



TOWN OF COCHRANE

Budget Consultation Focus Group April 29, 2026

PREPARED BY:

Parsons
DIALOGUE

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Executive Summary

The Town of Cochrane hosted a pre-budget consultation focus group on Wednesday, April 29, 2026, building upon a similar practice from the 2025 budget cycle. The purpose was to understand resident perspectives around infrastructure priorities, taxes, service levels and growth, and obtain feedback on the budget communications work.

Sixteen residents from a variety of ages and life stages participated with care and thoughtfulness. Four of the sixteen had participated in 2025 focus groups. Additional attendees were drawn from Advanis 2026 Budget Survey respondents that indicated an interest in participating in focus groups. Participants represented a mix of ages, genders, and lengths of residency in Cochrane, bringing a range of perspectives shaped by different life experiences and connections to the community.

The discussion focused on several key trade-offs and competing priorities currently facing Council, including:

- Essential infrastructure vs community amenities
- Stables taxes vs service levels and investment
- Growth & economic diversification vs community character

The final topic of the evening was feedback on the recently introduced 2026 citizens budget book and participant experience with the 2027 budget survey.

Prior to leaving, residents were asked to write a two-sentence letter to Council identifying priorities they thought Council should keep in mind as they consider the draft 2027 budget this fall.

Major themes that emerged from the discussions include:

- *Residents expressed a preference for investments in critical infrastructure over new amenities while maintaining existing amenities and slowing any new initiatives.* Accessibility of amenities for mobility impaired could be improved in Cochrane and residents wondered if there were greater opportunities for volunteer groups to assist in maintaining amenities, whether user-pay fees should be

implemented for non-residents, and noted that music and arts are vital to well-being.

- *Residents prefer stable taxes and spoke to the importance of understanding what a tax increase would pay.* They want to see a clear cost / benefit explanation. For them, maintaining critical infrastructure is non-negotiable. Residents noted the importance of a risk management lens when making investments.
- *Residents continue to be concerned about the Town's growth rate* and suggested that the growth rate be capped or managed at a fixed annual rate. Protecting Cochrane's western vibe and maintaining character is important. New businesses to Cochrane are expected to contribute to the Community character.
- *Residents felt that growth should lead to lower or stable taxes* as more people are contributing to revenues and ask that Council focus on operational efficiency. Some wondered if more funding could be requested of the province.
- *The Town should prioritize critical infrastructure, two-way in / out of neighbourhoods, affordable housing, updated bylaws and levies indexed to inflation.*
- *The budget book is a good step in budget communications,* and the opportunity for more interactive / drill down features was noted. This budget-curious groups of residents would like a meatier survey, decision making questions, more financial context and cost / benefit style questions.
- *Letters to Council reinforced the themes that emerged from the evening's discussions.*

Residents thanked the Town for hosting this conversation and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage.

Introduction

Two focus groups were conducted before and after the 2025 budget. The first, in April, welcomed 15 residents who provided feedback on budget preferences and priorities. The second, in November, invited residents back to hear how their input had been used in the budget. Residents were also asked for feedback and suggestions about budget communication processes.

On Wednesday, April 26, 2026, the Town of Cochrane hosted a pre-budget consultation focus group building on the practice of 2025 budget cycle.

The purpose was to understand resident perspectives around infrastructure priorities, taxes, service levels and growth, and asking for feedback on the first citizen's budget book and the 2026 budget survey.

Recruitment began with participants from the 2025 focus groups and was augmented by residents indicating an interest in participating in further conversations in the Advanis 2026 Budget Survey responses.

Of the 16 participants, four had participated in 2025 conversations. The group included eight men and eight women who have lived in Cochrane for 2- 15+ years. Three participants were in the 20 to 35 age range, one of which had limited mobility. Five participants were mid 30s to late 40s and the remainder in their 50s and beyond.

In the Spring 2025 focus group, conversation was framed around prioritizing known initiatives. Spring 2026 conversations were framed around inherent budget dilemmas and tensions facing Council that included:

- Essential infrastructure vs community amenities
- Stables taxes vs service levels & investment
- Growth & economic diversification vs community character

The final topic of the evening asked residents for feedback on the 2026 citizens budget book and communications practices related to budget engagement. Prior to parting, residents were asked to

write a two-sentence letter to Council identifying priorities they thought Council should keep in mind.

