

TOWN OF PEACE RIVER LAND USE BYLAW REFRESH SURVEY RESULTS

A Survey to inform the content of a Refreshed Land Use Bylaw

August 2019

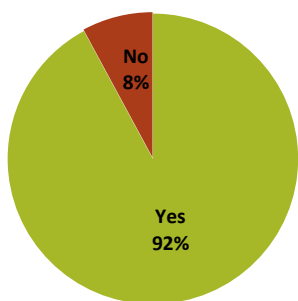
Prepared by



Land Use Bylaws are dynamic documents that change over time to respond to development trends and changing community interests. The last major update to the bylaw was in 2012. Town administration has identified a number of issues with the current bylaw. The LUB is being reviewed to provide greater clarity and consistency in an easy to read, updated document that reflects contemporary land use planning and development practices. The review of other land use bylaws within the province has brought forward a number of best practices that the Town aims to integrate into the bylaw. These issues and identified best practices merit an overhaul of the bylaw, rather than continued individual amendments.

In January 2019, the Town of Peace River launched an online survey through the Peace River website and Facebook page. The survey was available until February 21, 2019. The survey included 16 questions. A total of 203 people began the survey, with 159 completing the final question. 159 responses represent 3% of the population 15 years and older of the Town.

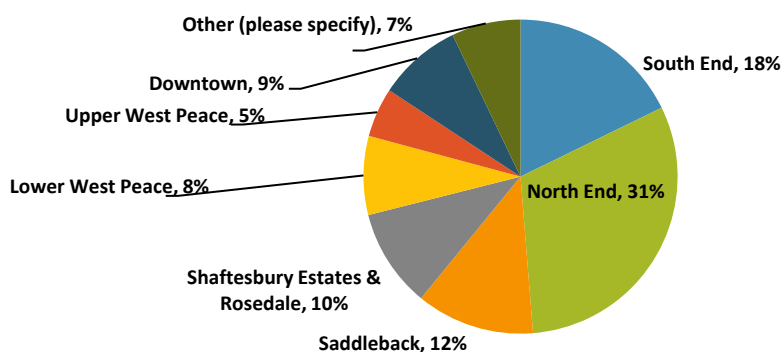
Who Responded



The majority of respondents (92%) live in the Town of Peace River. Of those who do not live in the town, the majority are from Grimshaw. There are also responses from residents of St. Isidore, Grande Prairie, Webberville and Yellowknife

Question 1. Response to "Do you live in Peace River?" (203 responses, 0 skipped)

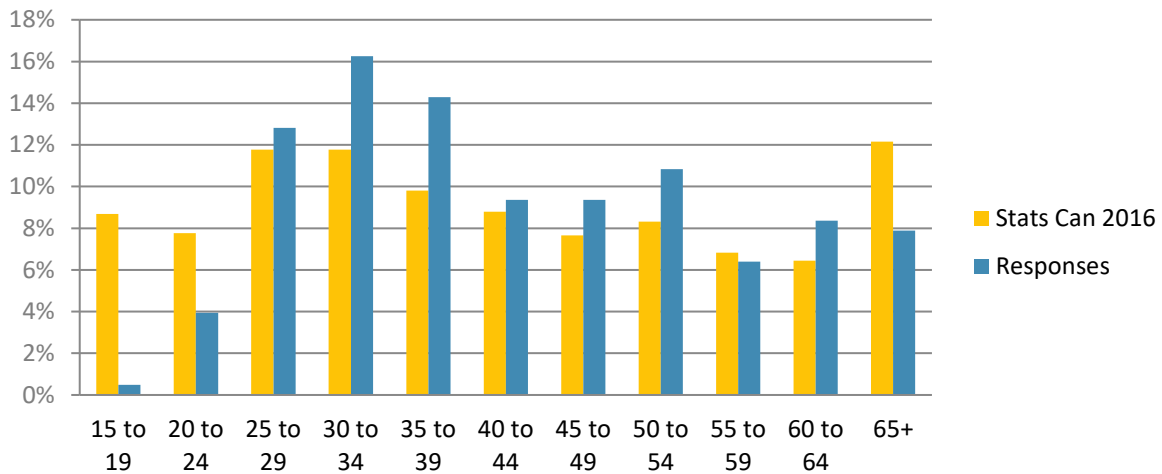
Respondents included people from all the major residential neighbourhoods in town. Within the "other" category respondents identified that they live in Pine acres, on the west hill and the Cool Springs Trailer Park".



