

PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT

# REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

*Working together for a more resilient region*

## What We Heard Report Phase 1 & 2

AUGUST 2024



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# 1. Project Background

This report provides an overview of public engagement results for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Peace River Regional District’s (PRRD) Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), which is currently under development. Taking place between September 2023 and August 2024, the first two phases of RGS engagement focused on sharing information about the RGS project and providing an opportunity for community members to share their concerns, ideas, and suggestions for how the PRRD could collaboratively plan for the future of the Regional District.

The RGS is the first project of its kind that the PRRD has undertaken and will be the first RGS in northern B.C. when completed. A regional growth strategy is a long-range, high-level plan that will help the PRRD and member communities (City of Dawson Creek, City of Fort St. John, District of Taylor, District of Chetwynd, District of Hudson’s Hope, District of Tumbler Ridge, and Village of Pouce Coupe) better understand and prepare for the potential changes that can be expected over the next 20 years due to a growing population, new service demands, the regional economy, and a changing climate.

Enabled through the provincial *Local Government Act*, an RGS is prepared and enacted by a regional district with the involvement of its member municipalities. The province leaves the process of preparing an RGS largely up to each region, so the PRRD’s will be “made in the Peace River region.”

As a high-level document, the RGS will include broad, region-wide policy goals on several regional issues and regional planning considerations, including:

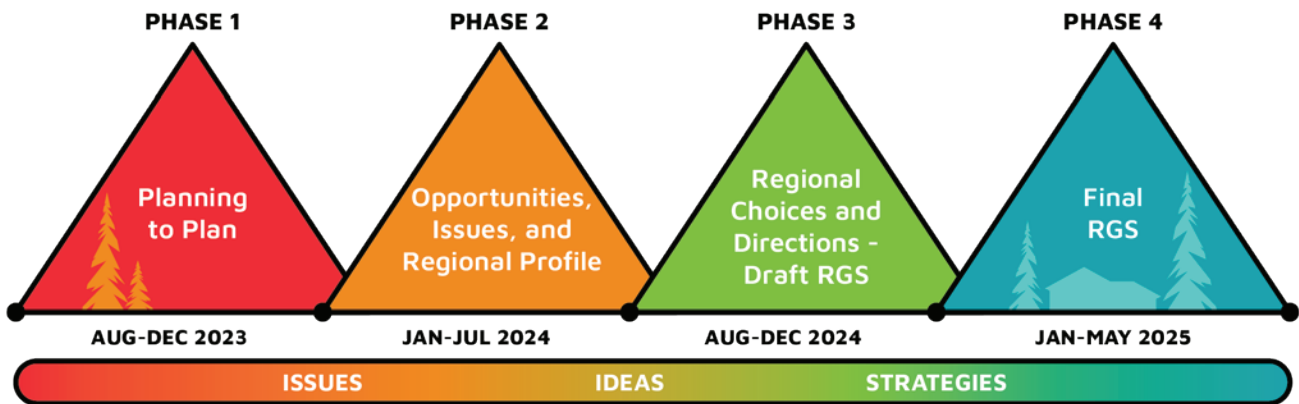
- Regional economy
- Housing and development
- Servicing and Infrastructure
- Parks and natural areas
- Environmental protection
- Agriculture and food security
- Health, safety, and resilience

Like all regional growth strategies in the province, PRRD’s **will not** regulate land use. Land use and development are regulated by Official Community Plans, Zoning Bylaws, and building permit requirements where they exist in our region.

This is the PRRD’s first RGS. The final product will be a high-level document that will support more coordinated region-wide planning and help us better understand the region, including its shared opportunities and challenges.

The project began in August 2023 and will continue until May 2025.

**FIGURE:** Project Timeline



## 1.1 ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The engagement process is aimed to involve a wide range of residents and interest groups in the planning process. Engagement activities and tactics were customized to align with the needs and unique character of the region. This included both targeted engagement (e.g., stakeholder sessions, surveys) as well as broader region-wide outreach, communications, and engagement.

Engagement and outreach were coordinated with the Steering Committee, which was established for this project, and with input from internal PRRD departments. Since the RGS is a new initiative with no precedent for the PRRD, the engagement process was designed to raise awareness and introduce the RGS process to the public, member municipalities, stakeholders, and First Nations in the region. As illustrated in the next figure, insights generated from engagement are among several important sources of information for the RGS. Information and ideas from these streams interact, leading to learning, shared insights, and the emergence of new ideas throughout the process. No single input, comment, or activity determines the outcome.

Over the past year, public engagement has included in-person activities such as open houses and online engagement through PRRD's Have Your Say platform. Communications have included both print and digital products, the utilization of existing PRRD social media channels, and outreach to traditional media outlets in the region, such as advertisements in magazines, newspapers, and on the radio.

The broad goals of engagement are to:

- Create awareness of the RGS, its function, and the rationale for the PRRD undertaking it.
- Provide various opportunities for engagement through different platforms, including in-person and online.
- Strengthen relationships among PRRD communities and other groups.
- Gather comments and feedback on the RGS vision and directions.
- Summarize information obtained during engagement for presentation to the PRRD Board.

