Rocky to become a more welcoming, close-knit, and supportive community in the future. Ideas include more community activities designed to bring people together to achieve common goals, and educational opportunities that focus on strengthening the community and caring for both neighbours and the environment. Last, many people identified safety as a priority moving forward. This includes reducing the prevalence of theft and drug use in the community, and increasing transportation/mobility related safety.



## Family/Youth-Specific Recreation

Many people identified improvements to Rocky's recreation provisions in their vision for the future. This is particularly true for family/youth-specific activities, programming, and facilities. Ideas include improving the skate park, ball diamonds, and arena, and creating botanical gardens, lawn bowling, dog parks, disc golf, performing arts centre, and a bike park.

## Connected Park & Trail Network

For many, their vision for the future of Rocky Mountain House involves an improved network of parks and trails where residents can interact with nature, spend time outdoors, and meet their neighbours. There is a desire to connect gaps in the trail network and extend it to areas including the river, the rodeo grounds, and nearby provincial parks. In addition, people would like to see improved amenities throughout the parks and trails network, such as washrooms, lights, and playgrounds.

## Mobility Upgrades for all Modes

Transportation & mobility improvements is a key component of people's vision for the future. Several people suggested that Rocky should focus on improving walkability and cycling access. Engagement participants feel that not only does this contribute to the overall health of the community but is important when considering the aging population, as many can no longer drive. Safety is also an important consideration for many people when thinking about mobility in Rocky. Several intersections were identified as safety concerns. Some people would like to see a bypass road to keep highway traffic, particularly trucks, away from the centre of town. Other suggestions from engagement participants include:

- » *Lights at the intersection of 60 St and Hwy 11*
- » *Traffic circles on 52 Ave at 50 St, Main St, and 48 St*
- » *Make Hwy 11 pedestrian friendly*
- » *A well paved, marked trail to the Historic Site*