Preparing for the Focus Group

Step 1: Establishing Objectives

Parsons Dialogue collaborated with the Town's Engagement Team to develop engagement objectives. The team included:

- Kevin Blanchette, Executive Director, People & Strategy
- Kristin Huybrecht, Manager Communications & Engagement
- Karla Schulz, Public Engagement Advisor
- Robin Parsons, Facilitator
- Dave Robertson, Facilitator

The following objectives for the focus groups we established:

- Understand resident priorities
- Gather qualitative information on key budget dilemmas
- Gather feedback on the Citizen's budget book and 2026 budget survey experience

A goal for the experience was for residents to find the environment welcoming, casual and comfortable and to know their fellow residents a little. At the end of the discussion, it was important that residents felt their contributions had been useful and appreciated.

Step 2: Developing Discussion Questions

The Town provided some scenarios that highlight the tensions that both Council and Administration balance when making budget decisions. Facilitation guides were developed that framed these dilemmas for participants.

The framing intentionally put residents in paradoxical scenarios (wicked questions) balancing two competing and important aspects of budget considerations to allow more nuance to surface.

The Town produced an inaugural Citizens' Budget book in 2026 and wanted to obtain input and feedback that would inform the evolution of the document and so questions about that document were included.

As focus groups took place in parallel with the survey, participants were also asked for feedback on the survey experience and questions, as well as the 2026 budget book.

As a final step in the focus group, residents were asked to write a two-sentence letter to Council identifying priorities they thought Council should keep in mind.

All verbatim results can be found in Appendix A.

Step 3: Preparing Residents

Residents were provided with the Citizens' Budget Book for the 2026 fiscal year as a pre-read and a request to complete the 2027 Budget survey.

Step 4: Facilitate The Meeting

Mayor Morgan Nagel and CAO Drew Hyndman provided welcoming remarks and participated in a question-and-answer period, after which Parsons Dialogue stepped in to facilitate and document the meeting. Residents were energetic and engaged and pleased to be invited to this conversation. They expressed their appreciation to the Town for this opportunity.

Step 5: Prepare the Report

Verbatim notes were captured in-meeting and can be found in the Appendix A of this report. Results have been themed and preserved the language and terminology used by residents wherever possible

All responses are qualitative and directional in nature representing individual opinions.

These findings are not statistically representative.

Summary of Findings

Following a brief welcome by Mayor Nagel and CAO Hyndman, residents had the opportunity to participate in a question-and-answer period. Residents were primarily focused on questions about development, levies on developers and the responsibilities and accountabilities of developers for fulfilling promises.



Dilemmas

The goal of the discussions was to understand the relative importance of various topics for residents, and so the discussions were framed as dilemmas faced by Council and Administration when making budget decisions.

1. Essential infrastructure and Community Amenities.

Context: Every dollar the Town spends on essential infrastructure – water systems, roads, wastewater – is a dollar not available for the amenities that make Cochrane a great place to live. Both matter. But when budgets are tight, Council must choose what comes first. Example: Upgrading aging water mains versus building the additional ball diamonds that Cochrane is already running short of.

Residents expressed a preference for investments in critical infrastructure over new amenities while indicating the importance of maintaining existing amenities.

- a. *Accessibility:* Amenities could, however, be made more accessible for people with mobility limitations, in particular wheelchairs (e.g. wheelchair friendly curbs and paths without potholes). Limited transit availability is a disadvantage for people who are unable to drive.
- b. *Volunteerism:* Residents suggested that there may be community groups who could assist with existing amenity maintenance (e.g. bike group maintaining paths); or additional resources within the community that could be accessed.

- c. *Slow down*: New amenities should be postponed for now; investments could be slowed down (such as a recreation centre or parks) to focus on immediate concerns.
- d. *User-pay fees*: Non-Cochrane residents could pay user fees for access to Cochrane amenities.
- e. *Arts & music*: One participant noted the value of arts and music and its importance to community well-being, and its value to tourism.



2. Stable Taxes and Service Levels and Investment

Context: Cochrane is under real fiscal pressure. Holding taxes steady sounds appealing, but it could mean cutting services, deferring maintenance, or delaying investments that will cost more later. Raising taxes is unpopular, but it may be what's needed to maintain what residents already have and invest in what we need for the future.

