

# Beaumont Environmental Master Plan

Phase 1 Engagement  
January 2021

# What We Heard



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## Executive Summary

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Phase One of the Beaumont Environmental Master Plan (EMP) public engagement process has concluded, with 41 participants providing key feedback in response to questions of environmental impact, priority focus, and plan implementation.

The following What We Heard report highlights the feedback offered by Beaumont residents, businesses, and volunteers. Participants engaged with the November 2020 phase through an online questionnaire, targeted stakeholder “user experience” interviews, and City of Beaumont social media channels. Given the complexity of environmental systems, public feedback focused on issues as diverse as active transportation, air quality, and habitat preservation. From participant feedback, several engagement themes were identified:

1. Increase and formalize the number of available waste management options in Beaumont
2. Promote renewable energy and efficient water use through corporate facilities management and community incentivization
3. Explore low-impact urban development to minimize the environmental cost of urban growth
4. Enforce existing bylaws respecting waste management, vehicle idling, and noise abatement
5. Foster partnerships with local community organizations and neighbourhood schools
6. Broaden education and outreach efforts to motivate environmental action

This important public feedback, coupled with outcomes from environmental policy review and internal staff discussions, will form the basis of the environmental planning process to follow in early 2021.

The Beaumont Environmental Master Plan project team thanks all participants for their time and effort in providing thoughtful feedback in response to the engagement questions. There will be more opportunity to participate in the second phase of engagement, anticipated in spring 2021.

## 1.0 Introduction

In 2012, Beaumont Town Council commissioned Beaumont's first Environmental Master Plan to promote an integrated approach to sustainability. The EMP planning process explored the "triple bottom-line" elements of economic, environmental, and social sustainability in terms of both day-to-day municipal operation and long-term community development.

While largely focused on programs and initiatives to be delivered by municipal administration, the EMP also included several initiatives for residents, businesses, and community groups to undertake in support of the plan's sustainability goals.

Following the direction set out in the current Municipal Strategic Plan, the EMP is now undergoing a review process that will lead to the creation of a new plan in 2021. As part of this process, the City of Beaumont ("the City") is engaging the community to learn more about both the challenges and potential opportunities to support a more resilient environment in Beaumont.

Through a tailored engagement plan that responds to current socially-distanced realities, the City sought feedback from the community on issues impacting environmental focus areas such as air, energy, waste, and water; potential priorities for the updated plan; and the ways in which the community and the City could work together to support environmental sustainability.

In 2021, the City will continue the development of the updated EMP in discussion with municipal staff and subject matter experts drawn from community groups and environmental non-governmental organizations within the region. Together, input from the community, municipality, and other civil society groups will be used to validate, refine, and prioritize strategy and supporting actions for the forthcoming plan.

## 2.0 Process and Methods

In support of the Environmental Master Plan development process, a tailored engagement process was delivered to ensure Beaumont residents and industry could provide their insights and feedback on the current and future state of the local environment.

At its core, the engagement process was designed to gain insight into these three areas of concern:

- What issues are of greatest concern to the health of the environment in Beaumont?
- How should the City of Beaumont prioritize its environmental service delivery?
- What role should individuals and community groups in Beaumont play in promoting positive environmental impact?

The first phase of engagement—focused on building this foundational understanding of the environment in Beaumont—took place for a period of four weeks from November 2-30, 2020. During this time, 41 participants from the community provided feedback to the question prompts across the different engagement methods.

### 2.1 Engagement Methods

Participants in the process provided feedback through a number of different methods:

- Completion of an online questionnaire available at the project webpage,
- Engagement through a series of one-on-one interviews, and
- Interaction with the City's online platforms

A community workshop was organized and delivered on November 25, 2020 via video conference but concluded early due to lack of interest. The workshop was intended to provide the opportunity for an in-depth discussion about the key issues impacting Beaumont's environment, and how those impacts influence the lived experience of workshop attendees.

Section 3.0 outlines the outcomes associated with each of these engagement methods.