Question 2. Response to "If you live in Peace River, which neighborhood do you live in?" (197 responses, 6 skipped)

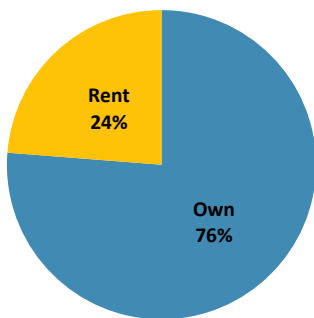
The age of respondents includes people from across the age spectrum. The age group with the highest number of responses were 30-34 years old (16%), followed by 35-39 (14%) and 25-29 (9%). The representation of the ages is relatively consistent with actual population. The most underrepresented people are from 15-24 and 65+, and the most over-represented are 30-39 and 50-54 years old.

Question 3. "How old are you?" (203 responses, 0 skipped)

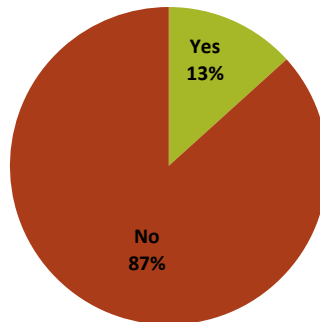


Questions 4 to 6 show the respondents relationship to property ownership in Town. The majority of the respondents own a property, while roughly a quarter of the respondents rent. Based on the 2016 census, renters are underrepresented as respondents by 14%¹.

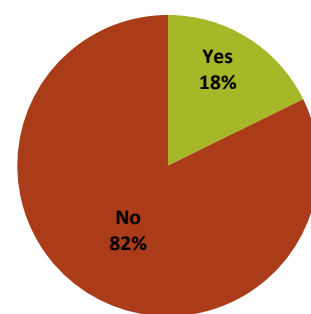
Question 4. Do you own your home or rent? (202 responses, 1 skipped)



Question 5. Apart from your home, do you own land or a building in Peace River?" (203 responses, 0 skipped)



Question 6. Do you own or operate a business in Peace River?" (203 responses, 0 skipped)

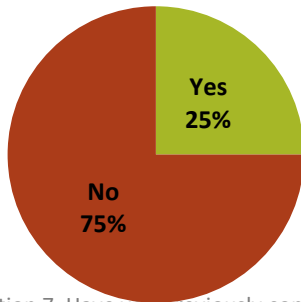


¹ Based on 2016 Household characteristics data.

Statistics Canada. 2017. Peace River, T [Census subdivision], Alberta and Division No. 19, CDR [Census division], Alberta (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.

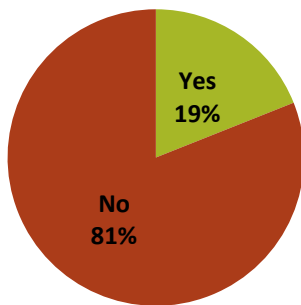
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed July 22, 2019).

Experience with the Land Use Bylaw



Question 7. Have you previously consulted the Town's Land use bylaw? (176 responses, 27 skipped)

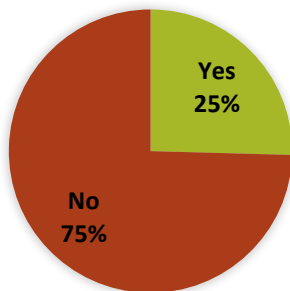
Those respondents (25%) who have used the Land Use Bylaw (LUB) provided feedback on its ease of use. Nine people responded that it was easy to use. Two people replied the LUB is 'somewhat' easy to read. The most often cited issues are that it is difficult to find all the necessary information in the LUB, it is not easy to read, and occasionally it is contradictory.