Residents prefer stable taxes and spoke to the importance of understanding what a tax increase would pay for. They want to see a clear cost / benefit calculation.

- a. *Non-negotiable*: Residents will not accept any degradation in the following services: public safety, emergency services, water and, for some, roads. They called these non-negotiables.
- b. *Risk management*: Some residents discussed the importance of good risk assessment and evaluation before making investment decisions.
- c. *Value for money*: Some residents discussed 'value for money' considerations. Could a service be better performed by others? Does it generate good value for

the dollar?

It's worth noting that residents found this question frustrating and felt the framing was unrealistic. In their view, risk management practices would negate the either / or context of the questions.

3. Growth and Economic Diversification and Community Character

Context: Cochrane is one of the fastest-growing communities in Alberta. Growth brings new tax revenues, local jobs, and economic resilience, but it also puts pressure on roads, services, and the small-town character that most residents moved here for. Past conversations have told us there are concerns about growth rates. The question isn't whether Cochrane grows, but how.

Residents felt that growth should lead to lower or stable taxes, as more people are contributing to revenues

- a. *Operational efficiency:* Focusing on operational efficiency and cutting Town Council expenses were mentioned.
- b. *Grant funding:* Some wondered if more funding could be requested of the province.

Residents continue to be concerned about the Town's growth rate and suggested that the growth rate be capped or managed at a fixed annual rate.

- a. *Growth:* In small business and boutique industry was encouraged.
- b. *Important Attributes:* Cochrane's western vibe, outdoor living and boutique business character is very important to residents.
- c. *Downtown character:* Some noted that the downtown character area attracts tourists, is a very congested area and wondered if the area could be expanded.
- d. *Community contribution:* New businesses to Cochrane must go the 'extra mile' to contribute to the community, including hiring practices and

physical appearance.

The Town should prioritize critical infrastructure, two-way in/out of neighbourhoods, affordable housing, updated bylaws and levies indexed to inflation.

Feedback on the 2026 Citizens' Budget Book and Communications Process

Participants were asked for feedback on the new Citizens' Budget Book. Most did not recall seeing it before, although it was a component of their pre-reads.

Generally, they believe it is a good step in budget communications. They said that the budget book was clear, simple, and easy to read and liked the idea of clicking on a graphic to go deeper into the details.



Suggestion for improvement included the opportunity for more interactive links and / or drill down capabilities for those who really want to dig in and adding values, rather than just percentages.

When asked about their experience with the budget survey, some felt that budget curious or savvy residents felt it didn't offer enough substance or quality questions. They thought cost / benefit style questions with concrete examples, more financial or decision-making context for questions, and setting expectations about the length of survey would be useful. Residents wondered if a short and long form survey might be needed to accommodate different levels of interest in the budget.

Letters to Council

The focus group concluded with each participant offering advice to Council in the form of a letter. Verbatim results can be found in Appendix A. The letters reinforced workshop themes and included:

1. Fiscal Responsibility & Value for Money

- a. Residents want the Council to prioritize spending wisely — reducing taxes where possible, questioning whether each service represents good value, and ensuring the budget focuses on *core* services.

2. Prioritize Critical Infrastructure

- a. There is strong sentiment that growth and development should not outpace critical infrastructure. Roads, subdivision access, and other foundational systems need to be in place *before* new residential development is approved, and all infrastructure projects should be risk-assessed and built into the Capital Plan.

3. Maintenance Over New Projects

- a. Residents favor investing in maintaining and protecting what already exists rather than pursuing new, costly amenities.

4. Balancing Needs vs. Wants

- a. While critical infrastructure is the priority, some residents also recognize the value of community amenities — public art, music events, green spaces — that contribute to mental well-being, social cohesion, and tourism.

5. Accessibility

- a. Several voices highlight that not all residents experience the community equally. Mobility impaired people struggle with curbs, ramps, and paths with potholes. Affordable housing, and accessible transportation are important.

6. Better Questions

- a. Residents want to be engaged with 'real' questions in focus groups and on surveys.

7. Budget book feedback

- a. Residents liked the Citizens' Budget Book and said that adding drill-down links to accommodate different levels of interest in the budget would be a welcome addition.