## 2.1.1 Questionnaire

Print and online questionnaires were made available for the duration of the engagement period from November 2 to 30, 2020. The questionnaire explored the key issues impacting the environment in Beaumont and the potential strategic direction the environmental master plan could take in response. Participants were also asked to consider the types of interventions that would be most effective in achieving positive environmental impact in Beaumont, from education and outreach programs to the development of new infrastructure, and to identify any promising best practices that have been piloted in other jurisdictions.

From November 2 to 30, 2020, the online questionnaire received 34 complete and 17 partial responses from self-selected participants for a 66.7% completion rate. No print questionnaires were submitted.

## 2.1.2 Interviews

As part of the November 2020 engagement process, the project team conducted a series of seven user experience mapping interviews with selected stakeholders drawn from both the local community and environmental organizations.

User experience mapping integrates in-depth user perspectives into the strategic planning process by asking selected stakeholders to illustrate their experience with a service and topic in detail. The process identifies parts of the user experience that are unexpected; as these unheralded issues are integrated into the strategic planning process, the resulting plan direction becomes more robust, grounded, and reflective of the community it serves.

## 2.1.3 Online Platform Engagement

Through the EMP project page at [beaumont.ab.ca/emp](http://beaumont.ab.ca/emp), the City shared project details, advertised engagement opportunities, and provided a means for feedback via email and questionnaire. The website remains live and will continue to provide updated information through the process. From October 1 to December 8, 2020, the project webpage received 118 unique visitors and 152 page views.

The City's Facebook and Instagram social media accounts were also used to advertise the process and solicit feedback. Across three posts (two advertising the EMP in specific, and one the City's public engagement opportunities in general), 10.5k social media accounts were reached, with a combined 447 post clicks and 66 likes, comments, or shares in response.

## 2.2 Communication Methods

Engagement opportunities were communicated through the following approaches:

- A dedicated project page, containing a comprehensive list of engagement opportunities, on the City of Beaumont website at [beaumont.ab.ca/emp](http://beaumont.ab.ca/emp)
- Direct interview invitations to representatives associated with local community groups
- Social media advertisements via the City of Beaumont accounts
- Weekly advertisements in La Nouvelle Beaumont community newspaper
- Engagement cross-promotion with concurrent Age-Friendly and Affordable Housing planning processes.

### 3.0 Engagement Outcomes

This section provides an overview of the outcomes from the interview and questionnaire engagement methods. In section 4.0, the key themes emerging from these process outcomes are discussed.

#### 3.1 Questionnaire

##### Demographics

Respondents were asked to provide basic demographic information as a means to understand the prospective audience of the plan for messaging and programming purposes. The majority of respondents are between 25-44 years old (61.3%) and possess an undergraduate degree or higher (75.5%). Where tenure is concerned, the majority of respondents have lived in Beaumont for five years or more (80.9%) and own property within the community (89.4%).

##### Questions

Participants were asked to consider the issues affecting the environment in Beaumont, the strategic direction that the EMP may take (with reference to EMP ‘focus areas’) and potential actions and best practices that could be applied to achieve positive environmental outcomes. The following questions were posed:

1. What do you believe the City of Beaumont’s environmental priorities should be? (air, active transportation, biodiversity, energy, land management, waste, water)
2. Are there any environmental priorities you believe should be included in the list above?
3. What is the most significant environmental issue affecting Beaumont today?
4. Are there environmental initiatives you have seen elsewhere which may be appropriate for use in Beaumont?
5. How can Beaumont best achieve its environmental priorities? (i.e. education and outreach, financial incentives, bylaws and policies, infrastructure development, other)

#### 1. What do you believe the City of Beaumont’s environmental priorities should be?

This question provides insights into what participants view as the most important environmental elements that should be addressed by the City of Beaumont. These environmental elements will appear as “focus areas” within the final Environmental Master Plan—a common convention that allows complex environmental systems to be categorized into discrete pieces. Participants collectively rated elements of waste (175 score), water (165 score), and land management (164 score) highest, while rating air (132 score) and active transportation (118 score) lowest.

| Item                  | Rank | Distribution | Score |
|-----------------------|------|--------------|-------|
| Waste                 | 1    |              | 175   |
| Water                 | 2    |              | 165   |
| Land Management       | 3    |              | 164   |
| Biodiversity          | 4    |              | 146   |
| Energy                | 5    |              | 143   |
| Air                   | 6    |              | 132   |
| Active Transportation | 7    |              | 118   |

lowest rank highest rank

Table 1. Environmental priorities by rank.