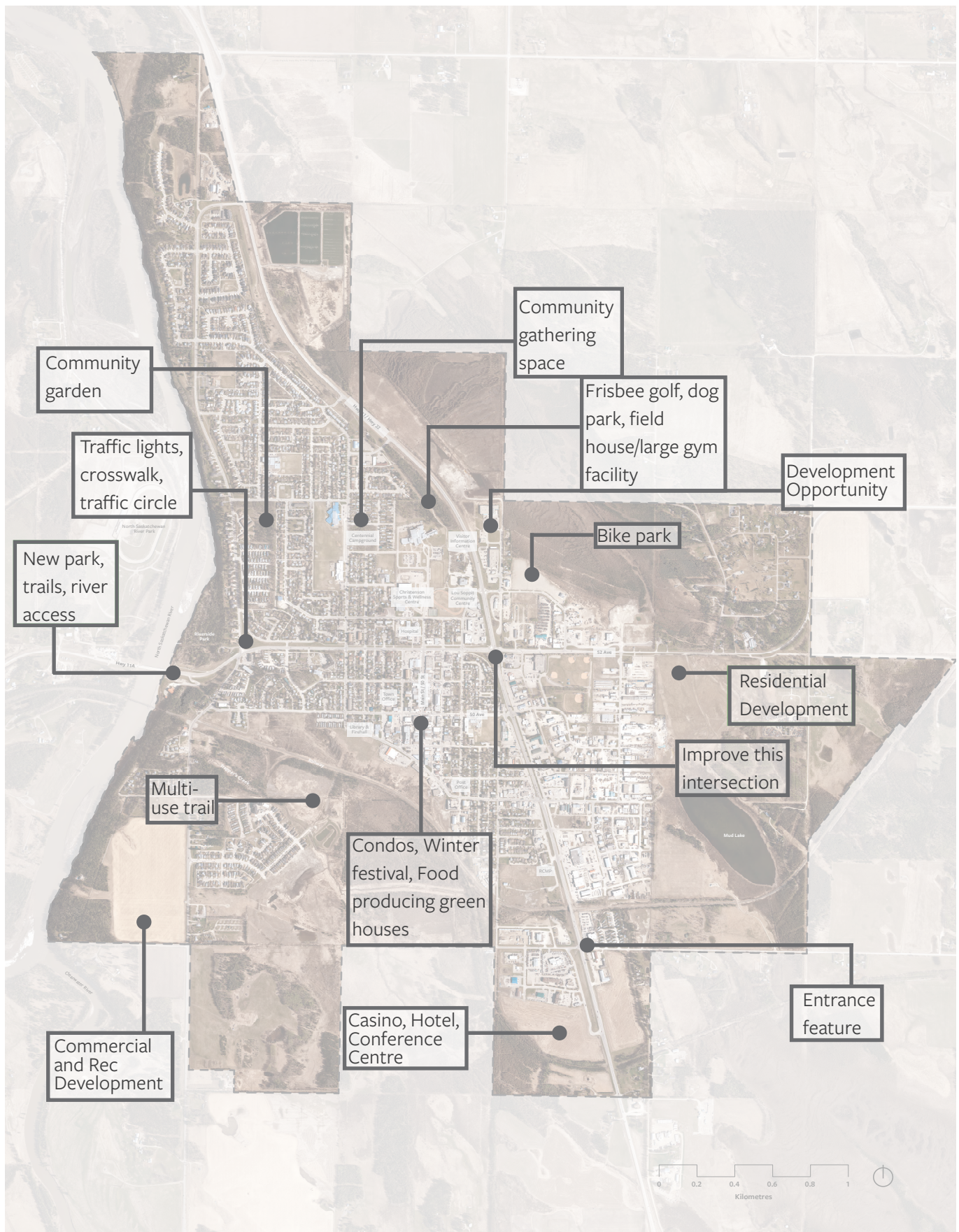


Figure 2: Location specific feedback



## Next Steps

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Stage 1 engagement process. Your feedback is essential to the development of the Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw. Stage 2 of the public engagement process will occur in September 2019, when the key directions in the draft MDP and proposed updates to the LUB will be ready for your review and feedback.

### Stay Informed

The project website will be your source of information throughout the project process. Visit [rockymtnhouse.com](http://rockymtnhouse.com) to:

- » Keep up-to-date with project milestones and Stage 2 engagement opportunities
- » Provide comments on an ongoing basis throughout the project

# Municipal Development Plan & Land Use Bylaw

## Stage 1: Imagine

## Stage 2: Create

## Stage 3: Review

JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Q1 2020
	Public Engagement		Public Engagement		Public Engagement		Council Approval

### What will our town look like in 20 years?

We want your input to guide how Rocky Mountain House grows, what development looks like, and how to best support the daily needs of residents, visitors, and businesses alike over the coming years.

### Next Steps

The feedback you share with us today will be used to inform the Vision and Guiding Principles for the Municipal Development Plan and assist in the update of the Land Use Bylaw.

Stay tuned to see the next stage of the documents at our next public engagement events in September 2019!

Website: [www.rockymtnhouse.com](http://www.rockymtnhouse.com)

Email: [LUB@rockymtnhouse.com](mailto:LUB@rockymtnhouse.com)

  @TownofRocky

### What is a Municipal Development Plan?

The MDP is the road map for long-term development of the town. It establishes a shared vision for the future and outlines a path for getting there.

This document covers:

- » Vision & Guiding Principles
- » Future Land Use Areas
- » Future Open Space
- » Future Transportation & Servicing
- » General policies for future development

### What is the Land Use Bylaw?

The LUB provides clear regulatory direction for land use and building to ensure successful implementation of the MDP. While the MDP provides the road map, the LUB provides the guidance to see it through by regulating use and development of land and buildings within the Town.

This document covers:

- » Zoning districts
- » Acceptable uses within each area
- » Required setbacks for development
- » Parking requirements
- » Process for development applications
- » Height and lot coverage restrictions



# Town Context

## Total Population

The town’s population decreased by 4.3% from 2011 to 2016.