Conclusion

Budget sentiments in 2026 are quite consistent with those of 2025 and generally lean towards fiscal prudence.

Consistent messages emerged around prioritizing critical infrastructure, maintaining existing amenities and managing growth, ensuring that infrastructure is in place before development. In both 2025 and 2026 residents voiced concerns about whether developers are accountable for their commitments. Keeping taxation increases low, fiscal prudence, and protecting Cochrane's unique character were also echoes of 2025.

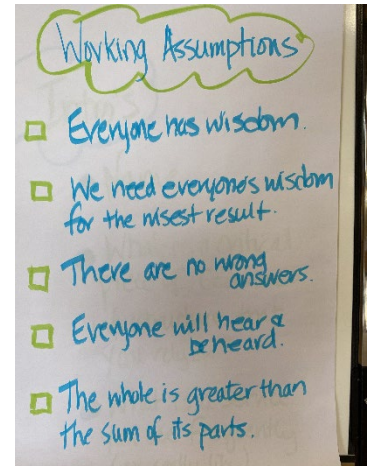
Question framing in 2026 helped surface the tension that residents understand between wants and needs. New messages in this focus group included paying attention to accessibility of pathways, transit and amenities for mobility impaired and the importance of music and arts and their value to community well-being and tourism.

Residents again expressed appreciation to the Town for creating this opportunity to discuss the budget and priorities and appreciated the efforts the Town was making to keep residents informed about the budget.

Appendix A: Verbatim Results

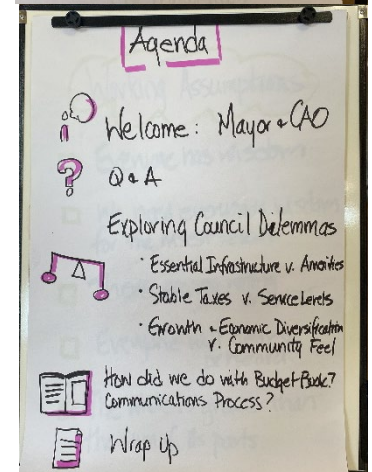
Working Assumptions

- Everyone has wisdom.
- We need everyone's wisdom for the wisest result.
- There are no wrong answers.
- Everyone will hear & be heard.
- The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.



Agenda

- Welcome: Mayor & CAO
- Q & A
- Exploring Council Dilemmas
 - Essential Infrastructure v. Amenities
 - Stable Taxes v. Service Levels
 - Growth & Economic Diversification vs. Community Feel
- How did we do with 2026 Citizens' Budget Book? Communications Process?
- Wrap Up



Welcome & Context Setting

(Mayor Nagel & CAO Drew Hyndman)

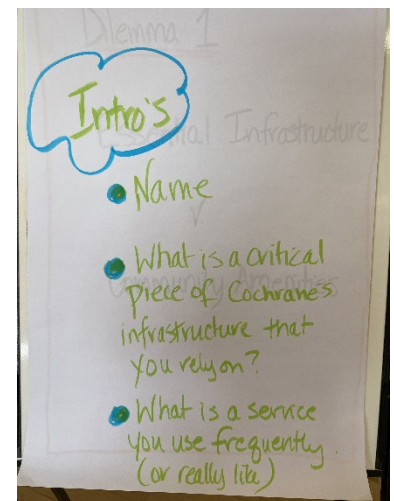
Question & Answer

- How is feed determined for developers? What has been grandfathered? What can be collected now? What hasn't been collected?
- How do we hold developers accountable for money and overall servicing areas/streets/etc.
- How do we charge developers more?
- Are we charging enough for taxes and growth?

Introductions

Name, what is a critical piece of Cochrane's infrastructure that you rely on, and what is a service you use frequently (or really like)?