**FIGURE:** Engagement streams

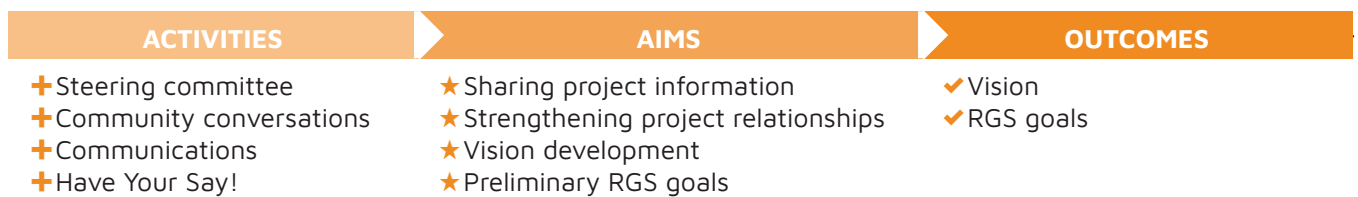


**FIGURE:** Engagement Activities, Aims, and Outcomes

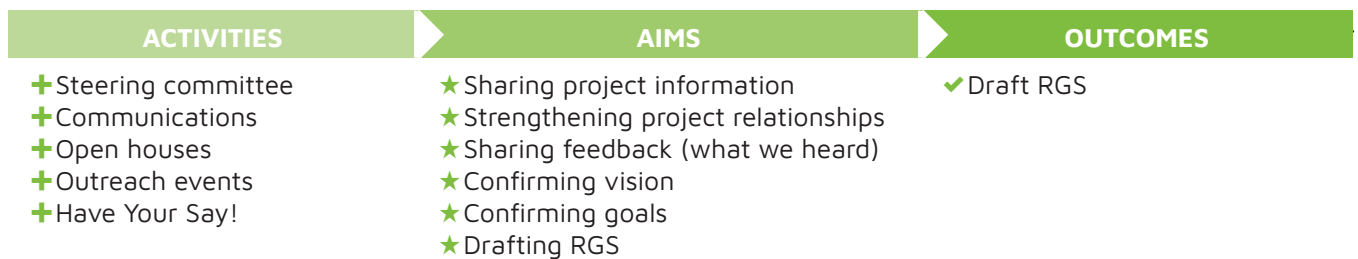
**PHASE 1: PLANNING TO PLAN**



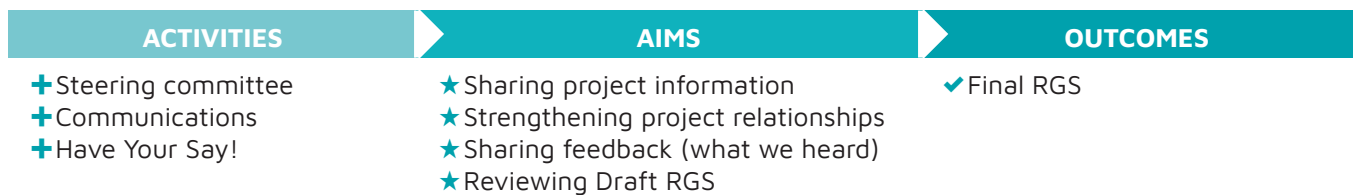
**PHASE 2: OPPORTUNITIES, ISSUES, AND REGIONAL PROFILE**



**PHASE 3: CHOICES AND DIRECTIONS – DRAFT REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY**



**PHASE 4: FINAL REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY**



## 1.2 STEERING COMMITTEE

A Steering Committee was formed at the start of the project and was composed of representatives from member municipalities, PRRD staff, and representatives from key provincial ministries and agencies, including the Agricultural Land Commission, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Northern Health. First Nation communities in the PRRD were also invited to participate in the Steering Committee. Doig River First Nation currently participates on the RGS Steering Committee.

The purpose of the Steering Committee is to:

- Provide input at key project milestones and supported two-way communication between the project team, PRRD communities, and the broader public.
- Help share and amplify project communications with their own networks to increase engagement and input.
- Provide input on how to best engage with any groups, stakeholders, or potential project collaborators or identify groups that have been missed.
- Provide local-level insights
- Support the development of a regional vision and policy areas.
- Support the development of the draft RGS.

With a minimum of six meetings planned with the Steering Committee, the group met three times over Phase 1 and 2, including an in-person meeting in June.

## 1.3 OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS OVERVIEW

### Have Your Say PRRD - Project Webpage

The PRRD's engagement 'Have Your Say' webpage is the principal online information hub for the project and includes background information, a timeline, relevant documents and resources, and information on in-person engagement activities. The site also hosts survey links and a photo gallery of engagement events.

#### 1.3.1 Communications

Phase 1 and 2 communications aimed to share information about the RGS, share project information, direct residents and project stakeholders to the Have Your Say PRRD project page, and promote engagement opportunities (e.g., surveys, community workbooks, open houses). Communication channels included the following.

#### Social media

Regular social media updates were posted on existing PRRD accounts, such as the PRRD's official Facebook page, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram.

#### Press releases and advertising

Media outlets, such as the Alaska Highway News, Energetic City, Chetwynd Coffee Talk, and Northern Horizon, were engaged through newspaper and digital press releases. Project ads were published for the first and second project surveys and to promote the first round of in-person engagement in June.

**FIGURE:** Have Your Say PRRD - RGS project webpage



### Radio Ads

A radio ad was developed and shared on Moose FM to introduce the RGS project and direct listeners to the Have Your Say website.

### Print materials

A range of project print materials were produced and distributed throughout the region and published on the Have Your Say webpage. The materials included a project postcard that was distributed to households throughout the region, a two-page RGS overview pamphlet, a FAQ, and a series of fact sheets on topics identified as important by residents during Phase 1 outreach.

### Email

The PRRD developed an initial email contact list that included community groups, business and industry groups, agricultural organizations, First Nations, and organizations like the School Districts and Chambers of Commerce. Interested parties could also reach out through the Have Your Say webpage or directly to PRRD to be added to the email list. Project updates and information materials are shared with the list through regular email blasts.

### 1.3.2 Outreach and Engagement

Both phase 1 and 2 outreach and engagement sought input on regional planning concerns and opportunities, the development of a vision statement to guide the RGS, and regional planning goals and directions for the RGS to consider.

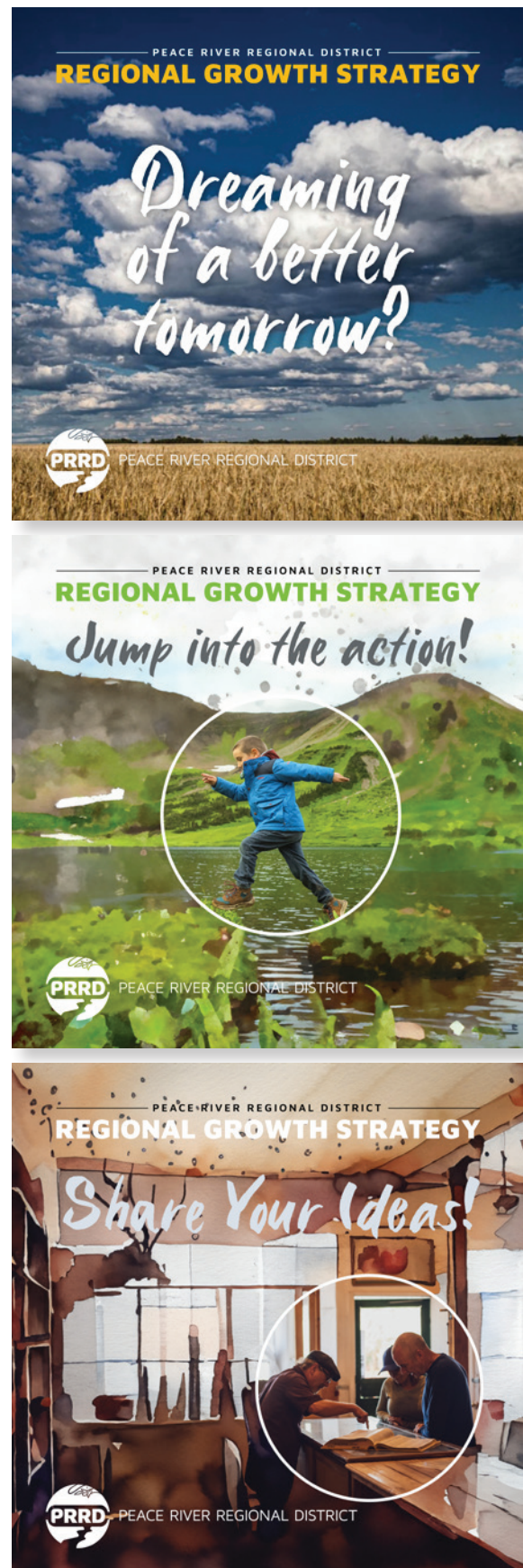
### IdeaShare online engagement

IdeaShare is an online engagement platform that allows people to generate, capture, and review crowd-sourced ideas. This tool was used at the start of the RGS to crowdsource shared regional planning issues and concerns and to support some preliminary prioritization of community issues through participants' ratings of each other's ideas. IdeaShare is accessible by smartphone, tablet, or computer.