## Demographics

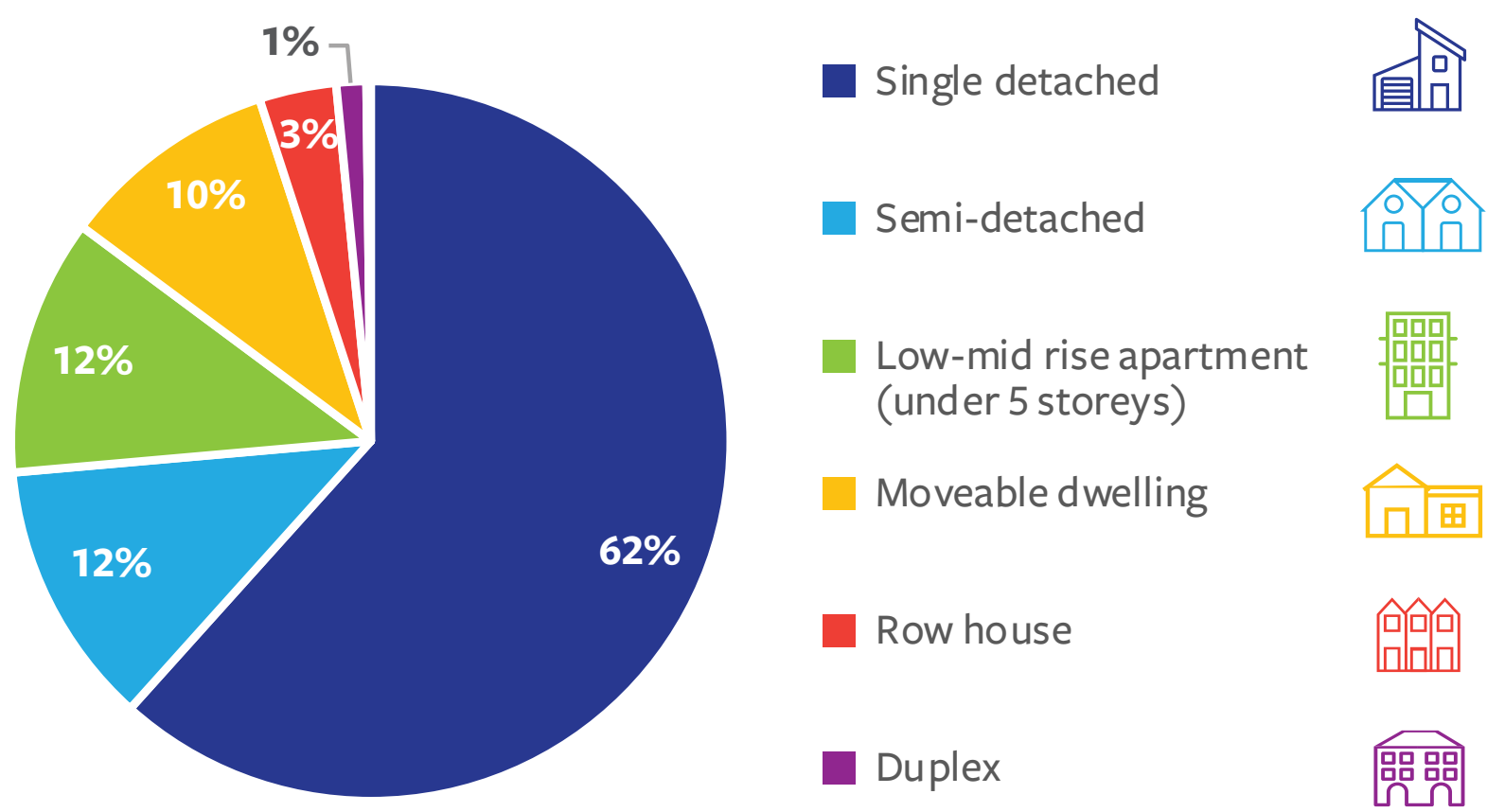
Rocky Mountain House has a relatively young working population with 59% of people being between 20-64 years old.



(Stats Canada 2016)