- Water
- Wastewater
- Parks
- Pathways / walkways
- Recreation Centre

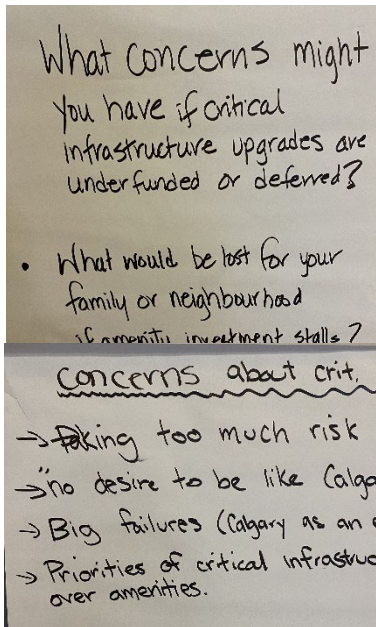


Exploring Council Dilemmas

Dilemma 1: Essential Infrastructure and Community Amenities

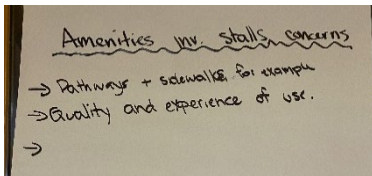
Context: Every dollar the Town spends on essential infrastructure – water systems, roads, wastewater – is a dollar not available for the amenities that make Cochrane a great place to live. Both matter. But when budgets are tight, Council must choose what comes first.

Example: Upgrading aging water mains versus building the additional ball diamonds that Cochrane is already running short of.



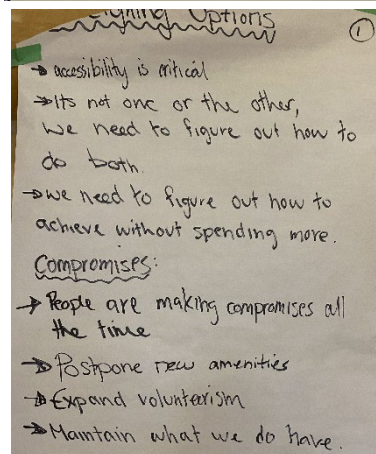
What concerns might you have if critical infrastructure upgrades are underfunded or deferred?

- That the Town is taking too much risk by not upgrading infrastructure
- No desire to be like Calgary
- Big failure (Calgary as an example)
- Priorities of critical infrastructure over amenities



What would be lost for your family or neighbourhood if amenity investment stalls?

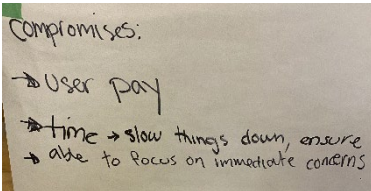
- Pathways and sidewalks, for example
- Quality and experience of use



Weighing options

- Accessibility is critical; when you are in a wheelchair, accessibility looks quite different; (e.g., getting into this building (RancheHouse) was difficult because the transition between door frame and sidewalk had a gap in it)
- Cracks / holes / gaps in sidewalks make it much more difficult to navigate a wheelchair
- Transit isn't available after 5 pm for someone who doesn't drive
- It's not one or the other; we need to figure out how to do both
- We need to figure out how to achieve this without spending more

What Compromises would you be prepared to accept to achieve a balance you could live with?

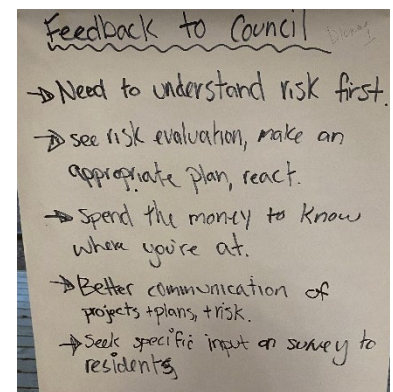


Compromises:
→ user pay
→ time → slow things down, ensure
→ able to focus on immediate concerns

- People are making compromises (in their own households) all the time
- Postpone new amenities (in favour of critical infrastructure) such as pickleball courts or rec centres
- Expand volunteerism – there are groups who may be able to pick up amenity maintenance (e.g. Bike Groups maintain pathways). Are there other volunteer groups that could be activated?
- Maintain what we have and focus on what is needed to get by
- Maybe we need more user-pay fees (e.g. for Non-Cochrane residents using Cochrane amenities)
- Time: slow investments down, ensure able to focus on immediate concerns; stop what isn't needed right now