### Surveys and Community Workbooks

Both project phases included surveys. Surveys were delivered online, while paper copies were made available for pick-up at PRRD member municipality offices and PRRD offices in Fort St. John and Dawson Creek. Completed paper surveys could be dropped off at PRRD offices or scanned and emailed to the PRRD.

FIGURE: Social Media Posts



## Open Houses and Pop-ups

Phase 2 engagement featured one round of in-person, drop-in open houses in Fort St. John, Hudson’s Hope, Tumbler Ridge, and Dawson Creek. The interactive events followed the same format, with residents invited through print, radio, and social media advertisements and through direct notices using the project email list. Participants were invited to learn about the project, engage with project posters, and to provide direct input to project consultants and PRRD staff who attended the events.

Two additional open houses were organized around the Fort St. John Farmers Market and the Chetwynd Chainsaw Carving competition. The pop-up open houses featured the same information and materials as the community open houses but looked to take advantage of the two popular community events.

## Stakeholder sessions

Phase 2 engagement featured two stakeholder sessions. Participants were invited directly and organized around two general themes – regional economy and agriculture. The two sessions were held in Fort St. John and Dawson Creek.

The overview graphic on the following page summarizes Phase 1 and 2 communications and outreach between September 2023 and July 2024.

FIGURE: Northern Horizon ad

PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT

# REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

*Our Home. Our Future. Our Plan.*

**WHAT?**  
*We have been working on developing our first Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) for the region. It's a long-range, high-level plan that will help us better understand and prepare for the potential changes we can expect over the next twenty years, including a growing population, new service demands, the regional economy, and a changing climate.*

**WHEN?**  
 From June 8th until 11th, 2024, the PRRD staff and the supporting consultant team will be travelling between communities throughout the Region. We will be hosting community open houses and attending events within the Region, like the Chetwynd Chainsaw Carving Competition and Fort St. John Farmers Market.

**We invite you to stop by one of our events to say hello to the team and to share your thoughts about the future of the Region!**

DATE	LOCATION
Saturday, June 8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>FORT ST. JOHN</b> 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM, Fort St. John Farmers Market Festival Plaza, 96th Avenue & 100 Street
	<b>FORT ST. JOHN</b> 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM, Pomeroy Sport Centre 9324 96 Street, Room: 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor Meeting Room
Sunday, June 9 <sup>th</sup>	<b>CHETWYND</b> 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM, Chetwynd Chainsaw Carving Competition 2005 John Hart Way
	<b>TUMBLER RIDGE</b> 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM, Tumbler Ridge Community Centre 340 Front Street, Room: #5
Monday, June 10 <sup>th</sup>	<b>HUDSON'S HOPE</b> 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM, Hudson's Hope Community Hall 9905 Dudley Drive
Tuesday, June 11 <sup>th</sup>	<b>DAWSON CREEK</b> 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM, Calvin Kruk Centre 10401 10 Street

 For more information, to see the work that we have done so far, and to see how else to get involved, visit us using the QR code, or visit the project information webpage at [haveyoursay.prrd.bc.ca/regional-growth-strategy](https://haveyoursay.prrd.bc.ca/regional-growth-strategy) or email us at [RGS@prrd.bc.ca](mailto:RGS@prrd.bc.ca)





# PRRD REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

## Engagement and Communications Overview



### PROJECT OPEN HOUSES

Fort St. John, Dawson Creek,  
Hudson's Hope, Tumbler Ridge



### COMMUNITY POP-UPS

Fort St. John Farmers Market  
and Chetwynd Chainsaw  
Carving Competition



### IN-PERSON and SURVEY INTERACTIONS



**4** DAYS  
of in-person  
events



**2**  
RADIO ADS



**20+**  
SOCIAL MEDIA  
POSTS



### COMMUNITY SURVEYS



### IDEASHARE WEB SURVEY



**1800**  
VISITS to HAVE YOUR  
SAY PRRD  
project website



**4450**  
PROJECT  
POSTCARDS  
delivered across  
the region



### STAKEHOLDER SESSIONS



### PRESS RELEASES



### STEERING COMMITTEE meetings



### FACT SHEETS on regional issues



### PROJECT NEWSLETTERS and info pamphlets

## 2. What We Heard – Phase 1 and 2

The following section summarizes common and consistent themes from both phases of outreach and engagement.

### 2.1 COMMON THEMES – PHASE 1

Several common and consistent themes emerged in Phase 1. For more detailed feedback, see Section 3 – What We Heard Phase 1.

#### Rural character and voice

- The PRRD’s rural and agricultural character is important and needs to be preserved.
- Rural communities and agricultural producers need to be engaged in PRRD planning and reflected in regional plans and strategies.
- Recognize and celebrate the independent nature of residents.

#### Quality of life and affordability

- Expanding upon amenities, tourism, and recreation opportunities is important to increase the quality of life for all ages.
- Affordability is an issue within the PRRD, especially when it comes to succession planning and an aging population.
- There is a desire to attract young people and young families to the region and an understanding that accessible health care, education, and recreation are all important in attracting new residents and retaining current ones.
- Emergency services and healthcare have room for improvement to fill gaps in service availability.
- People face affordability, food security, and housing struggles within the PRRD, especially enabling people to age in place and for families.

#### Regional economy

- Support entrepreneurs and small businesses/producers to help build a more resilient regional economy.
- Encourage economic growth and stability by supporting local businesses, producers, and industry.
- Support rural communities and agricultural producers, as they are the backbone of the PRRD.

#### Regional services and communications

- Communications can be improved to support emergency response, connectivity, and participation in PRRD initiatives.
- Expand transportation networks and infrastructure to increase regional connectivity, support residents’ transportation needs, and better emergency response.
- Collaboration and partnerships should be fostered and encouraged across communities, businesses, and organizations.

#### Climate

- Extreme weather events and climate are negatively impacting communities (drought, wildfire, wildfire smoke, flooding).
- Water shortages and drought are being felt by residents, especially when it comes to fires and expanding water servicing.

## 2.2 COMMON THEMES – PHASE 2

Several common and consistent themes emerged in Phase 1. For more detailed feedback, see Section 4 – What We Heard Phase 2.

- **Building local capacity and resiliency** will help create a stronger PRRD in the future.
- **Affordability and affordable housing availability** are two factors impacting PRRD residents’ lives.
- **Climate change and extreme weather events** are disrupting and changing normal patterns of life within the PRRD, impacting agriculture, businesses, tourism, and transportation networks.
- **Transportation infrastructure** can be improved to support quality of life and emergency response.
- **Collaboration, relationship-building, and trust-building** are critical at the local level and with regional partners, outside agencies, and government bodies.
- **Water conservation, access, and management** are priorities in the PRRD that require additional study, planning, and action.
- **There is a desire for more rural and agricultural presence and inclusion** in PRRD initiatives, including on the RGS.
- **Food security** is an important factor that needs to be prioritized, both within the PRRD and networks of producers in and outside the region.
- **Developing and expanding amenities** will draw people and families to the region and support the quality of life for residents.