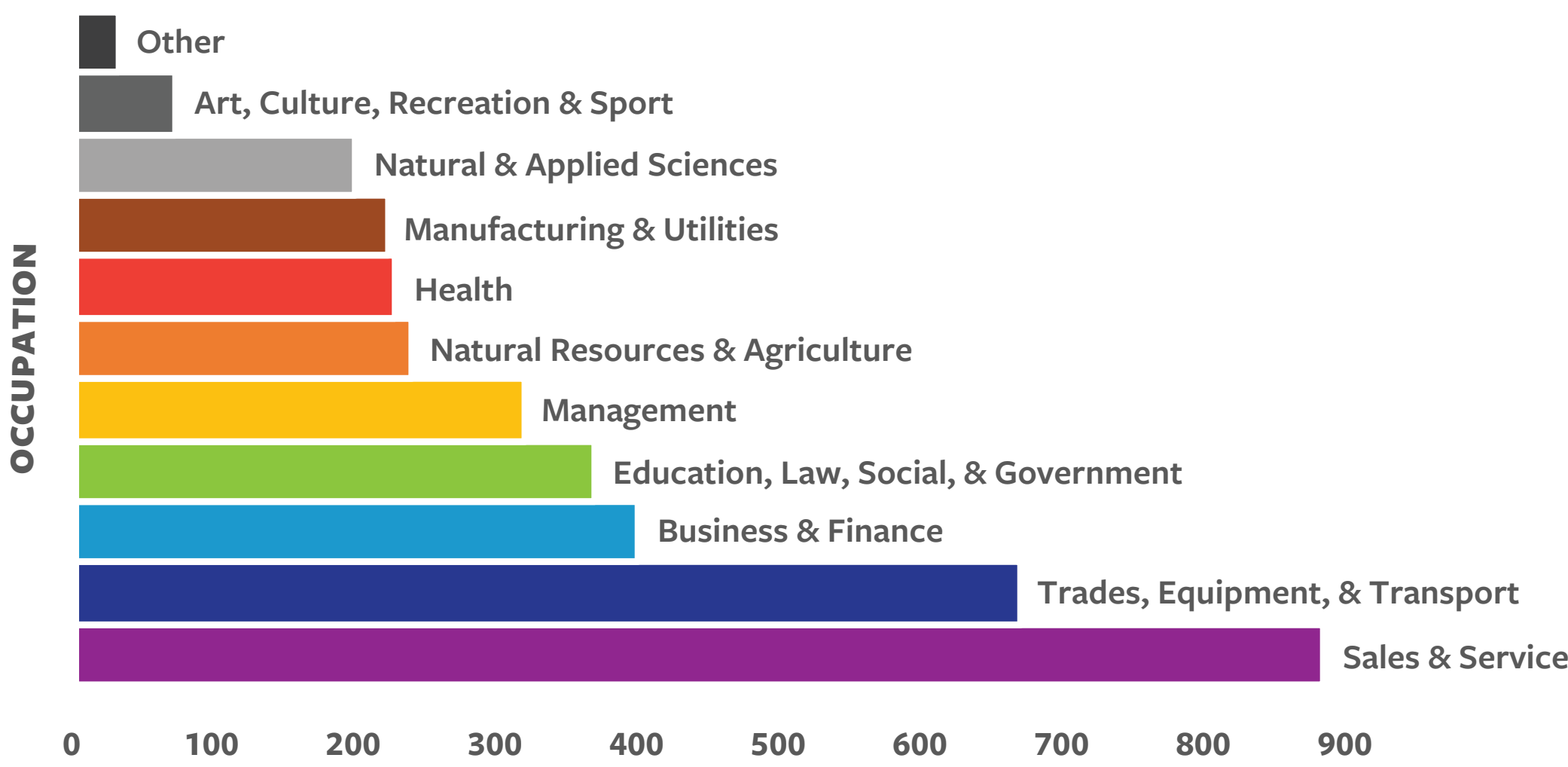
## Household Types

Most residents in Rocky Mountain House live in single detached homes.



## Employment

The sales and service industry makes up the highest percentage of jobs in Rocky Mountain House. This is closely followed by trades, equipment, and transport.





# Land Use | Current Conditions

## Strengths

### Downtown Public Realm Improvements

Recent effort and investment has gone into improving the public realm of downtown. This included storefront grants, streetscape enhancements, and a new Marketplace on Main.

### Regional Economic Centre

The town is positioned as a regional economic hub in the County.

### Scenic Mountain Location

The town is in a beautiful natural location, along the North Saskatchewan and Clearwater Rivers, which provides views and access to recreation.

### Developing Tourism Industry

There are many tourism attractions in and near town. New adventure companies and accommodations are becoming available to meet the needs of visitors.

### Education Opportunities

There are several post-secondary education sites in town.

### Regional Health Centre

The town has the main healthcare centre for the surrounding area with a new helipad.

