

Town of Calmar Land Use Bylaw Review

What We Heard Report: Spring & Summer 2026

1. Background on the Land Use Bylaw Review and Community Engagement

The Town of Calmar is reviewing its Land Use Bylaw (LUB). A kick-off survey was held between January 29 and March 27, 2026. Following the initial survey, Administration prepared draft uses and districts. The proposals were presented to Council and the community for review.

As part of this public engagement process, six in-person events were held between June 8 and July 1, 2026. Members of the public provided feedback through 59 in-person and online surveys. This report reflects the findings contained in the completed surveys.

Most survey questions were open-ended instead of multiple choice. This allowed respondents to share their thoughts in their own words. It also helped capture ideas that may not have been anticipated responses. However, open-ended questions are qualitative and make it harder to show clear percentages of support or opposition. As a result, some of the findings are focused on themes that emerged, rather than quantitative analysis.

Administration has categorized the survey responses where possible to provide an overview of their themes. Responses that were vague, not related to land use, or the specific question asked were not included in the analysis.

2. Land Use Bylaw Results

The results of the survey are provided below. Here are some highlights:

- **Clear support for simplifying the Land Use Bylaw.** However, responses indicate that changes should be intentional and transparent.
- **Cautious support for higher-density residential development.** Suggestions include that higher-density residential should go near schools, recreation spaces, and in newer neighbourhoods following comprehensive planning.
- **Focus commercial growth along highway corridors, particularly 50 Avenue.** While a few respondents indicated that mixed-use development and neighbourhood commercial is desirable, most feel it is most appropriate along the highway corridors.
- **Paying attention to the bigger picture.** Changes need to be aimed at making the rules understandable and development predictable. Consideration needs to be given the existing characteristics that make Calmar unique.

2.1 Support for general direction of LUB Review

Nearly 80% of respondents supported the overall goal of simplifying the LUB. While support for the review was strong, respondents also emphasized the importance of the Town being transparent about what is being changed and how it may benefit and/or impact the community.

Support for LUB Review direction	Count	Percent
Yes	47	79.7%
Neutral	6	10.2%
No	3	5.1%
No answer/not relevant response	3	5.1%

2.2 Housing options

The survey asked respondents which housing options they would like to see expanded in Calmar. Many expressed support for single-detached homes. Others supported affordable housing, seniors' housing, mixed-use developments, and higher-density housing options. A few respondents said they support all housing types. Some respondents raised concerns about higher-density housing, particularly multiplexes, apartments, and condominiums.

Additional housing suggestions included:

- Keeping Southbridge as a single-detached neighbourhood.
- Ensuring parking and park space needs are met for higher-density development.
- Preserving backyards.
- Focusing on lot size rather than house size.
- Separating residential areas from business and commercial uses.
- Allowing three-storey mixed-use development on Main Street (50 Avenue).
- Providing greater setbacks between homes for fire safety.
- Keeping housing development consistent with statutory plans.
- Requiring single-detached homes to have back alleys.
- No infills or basement suites/single-detached homes only.

Support	Count	Oppose	Count
Single-detached	25	Apartment	3
Duplexes	7	Multiplex	2
Townhouses/Rowhouses	7	Condo	1
Apartments	5	Anything besides Single-Detached	1
Mixed-use	4		
All	3		

Support...	Count		
Affordable housing	3		
Multiplexes	3		
Apartments	3		
Condos	2		
Rentals	1		
Senior housing	1		

2.3 Best locations for higher-density housing

Survey respondents provided direction on where in the community may be most suitable for higher-density development. Many respondents expressed support for higher-density housing near schools, and in newer areas such as Hawks Landing and future phases of Southbridge. Some suggested that locating higher-density housing in newer areas will help ensure that the necessary planning and infrastructure are in place.

Several respondents also suggested that higher-density housing should be located on the outskirts of the town, which may also indicate more support for locating higher-density housing outside older neighbourhoods. Some respondents were opposed to higher-density housing in general. A few respondents also suggested that around recreational areas such as parks may be ideal locations.