## 2.3 EMERGING DIRECTIONS – PHASE 1 AND 2

The sentiments from residents and respondents from engagement activities from Phase 1 to Phase 2 remained quite similar and informed changes to the RGS vision and policy areas to be developed in the next phase of work.

### 2.3.1 Regional Vision

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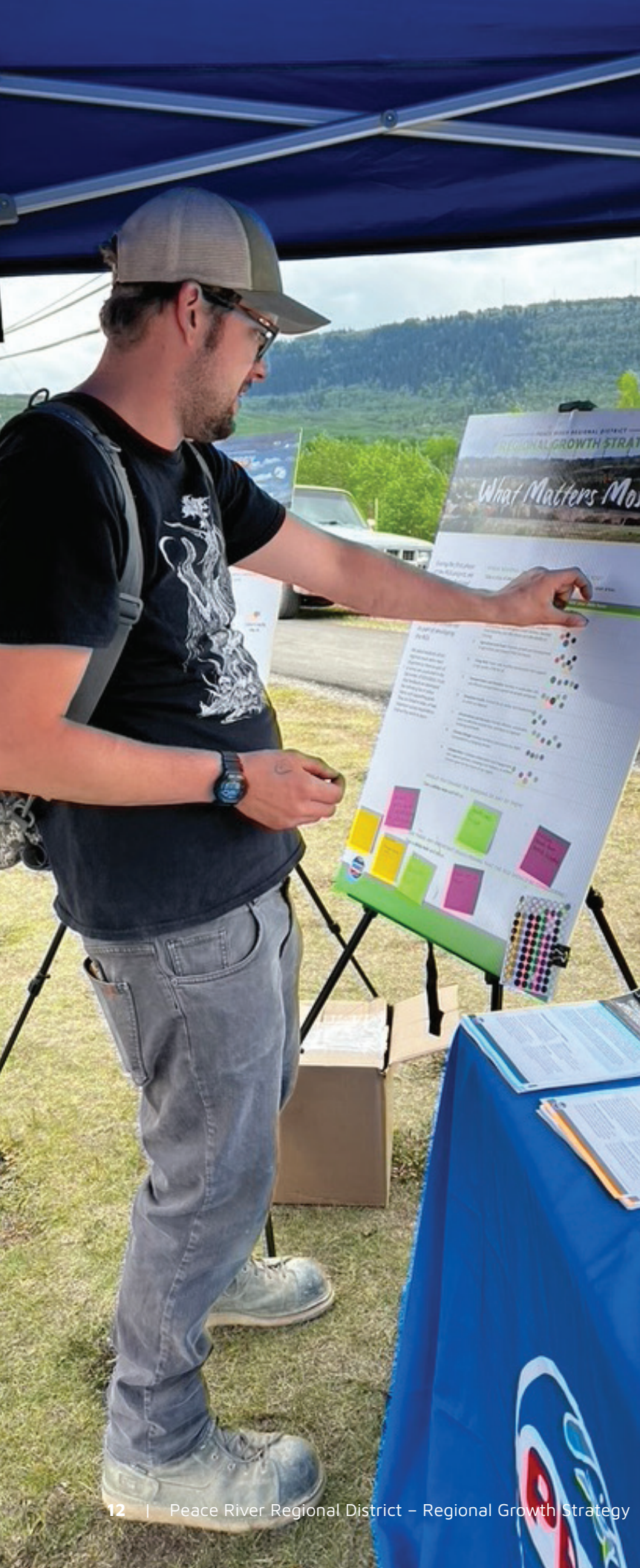
Initial engagement used a vision statement developed for the PRRD Board’s 2023 Strategic Plan. While support for the Board vision was quite high in Survey 1 (58% of respondents thought it was “Good” and 21% thought it was “OK”), the vision statement was refined and revised based on Phase 1 feedback.

Support for the Board vision was quite high in the second survey and community workbook (52% of respondents thought it was “Good” and 29% thought it was “OK”) and even higher in in-person events (69% of open house and pop-up events participants thought it was “Good” and 30% thought it was “OK”).

There was a growing sentiment that the vision statement could be further revised to better highlight the distinctive character of the PRRD, emphasizing its innovative and resilient nature. There were shared sentiments between Phase 1 and Phase 2 that underscored the significance of including all residents without singling out specific groups.

A notable divide persists regarding whether First Nations should have greater representation in the vision or less.

Across both phases of engagement, there was consistent and shared feedback that the vision was generally overly lengthy and could be simplified and shortened further.



### 2.3.2 Regional Issues

Between Phase 1 and Phase 2, the ranking of regional issue policy areas changed. This change may have been a result of renaming the issue areas. Economic Strength and Resiliency (previously labelled as Regional Economy in Phase 1) was the top-ranked regional issue in both phases. Furthermore, Agriculture and Food (formerly known as Agriculture and Food Security in Phase 1) and Living Well (previously categorized as Public Health and Safety in Phase 1) were among the top 4. This emphasizes that these issue areas matter deeply to residents of the PRRD.

Infrastructure and Services rose from the second least favoured topic to third (ranked 7th to 3rd). Changing the name from 'Regional District Services' to 'Infrastructure and Services' likely resonated with residents more, as many people shared the desire to increase local service availability, which would bring regional wellbeing. Participants' sentiments echoed that idea by asserting that infrastructure and services are connected to many other issue areas within the RGS. Improving and expanding infrastructure and services, like roads, water supply, and waste management, will also improve outcomes in other areas of the RGS, like living well, transportation and mobility, and community building.

# 3. What We Heard – Phase 1

This section provides a more detailed breakdown of community input received during Phase 1. The first phase of the project took place from August until December 2023. Engagement opportunities included an initial IdeaShare online engagement and an introductory community survey.

## 3.1 IDEASHARE

IdeaShare is an online engagement platform that allows people to generate, capture, and review crowd-sourced ideas. This tool was used at the start of the RGS to crowdsource a wide variety of ideas and enable preliminary prioritization through participants' ratings of each other's ideas. IdeaShare is accessible by smartphone, tablet, or computer.

The question posted on IdeaShare asked, "What would help keep the Peace River Regional District a diverse, abundant, and liveable place?" A total of 16 people participated by leaving comments and/or rating others' comments out of five.

A summary of comments is provided with the top-rated comments at the top.

- The rural character of the PRRD must be preserved.
- Ensuring the participation of rural residents and agricultural producers in the RGS (and other PRRD planning) will help protect and preserve the region's important rural character.
- Our communities are being impacted harder by extreme weather events.
- Highways and road access need to be improved, both for safety reasons and to improve connections between communities and residents.
- Attracting young families to the region will help bring positive growth and revitalize communities.