## Challenges

### Population Loss

For the first time, the town experienced a decrease in population of 4.3 % between 2011 and 2015.

### River Barrier

The river and its steep embankment creates a barrier to development to the west.

### Undevelopable Wetlands

A large wetland complex creates a barrier to development in the northeast of town.

### Lack of Town Landmark

Strip commercial and industrial development does not create a welcoming entrance to town. The town also lost its community landmark, the Water Tower.

### Competing Highway Commercial

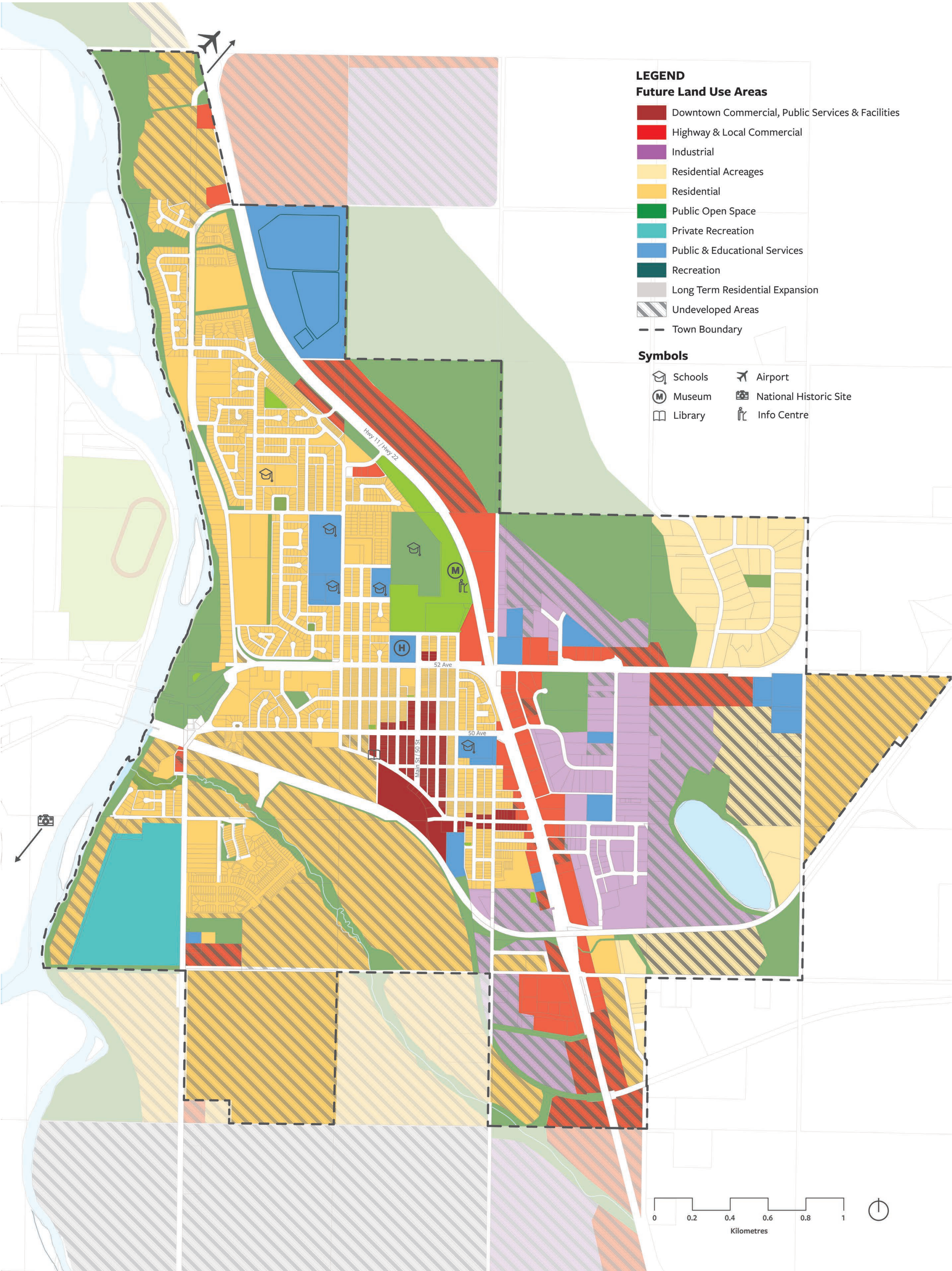
Large zoned areas for highway commercial development compete with downtown commercial development.