What is your feedback to Council

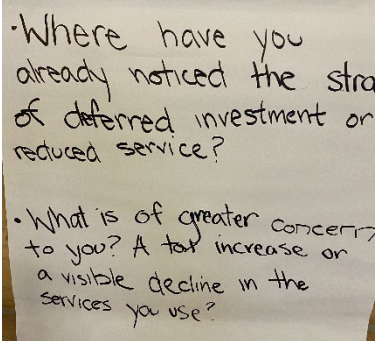
- Need to understand risk first
 - Do the risk evaluation
 - Make an appropriate plan
 - Be transparent about the plan to Community
 - Spend the money to know where you're at
- Better communication of projects, plans and risk to residents
- Seek specific input on surveys from residents (give concrete and specific examples of tradeoffs that Council might be considering)



Feedback to Council
→ Need to understand risk first.
→ see risk evaluation, make an appropriate plan, react.
→ Spend the money to know where you're at.
→ Better communication of projects + plans, + risk.
→ Seek specific input on survey to residents

Dilemma 2: Stable Taxes and Service Levels & Investment

Context: Cochrane is under real fiscal pressure. Holding taxes steady sounds appealing, but it means cutting services, deferring maintenance, or delaying investments that will cost more later. Raising taxes is unpopular, but it may be what's needed to maintain what residents already have and invest in what we need for the future.



• Where have you already noticed the strain of deferred investment or reduced service?

• What is of greater concern to you? A tax increase or a visible decline in the services you use?

Where have you already noticed the strain of deferred investment or reduced service?

- EMS – longer response times

What is of greater concern to you? A tax increase or a visible decline in the services you use?

- Facilitator note: Residents found this question difficult to grapple with and felt it was an unrealistic question.

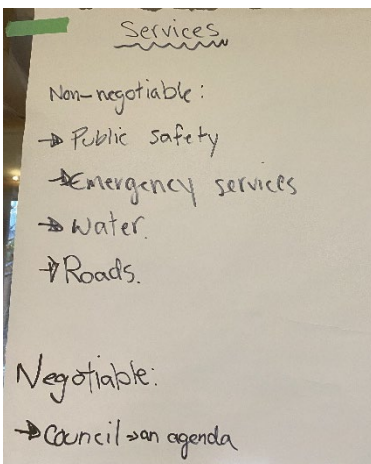
Which services feel truly non-negotiable to you, and where could you accept some reduction?

Non-negotiable:

- Public safety
- Emergency Services
- Water
- Roads

Negotiable:

- Council; an agenda



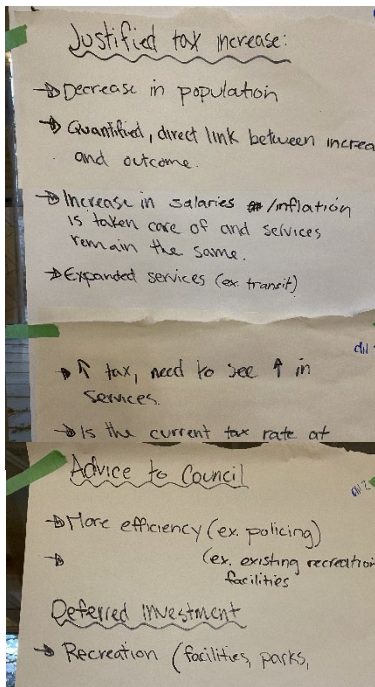
Services

Non-negotiable:

- Public safety
- Emergency services
- Water
- Roads

Negotiable:

- Council; an agenda



What would make a tax increase fee justified (or unjustified) to you?

- Decrease in population
- Quantified, direct link between increase and outcome
- Increase in salaries/inflation is taken care of, and services remain the same
- Expanded services (example, transit)
- Increase tax: need to see an increase in services
- Is the current tax rate at the right level?

If you had to advise Council today, where would you draw the line on taxes versus service levels?

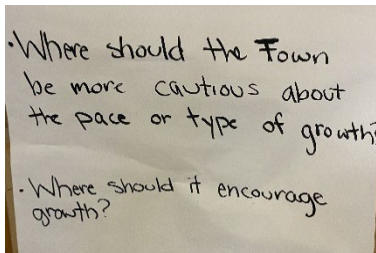
- Focus on more efficiency (e.g. policing and existing recreation facilities)
- Cutting back town council expenses
- Ask the Province for more money

What is one investment you could accept being deferred in the 2027 budget?

