



WHAT WE HEARD:

PREVIOUS COUNCIL INPUT TO INFORM THE 2026-2029 STRATEGIC PLAN



Executive Summary

To support the development of the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, members of the previous Council were invited to reflect on their term and share advice for the next Council. Their feedback identified several clear successes, including the strong performance of community-led committees such as DARP and the Heritage Resources Committee, the quality and impact of the Social Needs Assessment, and the completion of key projects like the Operations building, alongside ongoing work in tree inventory, trail enhancements, and broader infrastructure improvements.

Councillors also noted practical challenges that affected their work, including mid-day event scheduling, large reading volumes for new councillors, “lowest price” procurement, and the need for more consistent committee and board information, as well as emerging pressures related to aging underground infrastructure, demand for additional recreation amenities (pickleball courts and indoor soccer), tax affordability and clarity.

Looking ahead, Councillors expressed a vision of a thriving, diversified economy supported by strong small-business activity and proactive economic development, while acknowledging Lacombe’s likely continued reliance on a primarily residential tax base. Their advice to the next Council emphasized teamwork, patience, operating with integrity, advocating for residents, and being open to responsible development even when faced with NIMBY sentiment, alongside maintaining awareness of residents who face transportation or financial barriers.

Final reflections encouraged the next Council to appreciate the honour of serving, to set a strong leadership tone and to representing Lacombe with professionalism and integrity.

Participation Overview

- The survey was distributed to all members of the previous Council.
- Participation was voluntary.
- Responses were analyzed individually and then assessed for common themes and areas of alignment.

Method & Data Notes

- Responses were provided on an individual basis and reflect personal perspectives
- Responses are anonymous.
- The analysis focuses on themes that appeared across multiple responses, with illustrative examples used where relevant.

What We Heard From the Previous Council

Question 1: *Reflecting on your term, what successful community initiatives or projects could the City learn from, replicate, or build upon?*

Summary: Councillors highlighted concrete examples of success such as DARP, the tree inventory, trail improvements, major facility construction, strengthened advisory committees, and the Social Needs Assessment. Several responses emphasized that community-led committees—like DARP, Heritage Resources, and the Police Commission—produced visible and meaningful results. Lacombe Days stood out as a signature event with clear opportunities for increased support, volunteer recognition, and direct Council participation.

Responses:

- DARP
- Tree inventory
- Trail enhancement
- Continued infrastructure improvements
- Lacombe Days should be built upon. To the point of a separate category for volunteer awards to ensure recognition of a multi day marquee event. Offer to city staff working events in lieu of a partial work day or something. More involvement by Council. Instead of a catered breakfast, flip some pancakes. The city should support more than just money.
- The completion of the public works building is satisfying. I learned about the short comings of a municipality's tendering process. Hopefully we can work with this process to get the fire station the community wants.
- Communication - I think it is excellent how citizens and councillors can ask questions and a detailed response is received.
- The Social Needs Assessment and Report was completed well with excellent consultation with the community.
- DARP committee has been organized and operates well. We see the results of a community led committee.
- Historical designations have increased. Again, our City offers opportunities for citizens to use their skills well. The Heritage Resources Committee has a number of dedicated members who have worked well for the City.
- Hiring of a new Police Chief using the resources of the Commission went well! Again, the Commission is another place where the City has recruited highly skilled community members who are willing to "go the extra mile" for the City. I trust the Police Service will continue to serve the City well under its new leadership.
- I know there are more examples...

Question 2: Reflecting on your term, what challenges, if any, made it difficult for you to serve the community?

Summary: Councillors identified several barriers to effective service, including social-media negativity, slow capital project timelines, daytime event schedules, and inconsistent committee information. They also described structural challenges such as the tendering process, how committee appointments are assigned, and overwhelming reading volume for new members. Governance clarity, particularly the need for all communication to flow through the CAO, was noted as an ongoing issue requiring reinforcement.

Responses:

- Countering negativity on social media
- Dragging out major capital projects
- Daytime events. Especially mid-day. Makes Council work and attendance at events prohibitive for some members.
- Lacking access to consistent committee/board information.
- Getting buildings built - I feel our procurement process and tendering process seem too blunt. Is the lowest bid always the best? I believe we need to work on this.
- Committee appointments are left up to the mayor. I hear other Councils discuss this as a whole. In my first term I worked full-time yet was appointed to many committees. It didn't seem balanced. New Councillors should be given an opportunity for more input into this process.
- Second, the mayor vets all events Council will attend, or so it seems. I wonder if there could be a different process regarding that. (Having said that, I do not have significant complaints about our Mayor :) just process).
- A barrier as a new councillor was the volumes of reading that was required. I do not regret it as I learned a lot. I encourage Admin to continue assisting councillors so that meeting packages are manageable. (I guess this should have been listed under successes).
- Councillors that do not stay in their lane - councillors need to be continually reminded that their line of communication is through the CAO only.

