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# Public Input - MDP Survey Results

Summer Village of Ghost Lake - August/September, 2018

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Birch Consulting



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## Introduction

In August and early September 2018, Summer Village of Ghost Lake residents and landowners were asked to complete an online survey to assist in preparation of the Summer Village's new Municipal Development Plan (MDP). The survey was prepared by Birch Consulting following discussion with the MDP Steering Committee about the types of land use planning issues that were relevant to the community. Some of the survey questions were selected with the intention of updating previously assessed community positions, such as the desire for more growth and development. Other questions were asked in order to discover the position and interests of community members on newly evolving issues, such as short term vacation rentals. Still others were more open ended, intended to determine community sentiment regarding such things as water and sewer provision.

The survey was vetted by the Steering Committee prior to being posted on line. It was also offered in paper format for those who might not have been comfortable or able to use the online survey tool.

The input received from the survey is summarized below. The MDP Steering Committee has reviewed the detailed survey results and will use them to prepare the MDP but decided that the detailed results should not be made public. The members felt it likely that, given the small size of the community, some of the people who responded to the survey could be identified by their comments even though the survey results were anonymous. The detailed survey results are being provided to Council given the perceived value of those detailed comments to future decision-making beyond the scope of the MDP.

### Question 1: Are you a full-time or part-time resident of the Summer Village of Ghost Lake?

There were 115 responses as follows:

- Full-time Residents - 43.48%
- Part-time Residents - 56.52%

### Question 2: Do you rent or own the property you use in the Summer Village of Ghost Lake?

Again there were 115 responses. The results were:

- Rent - 1.74%
- Own - 98.26%

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### Question 3: What two (2) characteristics of the Summer Village of Ghost Lake do you like the most and want to preserve into the future?

There were 97 responses received for the first characteristic and 95 responses for the second characteristic. The top ten most frequently mentioned #1 and #2 characteristics are listed below. The characteristics are listed in order of frequency of mention by the survey respondents, with the number of mentions listed in brackets after each characteristic. In this regard note that the words used below to characterize the comments have been developed by the consultant for grouping purposes based on the wording used by the survey respondents.

#### Characteristic #1:

- Access to the Ghost Reservoir, the docks, and water recreation (13)
- The Summer Village's natural areas, springs, open grasslands, and environmental health (11)
- The small-town community atmosphere (10)
- Its small size and low population density (9)
- The peace and quiet (7)
- Volunteerism, sense of community and community spirit (5)
- It is family-oriented (5)
- No visible business activity or commercial development (5)
- The friendly people and relationships that are formed (4)
- The year-round recreational opportunities - lake, beach, tennis courts, golf, forest paths, winter activities on lake, etc. (4)

#### Characteristic #2:

- The small-town community atmosphere (11)
- No visible business activity or commercial development (11)
- The peace and quiet (10)
- Access to the Ghost Reservoir, the docks, and water recreation (8)
- Volunteerism, sense of community and community spirit (7)
- Its small size and low population density (7)
- The year-round recreational opportunities - lake, beach, tennis courts, golf, forest paths, winter activities on lake, etc. (7)
- The Summer Village's natural areas, springs, open grasslands, and environmental health (6)
- The friendly people and relationships that are formed (5)
- The lack of streetlights (5)

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## Question 4: If you could change two (2) things in the Summer Village of Ghost Lake, what would they be and how would you change them?

This question elicited 86 responses and 70 responses respectively in terms of the first and second things people would change. In contrast to the responses for Question 3 above, with this question there was a more diverse array of responses and less consolidation around common themes. For that reason only common responses having four or more references are listed below. Again, the description of each characteristic has been developed by the consultant for grouping purposes based on wording used by the survey respondents. Similarly, the number of mentions is again listed in brackets after each characteristic.

### Things To Change #1:

- Increase bylaw enforcement (stated in broad terms or with specific reference to vehicles parked on roads, abuse of garbage disposal areas, and unsightly premises) especially in the summer, because education and signs are not working (10)
- Limit the amount of Ghost Reservoir draw-down in the spring (7)
- Less municipal and senior government red tape and bylaws (7)
- No changes; we like the Summer Village as it is (6)
- Enforce bylaws regarding recreational trailers and derelict vehicles (5 - this is additional to the more general bylaw enforcement suggestion above)
- Improve the situation at the waste transfer site, with suggestions for more bins, levelling of the ground, more composting options (4)

### Things To Change #2:

- Limit the amount of Ghost Reservoir draw-down in the spring (9)
- Increase bylaw enforcement (stated in broad terms or with specific reference to vehicles parked on roads, abuse of garbage disposal areas, and unsightly premises) especially in the summer, because education and signs are not working (4)
- Enforce bylaws regarding recreational trailers and derelict vehicles (4 - this is additional to the more general bylaw enforcement suggestion above)