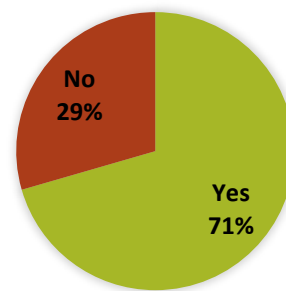
Question 8. Have you applied for a development permit in the past? (174 responses, 29 skipped)

Majority of the respondents do not have experience applying for a development permit. Respondents who have experienced applying for a permit provided feedback on their experience. Respondents who encountered issues identified concerns with process timelines and with communication with Town staff. However, the majority of respondents with permit process experience did not experience any issues through the development permit process.

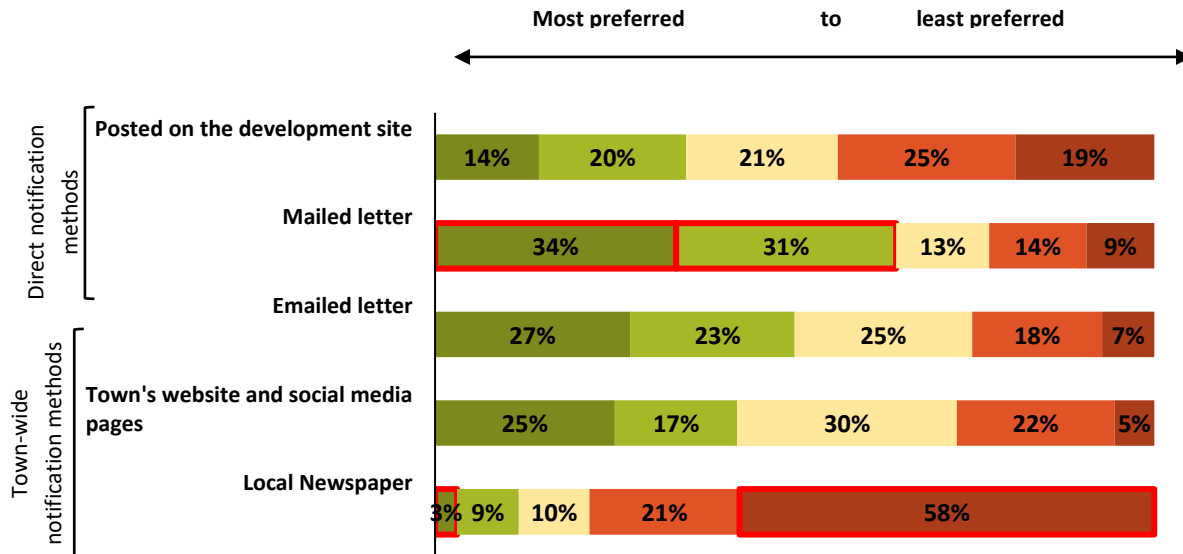
Currently and consistent with historical practice, the Town advertises amendments to the Land Use Bylaw in the local newspaper. The responses to question 9 highlight that this notification method is not effective for a majority of the respondents. Conversely, responses to question 10 indicate that the majority of respondents are satisfied with the current practice of the on-site notification of development permit decisions. Of those respondents that responded "no" to Question 10, they felt it was inadequate notification for affected parties who are not adjacent landowners. Alternative communication method suggestions include direct mail and social media. Respondents prefer direct communication when a new development is proposed in proximity to their property.