### Lack of Developable Town-Owned Land

The Town does not own a lot of land and the areas it does own are not developable.

### Railway Barrier

The railway is a barrier to development in the south of town. There are limited crossings.



Do you have anything else to share about the town’s land use?



# Open Space & Recreation | Current Conditions

## Strengths

### Recreation Facilities

The town boasts several recreation and community facilities, including the new Christenson Sports and Wellness Centre, the Lou Soppit Community Centre, and the Rocky Mountain House Public Library.

### North Saskatchewan River Park

Across the River from town is the newly developed North Saskatchewan River Park and Rodeo Grounds, which host many different events and derbies throughout the year.

### Network of Small Residential Parks

Most neighbourhoods in town have a small open space, which generally includes a playground.

### Access to Outdoor Recreation

Rocky Mountain House has amazing access to outdoor recreation including various water and land based pursuits. This is appealing for visitors and for people looking for an active lifestyle.

### 17 km of Trails

There are a series of trails throughout the north end of town.

## Challenges

### Limited River Access

Rocky Mountain House is located right beside the North Saskatchewan River, but it has very little access to it due to a steep embankment.

### Lack of Large Central Gathering Space

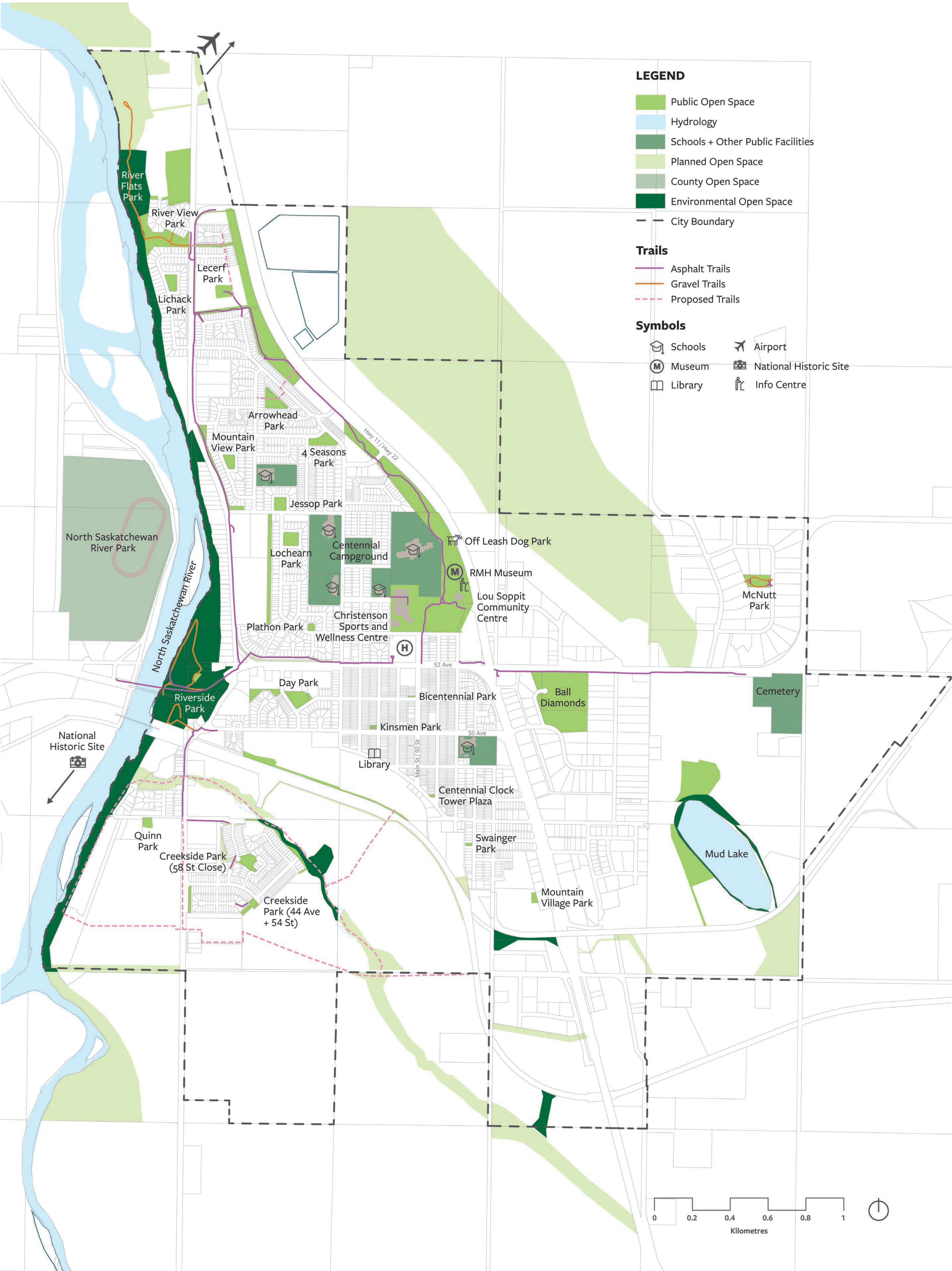
There is no large central gathering space for town-wide events and celebrations.