#### 2. Are there any environmental priorities you believe should be included in the list above?

Individual responses often re-emphasized the importance of listed environmental priorities, with reference to biodiversity and low-impact development (6 references), renewable energy (2), and waste management (2). Other suggested areas of focus included noise pollution (2 references), sense of community (1), and climate change (1). To the latter point, the EMP aims to attend to the overarching theme of climate change within each of the plan’s eventual focus areas.

### 3. What is the most significant environmental issue affecting Beaumont today?

This question provides additional insight into the environmental priorities discussed above. Participants most commonly cited waste reduction, composting, and recycling (11 references), threatened biodiversity (6), urban planning and transportation impacts (6) and renewable energy transition (6) as the defining environmental issues in Beaumont.

The complete list of cited issues is provided below.

| Identified issue                           | Count |
|--|-------|
| Waste reduction, composting, and recycling | 11    |
| Threatened biodiversity                    | 6     |
| Urban planning and transportation impacts  | 6     |
| Renewable energy transition                | 6     |
| Lack of bylaw enforcement (idling, waste)  | 4     |
| Poor air quality                           | 3     |
| Flooding and water management              | 2     |
| Lack of regional transit                   | 1     |
| Lack of plants / trees                     | 1     |
| Insufficient park spaces                   | 1     |
| Waste collection                           | 1     |
| Salt use on roadways                       | 1     |
| Lack of social concern for environment     | 1     |
| Density                                    | 1     |
| Noise pollution                            | 1     |
| Energy costs                               | 1     |
| Climate change                             | 1     |

Table 2. Identified environmental issues.

### 4. Are there environmental initiatives you have seen elsewhere that may be appropriate for use in Beaumont?

This question provides insight into the experiences and observations of those participants who are from or have visited other jurisdictions within the region, the country, and the world. There were no overwhelmingly popular suggestions; the recommendation for corporate renewable energy projects (building development and retrofitting, vehicle fleet electrification, energy efficiency certification) was the most popular with 5 references.

The suggested initiatives are presented below.

| Environmental initiative   | Count |
|--|-------|
| Corporate renewable energy projects  | 5     |
| Urban forestry supported by local partnerships and municipal leadership            | 3     |
| Rebate programs for renewable energy and efficiency                                | 3     |
| Improved recycling and composting programs   | 3     |
| Naturalization (encourage pollinators and birds, native plants and grasses)        | 2     |
| Urban agriculture (school and community gardening, edible plants in right-of-ways) | 2     |
| Single-use plastics ban  | 2     |
| Electric vehicle charging infrastructure   | 2     |
| Sustainable transportation (rapid transit, cycling, parking reduction)             | 2     |
| Urban land management (growth boundaries, ecologically sensitive land reserves)    | 2     |
| Grassroots community initiatives support   | 1     |

Table 3. Potential environmental initiatives.

### 5. How can Beaumont best achieve its environmental priorities?

This question provides insight into the approaches that the City may take to achieve its environmental aims. As illustrated in Figure 1, there is an even level of support for three of the four different approaches offered; infrastructure development is the outlier, with 57.9% of support relative to the 68.4% support enjoyed by education and outreach programs, financial incentives, and bylaws and policies. Participants offered other “write-in” suggestions to provide employment for the purpose of maintaining greenspaces, using pilot programs to test ideas, slowing industrial development, creating green infrastructure, and adopting specific environmental measures.