- Recreation (facilities, parks)

Dilemma 3: Growth & Economic Diversification and Community Feel

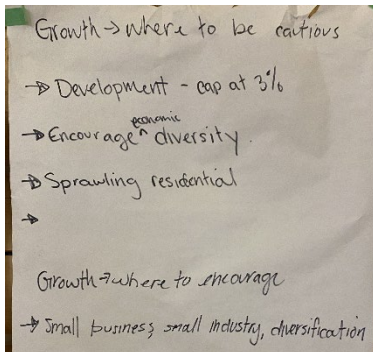
Cochrane is one of the fastest-growing communities in Alberta. Growth brings new tax revenues, local jobs, and economic resilience – but it also puts pressure on roads, services, and the small-town character that most residents moved here for. Past conversations have told us there are concerns about growth rates. The question isn't whether Cochrane grows, but how.



• Where should the Town be more cautious about the pace or type of growth?
• Where should it encourage growth?

Where should the Town be more cautious about the pace or type of growth?

- Development – cap at 3%
- Encourage economic diversity
- Sprawling residential

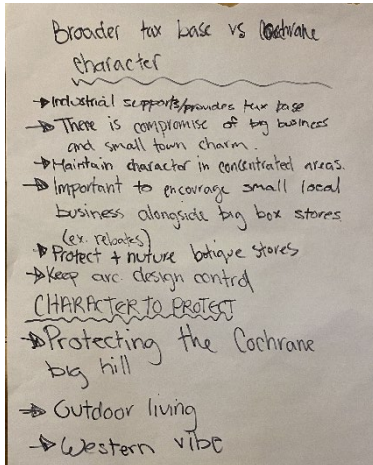


Growth → where to be cautious
→ Development – cap at 3%
→ Encourage ^{economic} diversity
→ Sprawling residential
→
Growth → where to encourage
→ Small business, small industry, diversification

Where should it encourage growth?

- Small business
- Small industry, diversification

How do you weight the benefits of a broader tax base against the risks of losing what makes Cochrane distinctive?

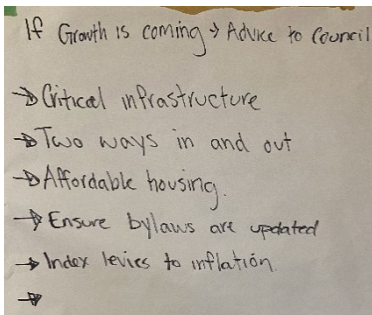


- Industrial supports / provides tax base
- There is a compromise of big business and small-town charm
- Maintain character in concentrated areas
- Important to encourage small local business alongside big box stores (e.g. rebates)
- Protect and nurture boutique stores
- Keep architectural design control

What aspects of Cochrane's character do you most want to see protected as it grows?

- Protecting the Cochrane Big Hill – don't destroy the view ever
- Outdoor living
- Western vibe
- Boutique businesses, industry (e.g. Garmin)
- Downtown / character area is getting quite congested

If growth is coming regardless, what should the Town prioritize to make sure it works for existing residents?



- Critical infrastructure
- Two ways in and out
- Affordable housing
- Ensure bylaws are updated
- Index levies to inflation

Feedback: How well are our budget book and communications process working?

Feedback about the Cochrane Citizen Budget Book

What did they get right in the budget book?

- Glad they did it
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Easy to read
- Good transparency

What could be better?

- Interactive graphics/links/ability to drill down
- Need to provide the math/numbers
- Too high level

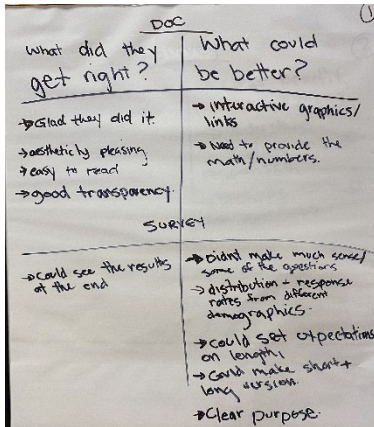
Feedback about the Survey

What did they get right?

- You could see the results at the end of the survey

What could be better?

- Some questions didn't make much sense
- Understanding distribution and response rates from different demographics
- Could set expectations on length of the survey at the start of the survey
- Could make short and long versions (some people want to dig in more; some people don't know enough to comment)
- Purpose for doing the survey should be clear
- Pose cost /benefit type questions (cost is x and benefit is y); make examples concrete
- Ask respondents about the implications to them of budget decisions
- Include more financial or decision making context for questions



Letters to Council

Write a short letter to Council. Provide one sentence for Council to keep in front of them throughout budget deliberations.