## 3.2 INTRODUCTORY SURVEY

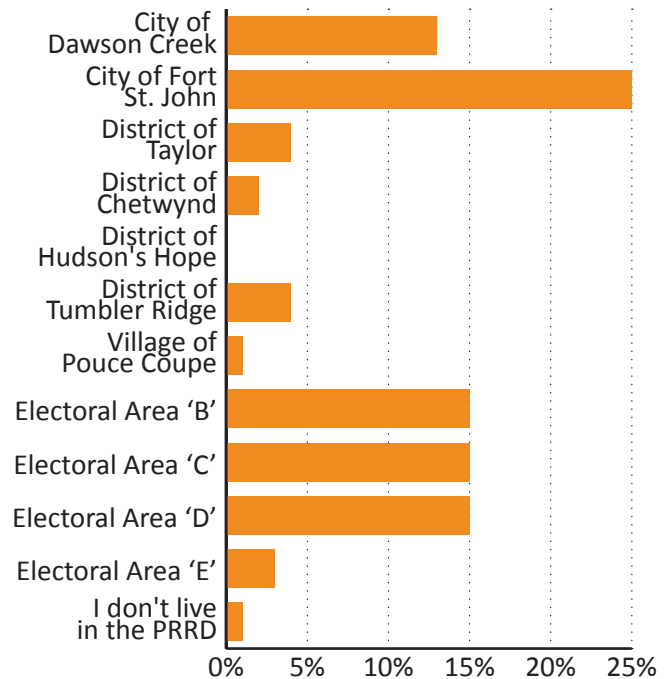
A short, introductory five-question online survey was developed and promoted through project communications. The survey sought initial feedback on using an existing vision from the PRRD Board's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan), along with feedback on regional planning issues for the RGS to consider.

Paper copies were also distributed to key community locations (e.g., Dawson Creek Municipal Library, Fort St. John Public Library, Chetwynd Public Library, Taylor Community Services Hub, and PRRD regional offices) where residents could pick up and drop off completed surveys.

The survey went live on November 17, 2023, and closed on February 1, 2024. Approximately 303 responses were received during that time.

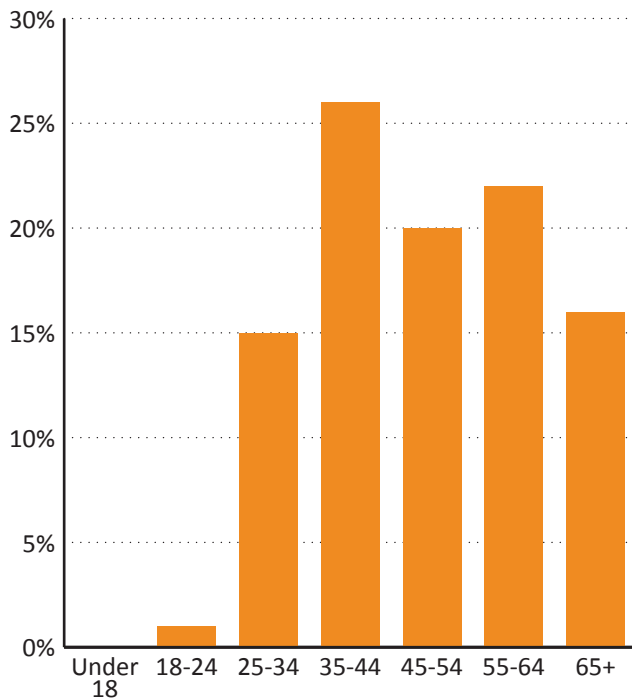
Almost 40% of respondents were located in the cities of Fort St. John (25%) or Dawson Creek (13%), while almost half (45%) of respondents came from Electoral Areas B, C, and D.

**FIGURE:** Survey respondents



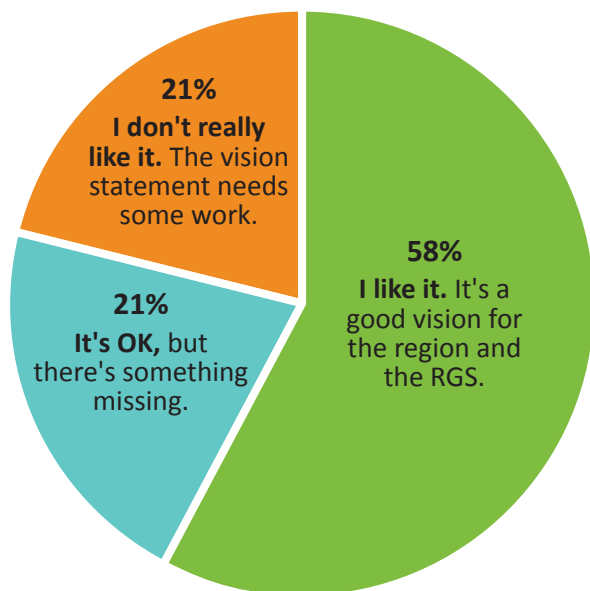
Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents were between 35 and 64 years old, with the highest number of respondents (26%) aged between 35 and 44.

**FIGURE: Average age of respondents**



Nearly 60 percent of respondents liked the vision from the 2023-2026 PRRD Strategic Plan.

**FIGURE: Regional Vision**



Some common feedback from those who responded with “it’s OK” or “I don’t really like it” included:

- Rural communities and agriculture need to be added.
- Environmental protection needs to be added.
- It should include something about addressing the housing crisis and affordability challenges.
- Economic development, including oil and gas, and agriculture, should be included.
- Promote collaboration, partnerships, community involvement, community building and relationships.
- Improving emergency services and safety should be added.
- Inclusion of First Nations perspectives.
- Too much mention of climate change.
- More information needed on “partners” – who are they?
- Addressing the needs of all age groups.
- A reduction of government oversight should be mentioned.
- A bit too vague and should have a direction of preference (what we are working towards), too lengthy

Respondents were asked to rank the top four regional issues that were most important to them from a list provided in the survey. The four bolded issues were clearly prioritized above the bottom four.