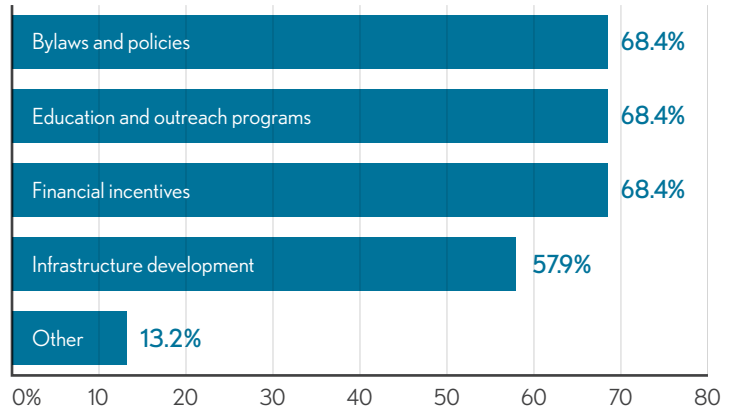


Figure 1. Stated preference for potential environmental management approaches.

## 3.2 Interviews

In these user experience mapping interviews, interviewers asked participants to consider an average “day in the life” to explore how the environment in Beaumont (and beyond) shapes their experiences. From there, the interviewers moved on to a broader line of questioning focused on how environmental planning and policy can be leveraged to resolve identified issues and effect positive impact.

The “day in the life” portion of the interview revealed a number of evident and not-so-evident environmental influences on the daily lives of participating Beaumontians. These influences are experienced through:

- **Active transportation and leisure activities:** Enjoying outdoor recreation and natural areas, walking and cycling along Beaumont’s trail network, observing the state of the environment, limiting car use by relying on active modes of transportation.
- **Daily essentials shopping:** Buying in bulk, from Community Supported Agriculture boxes, and selecting environmentally-friendly products.
- **Environmental stewardship:** Participation in urban agriculture activities; maintaining local water resources; participating in organized and ad-hoc environmental clean-up; planting native grasses, trees, and “pollinator pathways”; organizing water retention infrastructure (rain barrels, artificial ponds) on private lands; limiting chemical use, and limiting energy and water use within the home.
- **Volunteer and educational opportunities:** Community outreach and education on environmental topics, youth engagement, advocacy and writing.
- **Professional life:** Supporting corporate sustainability policies; promoting energy efficiency and air quality efforts within the workplace.

With these influences identified, interviewees provided several ideas for how to improve the environment in Beaumont. Broadly, these recommendations were concerned with:

- Increasing the rigour and transparency of plan implementation by the City of Beaumont
- Building new partnerships, education, and outreach opportunities
- Creating new waste diversion programs that, appropriately, seek to divert waste from the landfill by composting, recycling, or repurposing waste products
- Decreasing water use through improved infrastructure and efficiency programs
- Supporting water quality and community resiliency through watercourse retention in community design and naturalized stormwater management
- Decreasing energy use through support for renewables and efficiency programs
- Conserving biodiversity through native grass and tree plantings, applying low-impact development principles in urban development, and ensuring connected habitat for local insect and animal wildlife.

# A day in the life in Beaumont.

The Environmental Master Plan team conducted a series of interviews with different kinds of residents in Beaumont to understand a typical day in their life and how environmental considerations informed their actions. The table below summarizes the common themes related to environmental action heard through these interviews.