### Additional Things To Change:

In order to take advantage of the wide range of responses to this question, it was decided that where a change item had an individual frequency of mention of less than four in either list #1 or list #2 but a combined frequency of mention of four or greater when the two lists were combined, these should also be provided in this survey summary. These additional suggestions for change are:

- Encourage more volunteers, especially younger volunteers (5)
- Limit the size of residences and building height/ no second stories (4)
- Add more dock space (4)
- Have our own mail delivery and postal code (4)

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**Question 5: In 2012, the community finalized the Summer Village of Ghost Lake Sustainability Plan (available for viewing at [www.ghostlake.ca](http://www.ghostlake.ca)). Do you believe the Sustainability Plan is still relevant and should be used to help formulate the MDP?**

There were 75 responses as follows:

- Yes, the Sustainability Plan is still relevant and should be used - 89.33%
- No, the Sustainability Plan is no longer relevant and should not be used - 10.67%

There was very strong opinion advocating the continued relevance and use of the 2012 Sustainability Plan. Those supporting this position typically pointed out the extensive effort and inclusiveness of that planning process. They expressed the view that the Sustainability Plan is still reflective of the community's preferred direction. Indeed, several respondents asked for more action to accomplish the Sustainability Plan's numerous objectives.

The most common reason given for suggesting the Sustainability Plan may no longer be relevant was the concern that the document is simply getting older. No one suggested it was an incorrect reflection of the community or that community opinion had actually changed.

**Question 6: A new issue facing many municipalities is short term vacation rentals (e.g., Airbnb and VRBO). While the long-term rental of the house is legal and falls under provincial legislation, the short-term (generally thought of as less than 30 days, and often lasting only a few days to a week) rental of a property is a municipal land use issue. Are you in favour of people in the Summer Village of Ghost Lake renting out their house for short-term vacation rental purposes?**

There were 83 responses as follows:

- Yes, in favour of short term vacation rentals- 36.14%
- No, not in favour of short term vacation rentals - 63.66%

The most frequent comment made by those in support of allowing short term vacation rental was that people owning properties should be able to rent them out provided they take responsibility for their renter's actions and their use of Summer Village property. Associated with this opinion were a few people who simply felt that people should be able to use their properties as they wish. Some other comments made by those in support were:

- It should be given a try. If it does not work out, the rules can be changed to prohibit short term rentals.

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- Short term vacation rentals are okay provided the property owners have appropriate insurance and offset any extra costs incurred by other Summer Village owners, such as for extra garbage pick-up.
  - They should be licensed by the Summer Village if allowed and pay higher property taxes (with the suggestion that the regulations being developed in Canmore serve as an example).
  - Allowing short term vacation rentals would help people pay for their properties.
  - Property owners screen their potential vacation renters and they carry insurance.
  - If allowed, Summer Village administration should put together an information package for the short term vacation renters so that there are clear expectations as to Summer Village rules and expectations.

The majority of persons responding to the question were opposed the idea of allowing short term vacation rentals. Some noted that it was contrary to the Land Use Bylaw and inconsistent with the Sustainability Plan, notably in terms of the desire to keep Ghost Lake a single family residential community. Their primary concern was that there would be a loss of community cohesion and the sense of knowing your neighbours, with increased safety issues. They also thought that allowing short term vacation rentals would increase:

- local traffic;
- risk of fire;
- use of community facilities;
- noise;
- parking problems;
- visibility of the community to the public;
- theft and the need to secure one's property;
- risk of property damage; and
- liability exposure of the municipality.

Some of those opposed to allowing short term vacation rentals made clear that they were not opposed to people lending their homes to friends and relatives. They viewed this as a different type of use than short term vacation rentals to strangers.

**Question 7: Another common form of short term vacation rental is a Bed and Breakfast, where the owner stays in the home and rents out a few rooms to visitors, typically providing breakfast each morning. Are you in favour of allowing Bed and Breakfast accommodation in the Summer Village of Ghost Lake?**

There were 82 responses received on this question, with an almost even split of opinion:

- Those in support of allowing Bed and Breakfast development: 48.78%

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- Those opposed to allowing Bed and Breakfast development: 51.22%

The main reason given by those in support of allowing Bed and Breakfasts is that having the homeowner present reduces the risk of problems (this was contrasted against the short term vacation rental alternative). Some other comments were:

- These vacationers do not stay in Ghost Lake but head off to regional attractions, such as the national parks.
- People should be able to use their properties as they wish.
- It would help people pay for their properties.
- This is preferable to Airbnb or VRBO rentals, but the homeowners still need to take responsibility for their guests, get a business licence, and have appropriate insurance.