### Fragmented Trail Network

There is a partial trail network through town and plans for expansion, but there is a need for increased pedestrian connectivity throughout town.

### Mud Lake Development Pressure

There is potential for conflict between conserving mud lake and allowing development around it.



Do you have anything else to share about the town’s open space or recreation?



# Transportation & Servicing | Current Conditions

## Strengths

### High Quality Water

Rocky Mountain House has high quality water, with capacity to serve up to 11,250 people.

### RMH Airport

The town is located 5.6 km from the Rocky Mountain House Airport, which has a 5513 foot runway.

### Compact Downtown Street Grid

Downtown has a tight-knit street grid, meaning it has short blocks and frequent intersections. This is great for walkability and provides good network connectivity.

### Proximity to International Airports

The town is close to both Edmonton and Calgary International Airports.

### Connected by Two Highways

The town is well connected by the Provincial highway network. Highway 11 heads west to Banff and Jasper National Parks, and Highway 22 heads north and south to Edmonton and Calgary respectively.

## Challenges

### Lack of Regional Bus Connection

There is no longer any commercial bus service connecting the town to nearby population centres.

### Curvilinear Roads

Curvilinear roads can cause challenges for servicing and walkability, as they lead to a lack of connectivity in the transportation network.

### Oil Wells & Pipelines

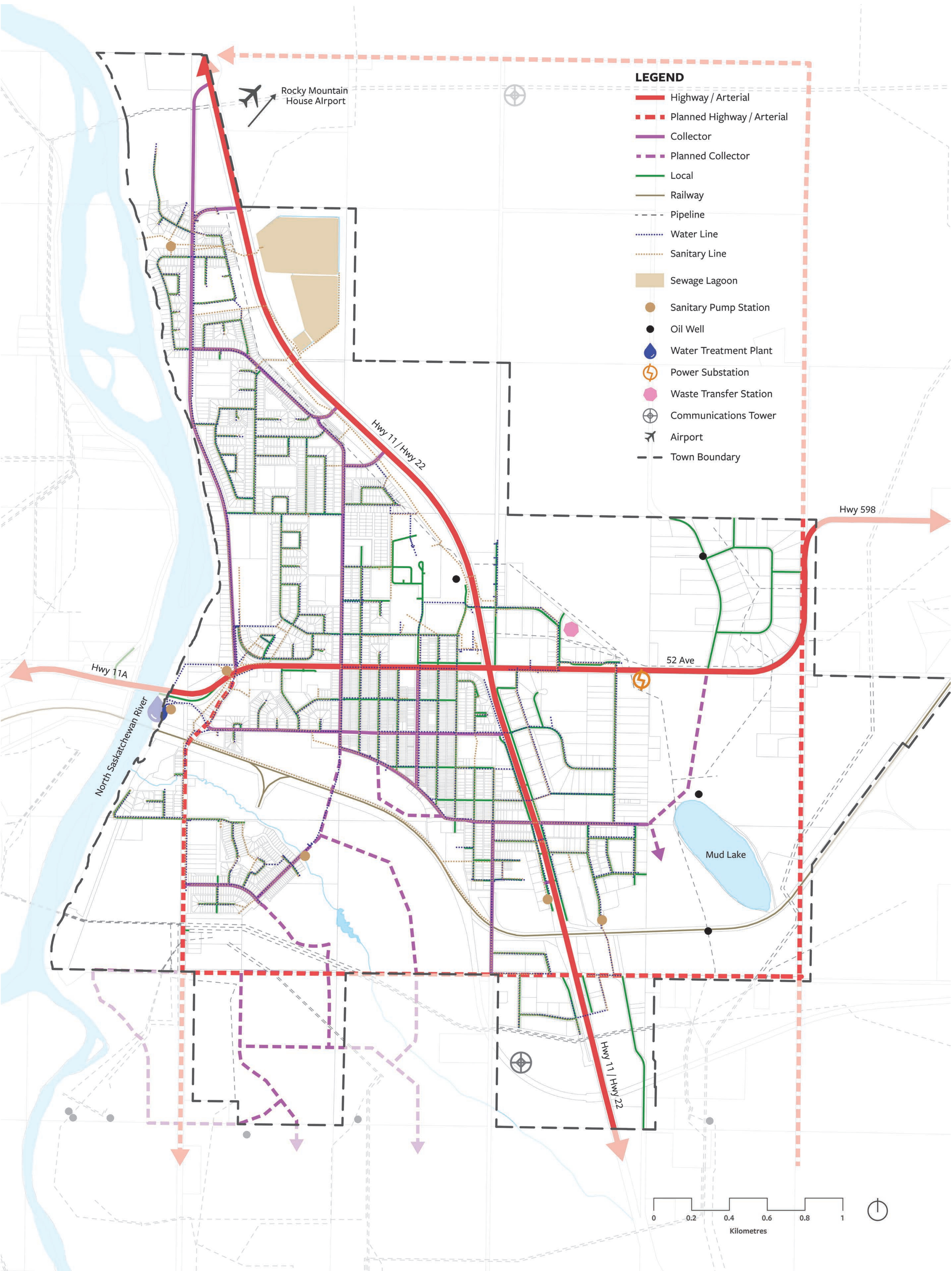
Oil wells, pipelines, and other utility structures require development setbacks, which limits growth around them.

### Lack of Rail Access

There are no rail spurs to allow rail access to the town's industrial areas.

### Few Highway 22 Access Points

There are few roads connecting highway 22 into the heart of town.



Do you have anything else to share about transportation and servicing in the town?