| Time of Day                  | Morning  | Afternoon   | Evening   |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
|                              | In the morning, people are getting themselves and their families ready for the day. They are beginning their work day and getting into the varied demands on their day. In some instances, work responsibilities have a direct relationship to the environment.  | In the afternoon, people are continuing with their work day. As they wrap up their work demands, people are then taking care of errands, such as purchasing necessities and are also using their leisure time to connect with the outdoors in various ways.   | In the evening, people are generally relaxing and unwinding. Those that are spending time on environment-related issues were related to work demands, when they need to spend some time in the evenings on professional responsibilities. |
| Environmental Considerations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Volunteer &amp; Educational Work</li> <li>● Outdoor Activity</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Outdoor Activity</li> <li>● Purchasing Necessities</li> <li>● "Green Thumb" Activities</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Professional Work</li> </ul>   |
| Examples of Actions          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Working on agricultural lands</li> <li>● Maintaining local water resources</li> <li>● Participating in urban agriculture, food forest, planting with a purpose</li> <li>● Writing grant applications</li> <li>● Teaching youth about participation in the environment</li> <li>● Walking to Don Sparrow Lake</li> <li>● "Checking in" on the state of the environment</li> <li>● Visiting Four Seasons Park</li> <li>● Walking as a part of the day</li> <li>● Cleaning up the environment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taking advantage of outdoor recreation opportunities</li> <li>● Commuting actively</li> <li>● Visiting the farmer's market</li> <li>● Choosing environmental products</li> <li>● Shopping in bulk</li> <li>● Reusing shopping bags</li> <li>● Reusing water through rain barrels and pond water</li> <li>● Composting and gardening</li> <li>● Using natural approaches to pest management</li> <li>● Limiting pesticide use</li> <li>● Limiting energy and water use within the home</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Developing energy efficiency policy</li> <li>● Air quality management</li> </ul>   |

These insights help the Environmental Master Plan project team understand where local residents are currently focusing their efforts to have a positive impact on the environment in Beaumont. These existing efforts highlight current areas of interest, which will inform the initial action planning steps in the EMP process. This understanding of lived experiences also provides insights into how new initiatives can support how people live in Beaumont.



## 4.0 Engagement Themes

From the interview and questionnaire feedback, several key themes have been identified for consideration in the forthcoming planning process. Each of these themes are discussed in some detail—and paired with corresponding verbatim quotes wherever possible—below.

### 1. Increase and formalize the number of available waste management options in Beaumont.

**Description:** Interview and questionnaire participants placed waste management as a significant priority for environmental action in Beaumont. This feedback assumed many forms, with greatest emphasis placed on bylaws, policies, and infrastructure. Participants noted that municipal waste management in multi-family housing could be made compulsory, and that the City could assume a leadership role in the exploration of new and unconventional forms of waste management. Examples include: the creation of a “Reuse Centre” that accepts items from community members and refurbishes them for use by individuals and organizations; the provision of waste management and composting facilities in Beaumont, and the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility through vendor agreements with the City of Beaumont.

#### VERBATIM QUOTES:

*“Lower our waste footprint by focusing on compost initiatives (teaching residents how important composting is and how easy it is to do).”*

*“Push for ‘green’ garbage disposal, i.e. push from Beaumont to use green carts and recycling. Perhaps the city should hire waste auditors to do random non checks to ensure waste is being disposed of properly.”*

*“Waste; I think a push on reducing waste would make a big impact. I really like the composting program, but reduction in waste (such as a ban on plastics) would be great.”*

### 2. Promote renewable energy and efficient water use through corporate facility management and community incentives.

**Description:** Energy and water use were recurrent messages throughout the engagement process, echoed in part by water being the second-most selected environmental priority in Question 1. Energy and water use were discussed in terms of renewability and efficiency, respectively. In effect, how might the City of Beaumont promote the sustainable use of resources through new technologies and paradigms while also encouraging simple steps that can be carried out by the community now?

Participants suggested that the City of Beaumont could lead by example by promoting renewable and efficient resource use within its corporate facilities and among its vehicle fleet, the purchase of carbon credits to offset conventional energy use, and the introduction of new sustainable energy pilot programs to demonstrate the efficacy of such “proofs-of-concept.”. Participants also noted the prospective use of community-based incentives to motivate change, such as the introduction of energy rebates for residents looking to install solar panels and other renewable energy technologies.