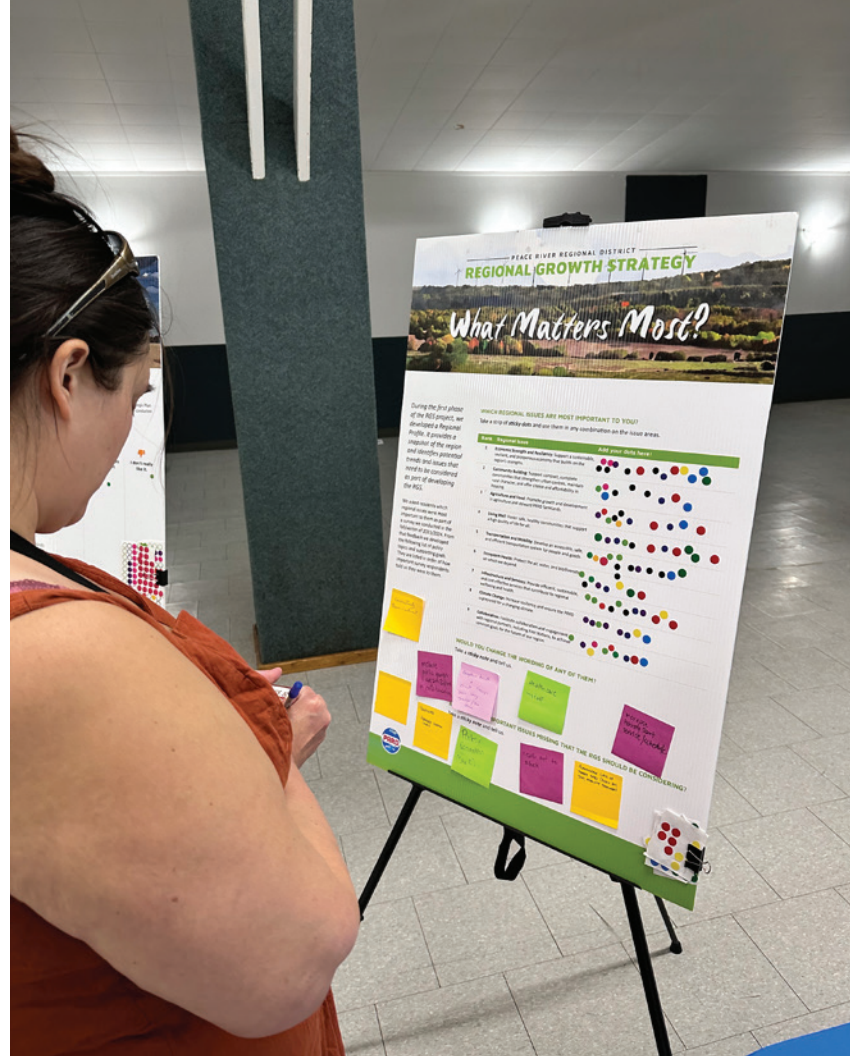
- 1. Regional Economy**
- 2. Housing and Affordability**
- 3. Agriculture and Food Security**
- 4. Public Health and Safety**
5. Transportation
6. Parks and Natural Areas
7. Regional District Services
8. Climate Change and Resilience

Respondents could also suggest any missing issues areas for the RGS to include. Their suggestions included:

- Agriculture and food security.
- Healthcare services (doctors and nurses)
- Affordable housing, especially for seniors

Respondents had clear suggestions for addressing the regional issues they identified as important.

- Engagement and communications – transparency and clear communication when consulting with residents
- Advocacy – healthcare, transportation, oil & gas management (water)
- Agriculture – processing and value-added, small lot/farms
- Support farmers to protect agricultural land
- Have more medical professionals and better access to healthcare facilities
- Protect natural resources
- Make it easier to subdivide land
- Promote economic development and protect small businesses
- Expansion of amenities and recreation opportunities



## 4. What We Heard – Phase 2

### 4.1 UPDATES FOR PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT

Based on the findings from phase one, the vision statement from the PRRD Strategic Plan (2023-2026) was modified. The titles of the regional issues were changed to be more inclusive of resident’s feedback and priorities, and an additional topic area was added, as shown in the table.

**TABLE:** Re-named regional issue areas

PHASE 1		PHASE 2
Regional Economy	→	Economic Strength and Resiliency
Housing and Affordability	→	Community Building
Agriculture and Food Security	→	Agriculture and Food
Public Health and Safety	→	Living Well
Transportation	→	Transportation and Mobility
Parks and Natural Areas	→	Ecosystem Health
Regional District Services	→	Infrastructure and Services
Climate Change and Resilience	→	Climate Change
	+	Collaboration

In addition, some supporting text was added to further clarify and define the issue areas.

- **Economic Strength and Resiliency:** Support a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous economy that builds on the region’s strengths.
- **Community Building:** Support compact, complete communities that strengthen urban centres, maintain rural character, and offer choice and affordability in housing.
- **Agriculture and Food:** Promote growth and development in agriculture and steward PRRD farmlands.
- **Living Well:** Foster safe, healthy communities that support a quality of life for all.
- **Transportation and Mobility:** Develop an integrated, safe, and efficient transportation system for people and goods.
- **Ecosystem Health:** Protect the air, water, and biodiversity on which we depend.
- **Infrastructure and Services:** Provide efficient, sustainable, and cost-effective services that contribute to regional wellbeing and health.
- **Climate Change:** Reduce energy emissions and ensure the PRRD is prepared for a changing climate.
- **Collaboration:** Facilitate collaboration and engagement with regional partners, including First Nations, to achieve common goals for the future of our region.

The second phase of the project took place from January until July 2024. During this time, nine in-person engagement events took place, along with a Community Workbook survey that was distributed on-line, at in-person events, and through PRRD member municipalities offices.



## 4.2 IN-PERSON EVENTS

Nine in-person engagement events happened between June 8th and June 12th, 2024. A set of interactive information posters was developed and shared between the events where participants could leave sticky notes and use dots to indicate preferences and support for the regional vision and goal areas.

Two stakeholder sessions were held on June 10th and 11th, 2024, in Fort St. John and Dawson Creek. These sessions served as focus groups to dive deeper into specific topics. Invitations were sent out via email, followed by a phone call, inviting over 30 organizations around the region to attend. Seven people participated, representing Northern Health, School District 60, agricultural producers, tourism representatives, and Chambers of Commerce. Participants were presented with the same posters used in the in-person engagement events.

Two pop-up community events were also held where PRRD staff and the supporting consultant team set up a booth at the weekly Saturday farmers market in Fort St. John and at the Chetwynd Chainsaw Carving Competition, on the final day of the competition. Attendance was highest at the pop-up events, especially the Chetwynd Chainsaw Carving Competition.

PRRD staff and the supporting consultants arranged a meeting with the local Prespatou Planning Commission, comprised of interested residents looking to guide the community's future growth. The 12-member group shared their concerns and desires for the community's future and their thoughts on the posters during a two-hour session.





**TABLE:** Phase 2 In-Person Engagement Events

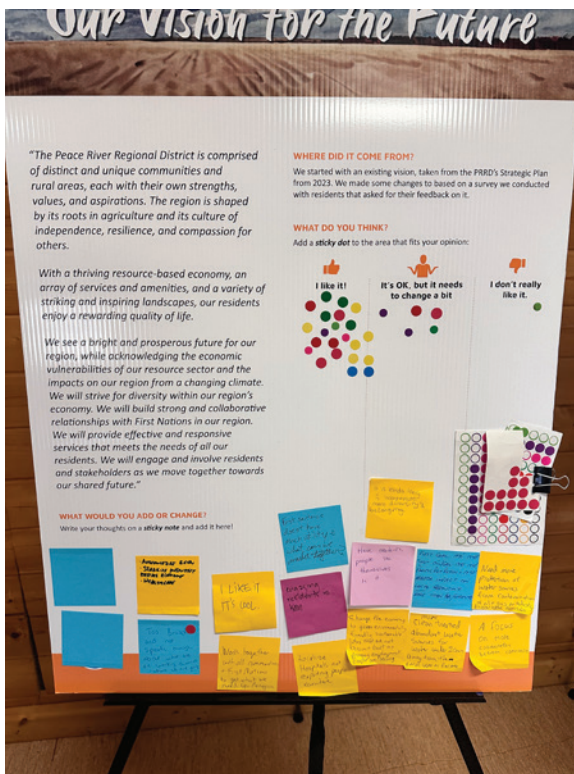
ENGAGEMENT EVENT	DATE	APPROX. # OF ATTENDEES
Fort St. John Farmers Market	June 8th, 2024	50
Chetwynd Chainsaw Carving Competition	June 9th, 2024	100
Prespatou Planning Commission Meeting	June 12th, 2024	12
Fort St John Open House	June 8th, 2024	3
Tumbler Ridge Open House	June 9th, 2024	2
Hudson's Hope Open House	June 10th, 2024	10
Dawson Creek Open House	June 11th, 2024	7
Fort St John Stakeholder Conversation	June 10th, 2024	5
Dawson Creek Stakeholder Conversation	June 11th, 2024	2

All the in-person events were organized around the same poster boards and information materials. A summary of feedback from these sessions follows.