Question 3: What improvements could be made to ensure Council receives clear and actionable information from Administration?

Summary: Councillors emphasized the need for timely notifications when visible or high-impact activities occur so they can respond effectively to public inquiries. They urged clearer email formatting that distinguishes information-only items from those requiring action. Respondents also noted improvements in meeting packages and recommended a City-specific orientation to reinforce processes and communication expectations.

Responses:

- Timely emails. Sometimes we hear things after the fact.
- Overall though communication with admin has been good
- Emails that clearly denote information only or action required.

- Additionally when larger things occur (like planting multiple trees along 2A), a short heads up email would be awesome. We field questions from the public and when larger expenditures occur, getting caught flat footed isn't great in building public confidence.
- I commend Admin as this has been worked on throughout the last two terms. Meeting packages are more manageable. The information is excellent and thorough.
- New Councillors could receive a City specific orientation, to processes, filling out expense claims, when to ask alternates to attend meetings, lines of communication, etc.

Question 4: What emerging challenges or opportunities should the next Council be aware of that could impact the community?

Summary: Councillors pointed to aging underground infrastructure, growing demand for indoor and outdoor recreation amenities, and the need to strengthen commercial areas such as Midway. Affordability, especially tax impacts, the provincial education levy, and public comprehension of budgeting, was repeatedly raised as a major emerging issue. They also noted the need to revisit public transportation and better understand the implications of high taxes.

Responses:

- Aging infrastructure
- Need for more recreational facilities (pickleball, indoor soccer pitch)
- Improving the viability of current commercial zones (midway)
- Perceived affordability.
- Promised increase in Provincial education levy.
- Updated materials to justify tax dollars re: budget and tax bills.
- Easy visuals. Other communities have great practice.
- Tax base and how it impacts home owners in new subdivisions. Sure, we can build nice new homes but how do we attract people to live there and pay \$8000 per year in residential taxes.
- Transportation. I believe we need to look at public transportation again.
- What areas of the City still contain aging infrastructure? I think it would be helpful for new councillors to know what is under our streets.
- Continue to explain asset management.

Question 5: What does the economy of our community look like in 10 years?

Summary: Councillors envisioned a more diversified and resilient economy, supported by strong small-business activity and proactive economic development. Some expressed optimism about steady growth tied to Lacombe's position between Edmonton and Calgary. However, concerns remain that the City will continue relying heavily on residential taxes with limited major development expected on the east or west sides.

Responses:

- Vibrant and diversified. We haven't been reliant on any one economic sector such as farming which is a good thing
- Thriving. Good support for small business with few impediments.
- Proactive Economic development officer.

- Our City will continue to rely on primarily residential taxes.
- We are in the corridor between Edmonton and Calgary so as those cities grow there will be some spillover to our community.
- I believe the economy will experience some growth as it has in the last years. I am not optimistic about development on the west or east sides.

Question 6: *If you had five minutes with the next Council, what key message would you want to share?*

Summary: Councillors emphasized teamwork, patience, and maintaining focus on the long-term interests of the community. They urged the next Council to advocate for residents, operate with humility, and rational decision making. They also encouraged openness to responsible development and urged the new Council to consider the needs of residents with fewer resources or less reliable transportation.

Responses:

- Continue to work together
- Have patience with one another
- Know that change doesn't happen overnight, that at the end of the day you all want what's best for the community
- Advocate for residents, not justify government.
- Operate with integrity.
- Leave your egos at the door so that decisions in Chambers will benefit the community.
- Always remember the citizens who are not as fortunate as maybe your average person.
- Consider social service type programs and how they serve citizens.
- Remember that not all people have reliable transportation.
- Be open to development even when you hear NIMBY.
- As municipal councillors, we oversee land development and the number of houses being built in communities across Canada.

Question 7: *What, if any, other comments would you like to make to the next Council?*

Summary: Final reflections encouraged resilience, strong leadership tone, and appreciation for the privilege of serving. Councillors emphasized the high standard staff set for themselves and to expect them to operate with integrity and professionalism. They also offered candid reminders about the realities of public criticism and the importance of maintaining perspective.

Responses:

- Have a thick skin and know you can't please everyone.
- It starts at the top.
- Enjoy your service. It is an honour to serve the people of Lacombe.
- The City has excellent staff. Always ensure that staff represent the City well and also operate with integrity. Accept nothing less.