Question 9. Do you watch the newspaper for notification of land use bylaw amendments and public hearings? (173 responses, 30 skipped)



Question 10. For the majority of development decisions, adjacent landowners and the public are notified of a decision by an on-site sign posted on site. Do the on-site signs that notify the public of development permit decisions provide effective and sufficient notification? (173 responses, 30 skipped)



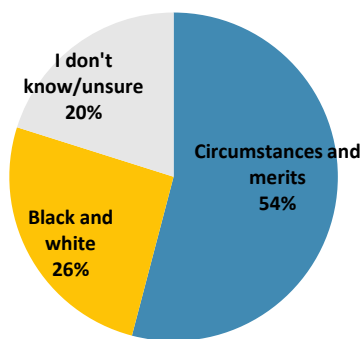
Question 11. Response to “If a new development were proposed beside or near your home or business, how would you prefer to be notified? Please rank your preferences, 1 being the most preferred and 5 being the least” (172 responses, 31 skipped)

Responses in order of preference:

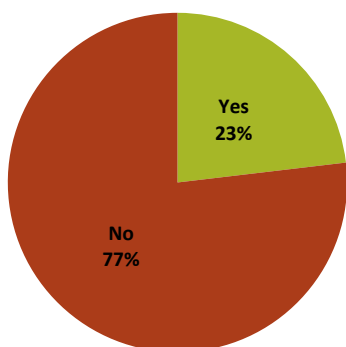
1. Mailed letter
2. Emailed letter
3. Website and social media
4. Posted on the development site
5. Local newspaper

'Mailed letter' is the preferred notification method for survey respondents and local newspaper is by far the least preferred method. However, mailing individual letters presents administrative challenges compared to current practice by increasing the number of referrals that are required as part of the permitting process. It also presents limitations, in that Town Administration will not necessarily be able to always be able to fully identify all affected parties.

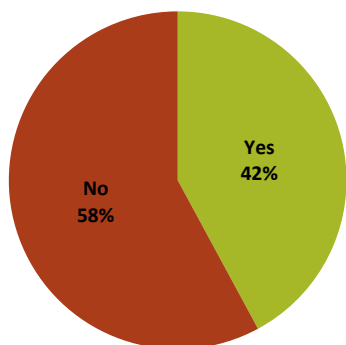
Respondent’s Ideas about Development



Question 12. Response to “Should the Town have flexibility to make decisions on development permits based on the circumstances of the site and the merits of the application or should the rules be black and white?” (159 responses, 44 skipped)



Question 13. Have you been negatively affected by a development in the past? (160 responses, 43 skipped)



Question 14. Response to “Are there certain types of development you think can be regulated differently in the Town?” (152 responses, 51 skipped)

With respect to decision making, a little over half of the respondents indicate that the town should have flexibility based on the ‘circumstances and merits’ of the application. Forty-nine respondents also expanded upon their answer. Themes in the expanded responses include:

- black and white rules help to eliminates bias,
- having flexible rules may lead to favouritism.
- Given the difficulty of anticipating all circumstances, flexibility allows for adaptation to the specifics of the application.

The majority of the respondents (77%) answered that they have not been negatively affected by a development in the past. Of those who have been negatively impacted, the themes in the comments include:

- Dissatisfaction with appeal decisions,
- Concerns of neighboring properties encroaching on or over property lines,
- The proximity between incompatible uses, particularly residential and gravel extraction in the Shaftesbury neighbourhood,
- The lack of clarity with respect to what is considered a Modular Home,
- Insufficient notification of development or bylaw changes,
- Concerns about the impacts of cutting trees on Town property,
- The ongoing impact of brownfields sites,
- The impacts of construction on access to businesses and trees on public property, and
- The impact of the new Recreation Center on views, access to green space, and traffic.