Overall, people liked the updated vision statement.

**TABLE:** Vision feedback - posters

RESPONSE TYPE	# OF STICKY DOTS
I like it	19
It's OK, but needs to change a bit	8
I don't really like it	1



## Our Vision for the Future

*“The Peace River Regional District is comprised of distinct and unique communities and rural areas, each with their own strengths, values, and aspirations. The region is shaped by its roots in agriculture and its culture of independence, resilience, and compassion for others.*

*With a thriving resource-based economy, an array of services and amenities, and a variety of striking and inspiring landscapes, our residents enjoy a rewarding quality of life.*

*We see a bright and prosperous future for our region, while acknowledging the economic vulnerabilities of our resource sector and the impacts on our region from a changing climate. We will strive for diversity within our region’s economy. We will build strong and collaborative relationships with First Nations in our region. We will provide effective and responsive services that meets the needs of all our residents. We will engage and involve residents and other stakeholders as we move together towards our shared future.”*

Of the in-person event participants who indicated that the vision was “OK” provided the following comments.

- It’s too broad and not specific enough about what we’re working towards.
- Acknowledge the economic impacts of industry not being stable and the need for recovery.
- Working together with all communities and First Nations, a focus on collaboration between communities.
- Engaging residents is key.
- It’s a bit long and needs to incorporate more diversity and belonging.
- Have the residents see themselves in it.
- Encourage green, environmentally friendly jobs in the economy.

When asked which of the re-named regional issue topic areas mattered most to them, participants ranked them, with the top four in bold. Notably, in-person participants prioritized collaboration.

- 1. Economic Strength and Resiliency**
- 2. Transportation and Mobility**
- 3. Collaboration**
- 4. Community Building**
5. Infrastructure and Services
6. Ecosystem Health
7. Living Well
8. Agriculture and Food
9. Climate Change

Participants also provided additional feedback.

- Ecosystem Health and Climate Change seem very similar
- Living well and infrastructure and services – very connected, we need amenities to attract and keep families and skilled labour in the community
- Collaboration needs to be authentic and meaningful
- Include parks and recreation
- Water needs to be stated and included
- Community building needs to incorporate diversity and belonging

When asked what was missing, participants provided additional feedback.

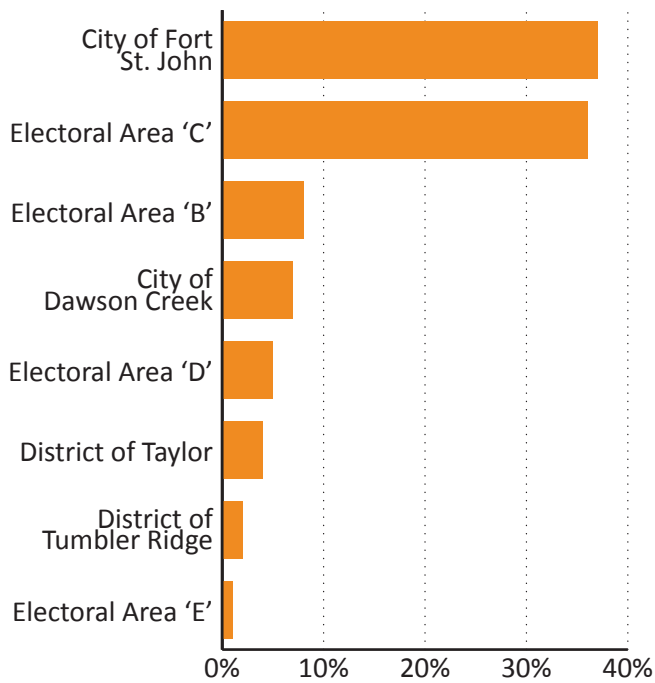
- Water – need more water sources, protection from contamination by industry
- Local healthcare
- Oil and gas have a higher impact on the local economy than agriculture and forestry
- Funding for cultural and community groups
- Have more development clarity for regional firms
- Create tax exemptions
- Include public groups and organizations in collaboration
- Reach out to schools
- Need more transit types (public bus, taxi, inter-city transit), and increase handy dart service/schedule
- Celebrate our entrepreneurs, i.e., the top 40 under 40
- Include rural people in the conversations around governance and agriculture

### 4.3 COMMUNITY SURVEY AND WORKBOOK

A survey and supporting community workbook were developed during the second phase of the project and made available online through the Have Your Say webpage from June 8th – July 31st, 2024. Paper copies were also distributed to key regional facilities (e.g., Dawson Creek Municipal Library, Fort St. John Public Library, Chetwynd Public Library, Taylor Community Services Hub, and PRRD regional offices) where residents could pick up copies of the survey and return completed ones to any PRRD office or via email. A total of 143 people filled out the community workbook.

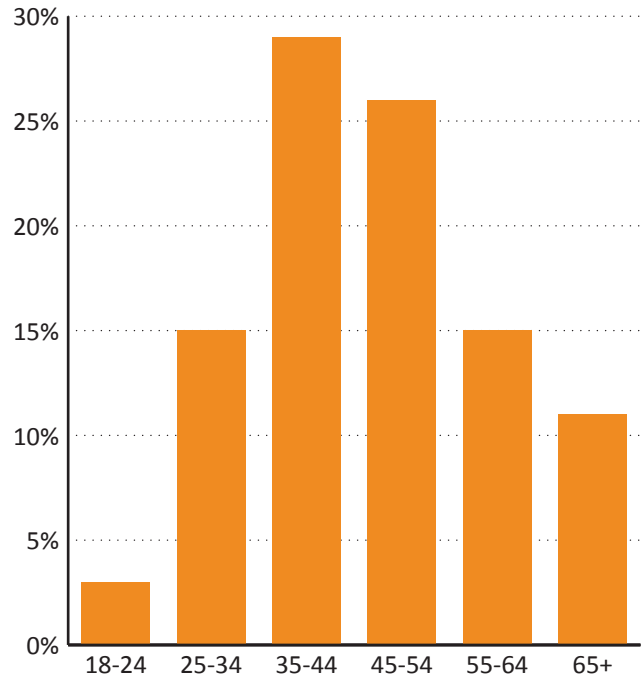
Almost 40% of respondents live in Fort St. John, and half (50%) of respondents live in Electoral Areas B, C, and D. Nearly 40% of respondents live in Electoral Area 'C.' Almost 40% of respondents also chose not to identify where they live.