There were two predominant reasons given by those opposed to allowing Bed and Breakfast developments. First was that it was against the longstanding rules aimed at keeping Ghost Lake a single family residential community, without commercialization. Second was that having non-owners/non-residents in the Summer Village would take away from the sense of community that currently exists and likely lead to more bylaw transgressions. Some other comments by those against Bed and Breakfasts were:

- There will be increased demand on municipal services and infrastructure, such as garbage removal and recreation facilities.
- There will be increased local traffic.
- Allowing Bed and Breakfasts will ultimately lead to allowing other short term vacation rentals (e.g., Airbnb and VRBO).

**Question 8: Operating a Bed and Breakfast is usually considered a Home Occupation. The term “Home Occupation” covers a lot of possibilities, from a carpentry business operating out of a garage to an internet-based business operating out of an office in a house. Do you have any comments or suggestions about the regulation of Home Occupations in the Summer Village of Ghost Lake?**

There were 68 responses to this question. Where there were at least three responses of a similar nature they are listed below in order of frequency of mention by survey respondents. The number of mentions is listed in brackets after each comment. Note that the description for each grouping has been developed by the consultant but is based on wording used by the survey respondents.

- We have no issues with home occupations provided there are no adverse impacts on neighbours and other Summer Villagers (parking, noise, unsightly yards, etc.) (14)
- Home occupations are okay as long as they do not bring customers into the Summer Village and there are no non-resident employees (12)

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- These are adequately addressed by regulations in the current Land Use Bylaw - follow them (9)
  - There should be no home occupations in Ghost Lake (8)
  - Home occupations are acceptable only if there is absolutely no impact on neighbours - no outside clients, no visible storage, no increased noise, etc. (7)
  - Home occupations are okay within reason, provided there is a proper approval process and no nuisance (5)
  - We have no serious issues; we are fine with home based businesses (3)
  - Enforce the current bylaws (3)
  - People should be allowed to do what they want on their properties; this should not be regulated (3)

**Question 9: Secondary suites (characterized as a second dwelling on a property with its own living area, kitchen, bathroom and entrance, usually within the principal residence but sometimes in an accessory building such as a garage) are not currently allowed in the Summer Village. Are you in favour or against allowing secondary suites in the Summer Village of Ghost Lake?**

There were 81 responses as follows:

- In favour of allowing secondary suites - 37.04%
- Opposed to allowing secondary suites - 62.96%

As with the previous question, where there were at least three responses of a similar nature they are listed below, in order of frequency of mention by survey respondents. The number of mentions is listed in brackets after each comment. Again, the description for each grouping has been developed by the consultant based on wording used by the survey respondents.

- Secondary suites are okay if the property owner occupies the primary residence and the suite is not rented out but used by aging parents, other relatives or caregivers (6)
- No - enforce the existing bylaws (5)
- No - single family dwellings only (4)
- No - does not fit the concept of a summer village; does not fit Sustainability Plan direction (4)
- Secondary suites are okay if they receive approval; are properly regulated (3)
- No - will cause more traffic, parking and vehicle storage issues (3)
- No - stresses wells and septic systems (3)

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**Question 10: Each property in the Summer Village of Ghost Lake currently has its own private water system and sewage treatment system. Are you aware of any need to move away from these private systems?**

There were 79 responses to this question. The results were:

- Yes - 11.39%
- No - 88.61%

Again, the responses have been grouped into common categories by the consultant based on the wording used by the survey respondents. Where there were at least three responses of a similar nature, they are listed below. The number of mentions is listed in brackets after each comment to give a sense of frequency and relative importance.

- We do not need to move away from the current systems now but municipal systems, especially for water, may be necessary in the future. Reasons for such a change would be: water level fluctuations in the Ghost Reservoir becoming more dramatic and negatively impacting groundwater levels or supply; effect of decisions by other governments in the region or in the South Saskatchewan River Basin; larger homes, more homes or more permanent residents in Ghost Lake; changes in senior government regulations or requirements. (9)
- Municipal water and sewer services would be very expensive and cannot be justified at this time (7)
- Having private water and sewage systems puts the onus on property owners to be more responsible when managing resources; each property owner should look after their own water and sewage needs rather than relying on the municipality (3)
- Because of declining well water levels, we need/may need a municipal water system. (3)
- When houses are renovated or replaced, the existing systems should be upgraded, and holding tanks should be installed rather than septic fields (3)
- Holding tanks should be required for properties near the lake to prevent possible pollution (3)
- No problems with the current systems that I know of (3)
- In a perfect world, community-wide water and sewage would be preferred; 'nice to have' not 'need to have' (3)

**Question 11: Municipal Development Plans must address transportation matters in the municipality (adjacent highways, internal roads, pedestrian or bicycle trails, public transit, etc.). What transportation issues, if any, are of concern to you in the Summer Village of Ghost Lake?**

There were 71 responses to this question. Where there were at least three responses of a similar nature they are listed below in order of frequency of mention by survey respondents. The number of mentions is listed in brackets after each comment. Note that the description

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for each grouping has been developed by the consultant but is based on wording used by the survey respondents.