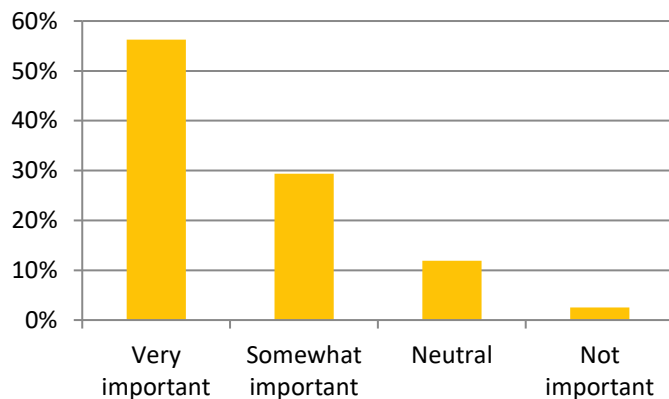
42% of respondents provided suggestions for how developments can be regulated differently. Suggested changes and focuses, or concerns include:

- Creating aesthetic standards for new (re)development, particularly in the downtown,
- Encouraging mixed commercial/residential buildings,
- Dealing with derelict buildings,

- Lowering parking requirements in the downtown to make redevelopment easier,
- Allowing more secondary suites, garden suites and tiny homes in more areas of Town,
- Requiring new development to provide for pedestrians and cyclists, and provide adequate green space,
- Encouraging industrial development away from scenic locations and/or livable areas,
- Encouraging of a variety of business as opposed to similar ones,
- Clear communication of when construction is occurring,
- Address temporary houses/homeless shelters,
- Encouraging downtown (re)development through grants,
- Discourage vacant or derelict buildings/sites through fines,
- Address temporary housing/homeless shelter in the LUB,
- Residential areas of Downtown should remain residential,
- Greater communication about construction programs to give advanced notice of impacts,
- Scale development information requirements and notification processes to the possible impact of the development (i.e. greater for industrial developments, lesser for home-based businesses),
- Gravel pits and other noisy development in proximity to residential,
- Limiting the number and/or brightness of digital signs,
- Promoting affordable housing,
- Gravel parking areas associated with the downtown, and
- Preserving the character of historic streets.

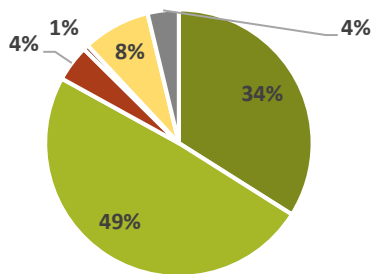
A little over half of the respondents (56%) believe that it is very important that land use bylaw should provide certainty of what others can do on their land near them. The comments identify the importance of:

- Communication between neighbours, and consultation by the Town, prior to change,
- Maintaining property values,
- Clarity of land use rules and regulations and processes, and
- Balancing an individual’s rights to use their property as desired with the impacts that use may have on neighbouring landowners and the community as a whole.

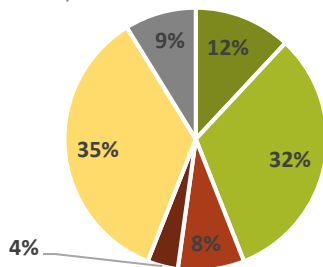


Question 15. As a landowner affected by development in your area, how important is it for you that the land use bylaw provides certainty of what others can do on their land near to you? (160 responses, 43 skipped)

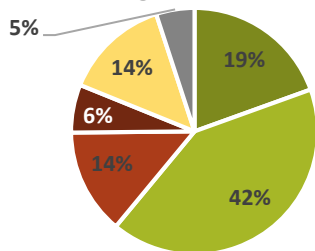
All developments in Peace River should require some form of landscaping.



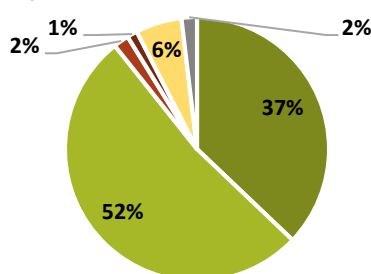
In the downtown, new commercial development should be required to be as close to the street as possible to promote a 'main street' style of development.



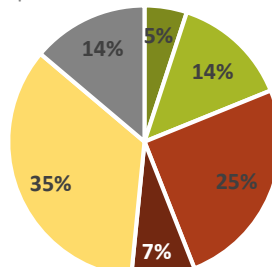
Secondary suites or garage suites or garden suites should be allowable in all residential neighbourhoods in town.