# What do you like about living in Rocky Mountain House?

What is the best thing about living in this town? What are the “must-sees”? What makes Rocky Mountain House special?

Share your thoughts below!



# What are the challenges Rocky Mountain House is facing?

Is there anything you wish Rocky Mountain House had or was improved? What issues have you encountered with existing Town policies or regulations?

Share your thoughts below!

# What do you think is most important to consider when planning the town's future?

↓ Place a dot next to the three topics that you feel are most important.

↓ Place a sticky note here to explain.

Arts, Culture, & Events	
Downtown Growth	
Environmental Sustainability	
Parks, Recreation, & Trails	
Economic Development & Tourism	
Housing Options	
Building Design	
Transportation & Roads	
Other	

# What is your vision for Rocky Mountain House in the next 20 years?

What does it look like? How should we grow? What is the identity of our town?  
Share your thoughts on a sticker and post it here!

The feedback you share with us today will be used to develop the Town's  
Municipal Development Plan and update the Land Use Bylaw.

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### What is the Land Use Bylaw?

The LUB provides clear regulatory direction for land use and building (such as zoning, parking requirements, and height restrictions) to ensure successful implementation of the MDP.

### Take the Online Survey

Want to provide more feedback?  
Visit the project website or scan the QR code with your phone to complete the online survey.



### Next Steps

Stay tuned to see the next stage of the plans at our next public engagement events in September 2019!

**Website:** [www.rockymtnhouse.com](http://www.rockymtnhouse.com)

**Email:** [LUB@rockymtnhouse.com](mailto:LUB@rockymtnhouse.com)

  [@TownofRocky](https://twitter.com/TownofRocky)





# Share your Rocky Mountain House.

Write your thoughts on a sticker and place it on the map.

- I like...
- This is a challenge because...
- I wish we had...