#### VERBATIM QUOTES:

*“Encouraging/supporting green energy in businesses and municipal buildings.”*

*“I think Beaumont should push renewable energy (residential and commercial solar projects).”*

*“Energy Efficiency - Public buildings should meet the LEED certification for Energy Efficiency and design. Electric Vehicle Recharging Station Infrastructure - Partner with Provincial Government & Local Businesses for convenient locations, and cost sharing.”*

*“Energy production and storage needs. We need to transition to sustainable resources like wind and solar. As well as having some form of storage like battery packs to offset downtime of the solar and wind.”*

### 3. Explore low-impact urban development to minimize the environmental cost of urban growth.

**Description:** The impact of urban development and conventional transportation on the environment was a consistent theme through both interview and questionnaire engagement. This ranged from diffuse references to “poor planning” and limited opportunity for sustainable transportation to specific statements on the destruction of watercourses (wetlands, streams) and the loss of biodiversity due to urban development.

In response to these identified challenges, participants recommended increased emphasis on responsible environmental planning that prioritizes the incorporation of naturalized green spaces into neighbourhoods, the inclusion of natural watercourses into community planning, and the provision of pollinator pathways (contiguous bee habitats) in open space design to support biodiversity. Urban agriculture was referenced as a community-led initiative that could help sustain and grow biodiversity within Beaumont.

VERBATIM QUOTES:

*“Beaumont is developing land that was previously part of natural wetland habitat with many unseen but endangered species making these areas their home. Biodiversity, for environmental sustainability, should be considered when developing these areas.”*

*“Commuter traffic needs to be more sustainable. Transit is great (except during COVID) but Expanding routes to different areas of South Edmonton would be beneficial.”*

*“Running houses right up to water features that flood every spring is not good planning. Use biodiverse planting suitable for riparian areas and other suitable plants to help deal with spring flooding.”*

**4. Enforce existing bylaws respecting waste management, vehicle idling, and noise abatement.**

**Description:** Common to the interview and questionnaire responses was the need to enforce existing City of Beaumont bylaws focused on preventing littering, vehicle idling, and noise pollution to both reduce environmental impact and maximize public health and “quality of life” outcomes.

VERBATIM QUOTES:

*“Noise pollution, maybe especially in the older part of the city, where there is zero clearance between properties.”*

*“Noise pollution. Enforcement of our no-idling law, which is part ... of Air in the list.”*

*“The constant waste and litter around town [is the most significant environmental issue facing Beaumont today].”*

**5. Foster partnerships with local community organizations and neighbourhood schools.**

**Description:** Participants—perhaps due to their engagement with and interest in environmental issues—cited the need and potential for the formation of partnerships between the City of Beaumont and local industry, community organizations and neighbourhood schools to prompt environmental action. Interviewees envisioned these partnerships as a means to achieve a specific end—such as redirecting produce waste from grocery stores to local composting programs—and to promote lifelong participation in environmental stewardship among Beaumont residents.

Recommendations include the cross-promotion of environmental “success stories” among the City and volunteer groups and the mobilization of the Beaumont community through volunteer and subject matter expert social networks.

**6. Broaden education and outreach efforts to motivate environmental action.**

**Description:** In support of new community partnerships, participants in the engagement process also pointed to the need to introduce educational opportunities to promote positive environmental action. This direction was referenced in three ways. In the first, general education and outreach, particularly aimed at youth, was recommended to increase knowledge of environmental systems and positive behaviours. In the second, tailored education programs could improve awareness of and participation in environmental initiatives conducted by the City of Beaumont. In the third, education could be paired with demonstration projects—like community gardens—to promote community-led volunteer initiatives.

## 5.0 Next Steps

With the first phase of public engagement now complete, the EMP project team will now move to place these broad feedback themes and direction provided by the public in context of City of Beaumont priorities and environmental best practice and begin the development of a draft Environmental Master Plan.

This draft plan will be shared for public review and feedback to determine the extent to which public sentiment was accurately captured in the planning process and to modify as needed. We anticipate the draft plan will be ready for public review and comment in spring 2021.

Thank you to those who participated in the first phase of engagement. To learn more about the project and to keep informed of the ongoing planning process, visit [beaumont.ab.ca/emp](http://beaumont.ab.ca/emp).