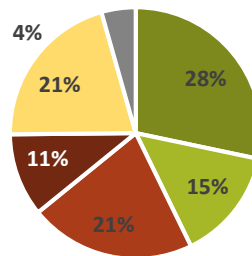
Question 16. (159 responses, 44 skipped)
Outdoor lighting should be regulated to avoid negative impacts on surrounding properties.



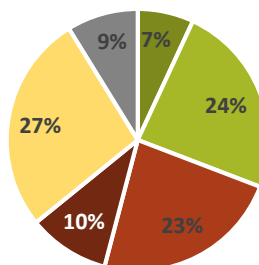
On the west hill, new commercial development should be required to be as close to the street as possible to promote a 'main street' style of development.



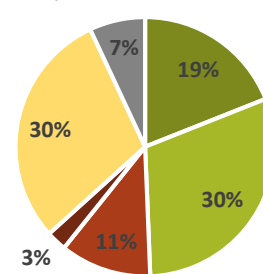
No new digital variable-message signs should be allowed in town.



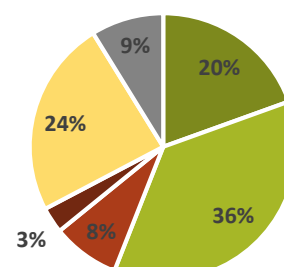
There should be more regulations and restrictions on the development of a modular home compared to an on-site, stick built home.



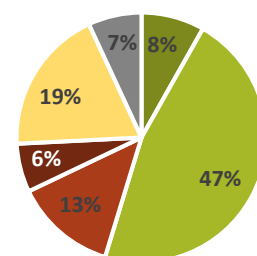
There should be more direction regarding the architectural design of new development in the Town.



More bicycle parking should be provided in town



Shipping containers are acceptable storage buildings in commercial areas.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Neither ■ No opinion

In Question 16, respondents were asked to rate the level of agreement with a number of development-standard statements. The greatest degree of agreement was for “Outdoor lighting should be regulated to avoid negative impacts on surrounding properties” (89%), “All developments in Peace River should require some form of landscaping” (83%), “Secondary suites or garage suites or garden suites should be allowable in all residential neighbourhoods in town” (61%), “More bicycle parking should be provided in town” (56%), and “Shipping containers are acceptable storage buildings in commercial areas” (55%). There was no clear consensus regarding “There should be more regulations and restrictions on the development of a modular home compared to an on-site, stick built home”, the respondents were almost equally split between agreeing, disagreeing and neither. Responses were similarly split on “No new digital variable-message signs should be allowed in town”.

A lesser majority of respondents agree with “There should be more direction regarding the architectural design of new development in the Town” (49%). For “In the downtown, new commercial development should be required to be as close to the street as possible to promote a ‘main street’ style of development.” Respondents are split between being in support (44%) and neither or unsure (44%).

The statement with the largest proportion of respondents answering with Neither or No Opinion was with “On the west hill, new commercial development should be required to be as close to the street as possible to promote a ‘main street’ style of development.”

Respondents identified other development issues that should be considered through this process or other planning processes. They include:

- Saving trees during construction processes,
- Developing an environmental vision
- The increased provision of sidewalks, crosswalks and bicycle lanes

A significant number of comments addressed property maintenance standards. While related to development, addressing these are outside the scope of this project but may inform future changes to the Community Standards Bylaw.

Next Steps

This survey report will be presented to the Municipal Planning Commission, the Town’s Development Authority for discretionary use and variance applications, Town Council, and the public. The results of the survey will inform the content of the Refreshed Land Use Bylaw, which continues to be drafted at this time. Subsequent to the draft bylaw being prepared, a second survey will request feedback on the specifics of the bylaw and provide another opportunity for input into the document, before it is formally presented to Council for adoption.