Responses written on white notecards:

Despite what you think, opportunity is not equal. Transport, affordable housing etc...

1. Growth & Development needs to slow down as far as residential. Critical infrastructure needs to be in place first such as roadways, entrances to subdivisions etc.

What is the most cost effective for the taxpayer?

During budget deliberations I'd like the town council to consider: is the service being debated a 'core' service? By this I mean, can the service be better performed by others and/or can the town perform the service well and generate good value for the dollar?

Reduce Taxes, Engage Citizens with real?

- Let's focus on the essential needs of the community so we don't bite off more than we can chew.
- More focus on maintenance and prevention versus new and exciting (and expensive) projects.
- Despite what you think, opportunity is not equal... transport, affordable housing, etc.
- What solution is most effective for the taxpayer?
- Growth and development need to slow down as far as residential. Critical infrastructure needs to be in place first, such as roadways, entrances to subdivisions, etc.
- Thank you for listening to all our feedback. I also meant to say that protecting public art and beauty projects/more music events, is very important for community mental/spiritual well-being and tourism growth.
- The 2026 budget booklet is good, links so that we can find out more information, i.e. drill down, to get more information would be a welcome addition.
- Doing what is right is not always popular. Doing what is popular is not always right. It's the political push and pull that you have to deal with. Good luck!
- During budget deliberations, I'd like the Town Council to consider: is the service being debated a 'core' service? By this, I mean, can the service be better performed by others and/or can the Town perform the service well and generate good value for the dollar?
- Reduce taxes, engage citizens with real questions.

Let's focus on the essential needs of the community so we don't bite off more than we can chew. More focus on maintenance & prevention vs new & exciting (and expensive) projects.

The 2026 budget booklet is good, links so that we can find out more information is still down, to get more information would be a welcome addition.
Doing what is right is not always popular. Doing what is popular is not always right. It's the political push & pull that you have to deal with. Good luck!

Thank you for listening to all our feedback. I want to also say that protecting public art & beauty projects/more music events is very important for community mental/spiritual well-being & tourism growth.

Balance needs vs wants;
- Infrastructure is important
but so are the nice to
have amenities that
make a community
cohesive.

Please determine what our infrastructure risks are
and ensure we are balancing risks appropriately.

Find ways to engage the
community groups that already
serve the community well so we can
all work together + support each
other.

Advice to Council

Risk assess all
infrastructure projects
to build into Capital Plan

Support amenities ~~for~~
within existing O&M.

- Balance needs with wants: Infrastructure is important, but so are the nice-to-have amenities that make a community cohesive.
- Please determine what our infrastructure risks are and ensure we are balancing risks appropriately.
- I applaud your decision to focus on fiscal responsibility and collaboration with Town administration and consideration of capping growth, enhancing economic diversity, and lobbying to increase offsite levies.
- Find ways to engage the community groups that already serve the community well so we can all work together and support each other.
- Risk assess all infrastructure projects to build into Capital Plan. Support amenities with existing O&M.
- Please ensure that new businesses coming into; or considering opening 'store or shop etc.'; our town that they each go an extra mile to contribute to our community aside from hiring (people in our community) or other obvious contributions they normally make.

Dear Council,

I applaud your
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+ consideration of
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levies.

Tom Kiliancourt

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Emailed Feedback – Post Meeting

- The community is called University District. Was built by the U of C, but maybe is a model that can be pushed onto future developers
- High quality and uplifting Art and Music are important for the success of our town and for tourism. Visitors pay attention to these details. If I can help in any way with my unique Music and guitars/vocals accompanist, please let me know. I'd love to help for either a festival or a private function.
- A couple of common themes I noticed, which you may see from the summaries:
 - Many believe 'must haves' are the practical route & not 'nice to' haves, unless there are other ways to manage 'nice to's' without budget upheaval.
 - Cutting back on town council expenditures.

- Looking at several items as longer term planning.
- Asking the Province for more funding.
- Energizing communities to become involved in areas as appropriate. (Perhaps finding a couple of responsible adults in each community to be the 'town community liaisons' if they do not exist today.