- None; no concerns (20)
- Speeding is an issue; encourage reduced speeds in Ghost Lake (10)
- Highway 1A is dangerous and should be widened and straightened to accommodate vehicles, semi-trailers, cyclists and pedestrians (10)
- Improve road maintenance - snow and ice removal - in winter; may have to use a service rather than rely on volunteers (9)
- Need a turn lane into the Summer Village on Highway 1A (6)
- Replace rubber speed bumps with properly designed speed bumps; keep speed bumps in winter; replace missing speed bump (5)
- Use of unlicensed ATVs in Summer Village and by underaged youth is a concern (4)
- The newly paved roads are an asset; roads are in good shape (3)

### **Question 12: There is room within the Summer Village of Ghost Lake's current boundaries to accommodate growth. Would you like to see more development in the Summer Village?**

There were 78 responses to this question. The results were:

- Yes, more development - 20.51%
- No more development - 79.49%

The majority of comments received on this question fell into one of two distinct categories based on support or opposition to there being more development. Because these comments tended to be more unique to the individual and less easily grouped by similarities than with other questions, they have been provided in a slightly different format.

The majority of respondents, those opposed to development, provided the following reasons (21):

- Damage to natural areas
- Changes to the unique way of life of Ghost Lake
- Disruption of the private and quiet nature of the community
- Generates more noise and pollution
- Goes against the Sustainability Plan
- Would reduce the amount of green space
- Makes sale of exiting properties more difficult
- Loss of the Summer Village's existing charm
- Increased stress on infrastructure - roads, recreation facilities, garbage bins, composting site, burn pile, dock space
- Groundwater supply cannot handle it
- Sewage handling capacity is limited

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- Will devalue properties
  - More development will lead to more demand for services and increase taxes

The smaller group, in support of more development, offered the following (12):

- Need more people to sustain status as a Summer Village
- Need more volunteers
- Will increase the tax base
- Will add more people and create a busier, more active community
- I support more development but only if it is single family residential development

Other comments with at least three mentions:

- I am in support of more development if “development” means (8):
  - more recreation facilities
  - a garden plot (community garden?)
  - a community hall on the lake with entertainment facilities and a deck for barbecues and socials
  - better access to the lake when water levels are low
  - improvements to the waterfront
  - a new and bigger beach for adult activities like volleyball and kayaking
  - a community gym
  - updating the older houses and cabins
- I can support more development only if (4):
  - a larger tax base is required
  - it helps prevent takeover by the MD of Bighorn

**Question 13: Is there an issue not covered above that you would like addressed in the Summer Village of Ghost Lake’s MDP? (It is a future-focused, long range planning document.) If so, what is the issue and how should it be addressed?**

There were only 42 comments in response to this question. As might be expected given the nature of the question, the range of responses was broad. Consequently, for this question summary only, where there were at least two responses of a similar nature they are listed below. The number of mentions is listed in brackets. Again, the description for each grouping has been developed by the consultant based on wording used by the survey respondents.

- There needs to be more enforcement of Summer Village bylaws regarding the following (9):
  - recreational trailer use ... this is not a campground
  - miscellaneous storage on properties
  - parking on Summer Village property
  - storage of unused vehicles

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- misuse/ abuse of the garbage collection area
  - loud music and other noise
  - Don't have anything to complain about; pretty awesome community (5)
  - We need better fire response options; a fire response agreement with Cochrane; a contingency fund to deal with the effects of fire events (3)
  - Keep the Summer Village as is, casual and undeveloped with an emphasis on recreation (2)
  - We need better compliance with Summer Village plans and rules; need a more transparent and consistent complaint process; need better notification of the Summer Village's traditional values and respect for them (3)
  - The Sustainability Plan is very relevant and should be used; establish a working group to implement it (2)
  - Some MDP steering committee members have a pecuniary interest in development; some committee members are currently breaking the rules (2)
  - Control burning, indoors and outside, to protect air quality (2)
  - Make this a gated community; gate the entrance (2)

## **End of Survey Summary**