**FIGURE: Survey respondents**



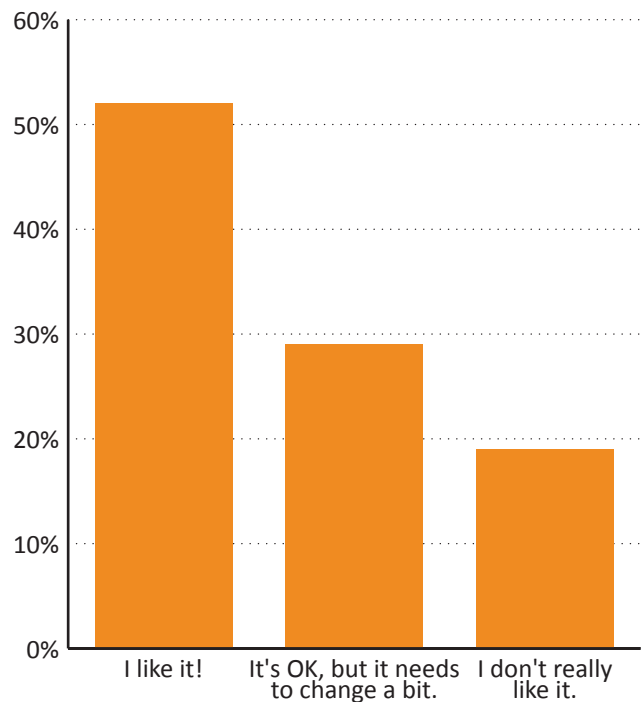
Over two-thirds (70%) of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 64, with most respondents (29%) aged between 35 and 44. About 30% of respondents also chose not to identify their age.

**FIGURE: Respondents' age**



Most respondents said that they either liked the updated draft vision statement (52%) or that it was "OK" (29%).

**FIGURE: RGS Vision**





The survey asked respondents again what they would add or change for the vision. For those who said it was “OK” their comments included:

- Emphasize the importance of all residents.
- Concerns about specifically highlighting First Nations, which causes division.
- More about regional partners and collaboration.
- Add fire protection, water sustainability and access, health services.
- Remove climate change.
- Emphasize resilience and innovation.
- Emphasize the resource sector.

For those who responded that they did not like it, comments included:

- There is strong division on whether there should be more or less about First Nations.
- It should be shorter.
- Remove ‘buzz words’ (e.g., diversity and inclusivity).
- It doesn’t sound achievable.

Respondents of the community workbook listed regional issues in order of most to least important.<sup>1</sup> The regional issue topic areas were ranked as follows, with the top four bolded.

- 1. Economic Strength and Resiliency**
- 2. Agriculture and Food**
- 3. Living Well**
- 4. Infrastructure and Services**
5. Community Building
6. Ecosystem Health
7. Transportation and Mobility
8. Collaboration
9. Climate Change

Respondents were asked what they would you change around the wording for the issue areas identified as most important.

<sup>1</sup> The Borda count method was used to determine the overall ranking of issues by assigning points to each rank (10 for rank 1, 6 for rank 2, 3 for rank 3, and 1 for rank 4) and aggregating these points for each issue, with higher total points reflecting greater importance.

### Economic Strength and Resiliency

- Emphasize strengths – farming, forestry, oil and gas
- Highlight population and business growth
- Emphasize a strong local economy
- The term ‘sustainable’ may be controversial

### Agriculture and Food

- Highlight food producers, animal-based foods (cattle, etc.), and traditional food methods
- Emphasize protecting farmland
- Emphasize support for and freedom of farmers
- Promote year-round agriculture
- Highlight local food production, security, and sustainability

### Living Well

- Add outdoor recreation
- Emphasize rural health services
- Use a Social Determinants of Health lens
- Emphasize reducing crime
- Uphold community values

### Infrastructure and Services

- Emphasize fresh water supply
- Support regional growth and wellbeing
- Emphasize regional transit and improved roads
- Add “for all citizens”
- Highlight services: regional transit, roads, bridges, hospitals, pools, water services

### Community Building

- Replace “compact” with efficient use of the land base
- Maintain and protect the rural culture
- Emphasize a variety of amenities
- Clarify the meaning of “community,” “affordability,” and “choice” in this context
- Attracting young people and professionals

### Ecosystem Health

- Emphasize the cumulative effects of oil and gas exploration and extraction
- Highlight public health and land
- Emphasize the protection of water resources

### Transportation and Mobility

- Develop an accessible, safe, and efficient transportation system that supports local businesses
- Facilitate active transportation and access for people and goods
- Emphasize connections between communities

### Collaboration

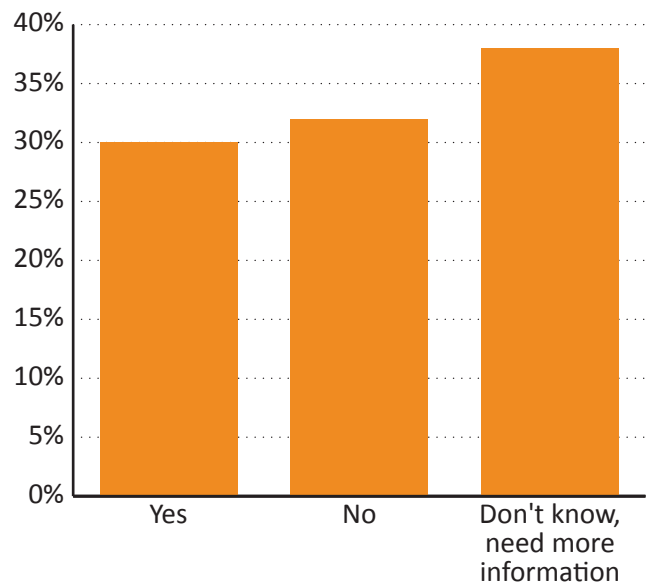
- Continued collaboration and engagement with regional partners and First Nations

### Climate Change

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase energy efficiency, and ensure the PRRD is ready for a changing climate

Respondents were also asked if the RGS should encourage and help direct most growth to urban centres. Responses were evenly split between the three answers, with a slight majority (38%) saying they didn’t know and needed more information. Overall, all respondents agreed that both rural and urban areas are important and should support each other. The value for “balance” was mentioned by respondents who agreed, disagreed, and didn’t know about the statement.

**FIGURE:** Directing most growth to urban centres.



Respondents were also asked why they made the selection they did. For those who said yes, they thought that urban areas are already where most growth is occurring, have the infrastructure and services to support it, and will protect agricultural land and natural areas. Those who said no stated that rural areas should have more local services, that people should be free to choose, and that some prefer the rural lifestyle. Those who said they didn’t know wanted more information about the benefits of directing growth, where growth is happening naturally, how to involve First Nations, and how current and future residents’ needs would be met.