Other locations that were suggested are provided in the table below:

Locations of high-density housing	Count
New areas	11
Schools	11
Outskirts	7
None/do not support	5
Near recreation areas like parks	3
Near the Firehall	2
Mainstreet	2
West	2
Southside of Highway 39	1
Around the pond	1
Towards Leduc	1
Near the Legion	1
Large yards	1
Anywhere	1
East of the Co-op	1

Not in Southbridge	1
Not in existing areas (No infill)	1

2.4 Regulations in residential districts

Respondents were asked about regulating the scale of structures in residential areas and whether any existing rules should be relaxed or tightened. The most common concern was residential building height. Respondents also noted the importance of protecting privacy, maintaining similar building heights within neighbourhoods, and ensuring access to sunlight in yards. Several respondents also expressed support for higher fences, raised concerns about lot coverage, or felt that the current rules strike an appropriate balance. While five respondents identified lot coverage as a concern, it was not overall clear whether they wanted stricter or more flexible regulations. Administration will note this as an issue to follow up on in future conversations.

Additional suggestions included:

- A few respondents expressed a general desire for the rules to be relaxed.
- Somewhat like those who supported relaxing the rules, a few respondents were less concerned about the type of development on residential lots; rather, they were simply concerned with keeping development neat and tidy.
- Some respondents indicated that they do not want to see trailers stored in front of houses during the winter.
- Other themes are provided in the table below:

Comment theme	Frequency
Building height limits	12
Lot coverage	5
Keep regulations the same	5
Fence height for privacy	5
Concern about trailers in front yards during winter	3
Ensure adequate distance between builds & minimum lot sizes	3
Relax regulations in general	3
Focus on aesthetics over specific standards	2
Adjust corner lot fence regulations	2
Ensure on-site parking	2
Regulate empty lots to keep them orderly	2
Provide a mix of lot sizes	1
Focus on lawn maintenance and mud	1
Restrict fence height	1
Allow sheds closer to the lot line	1
Ensure backyard privacy	1

2.5 Commercial development locations

Respondents were asked where they thought commercial land uses should occur in Town. Currently, commercial development is primarily concentrated along 50 Avenue, which is also known as Alberta Highway 39. Most respondents indicated that 50 Avenue is the most appropriate location for future commercial development. Respondents also expressed interest in allowing commercial uses along 50 Street, which is also known as Highway 795.

Additional suggestions included:

- The area around the CO-OP gas bar, located on the south side of Highway 39, was identified as an appropriate location for commercial expansion.
- A few respondents suggested that commercial uses could also be located alongside industrial uses, particularly closer to the train tracks.
- Some respondents expressed interest in neighbourhood commercial development, and one respondent indicated that an area near a school may be an appropriate location.
- Other responses are provided in the table below:

Location	Count
Main Street	34
Highway 795	9
Industrial (various)	6
Near the Co-op	4
Edges of town/outskirts	4
Not in Calmar	2
East	2
Explore neighbourhood commercial	2
South	1
West	2
Keep commercial locations are they currently are	1
Anywhere	1
Near schools	1
49 th Avenue	1
In the Industrial Park	1

2.6 Comments and concerns

Survey respondents were asked if they had any comments or concerns about the Land Use Bylaw Review and were given additional space on the back of the paper survey to expand on their thoughts. The most frequent response was opposition to data centres within the town. We also heard concerns about the standards applied to new development and construction quality.

Additional themes are provided in the table below:

Theme	Frequency
Opposition to data centres	4
Transparency and standards for growth	3
Keep it simple	2
Would like to see the final proposal	2
Too many restrictions	2
Focus on promoting business growth	2
No need to change the LUB	2
Animal noise concern	1
Industrial noise concern near residential areas	1
Allow places of worship in the C1 District	1
Review corner lot rules	1
Concern about the impact of traffic and rate of change	1
Concern about smaller lots and more multiunit housing	1
Have public consultation on commercial and industrial near residential	1
Direct control districts create uncertainty	1
Require landscaping and a tree per home for new builds	1
Regulate density near single-detached dwellings	1
Review the LUB periodically	1
Keep the community neat and tidy, but don't tell landowners what to do with their properties	1
Simplify home occupation signage rules	1
Concern about strain on infrastructure from growth	1
Need public consultation for commercial and light industrial areas	1
Keep land uses separate from each other, including different types of residential	1
Concern about vacant lots	1
Keep Southbridge single-detached	1
Ensure parking for multi-unit residential	1
Have playground in Southbridge	1

3. Respondent Demographics

3.1 Respondent backgrounds

Most survey respondents identified themselves as Calmar homeowners, which is not surprising given the Town's high rate of homeownership. Their perspectives were supplemented by responses from a small number of renters, visitors, and business owners. Note that the response shares exceed 100%, as some respondents selected more than one category.

Category	Responses	Share of responses
Homeowner	51	86.4%
Renter	3	5.1%
Visitor to Calmar	3	5.1%
Calmar business owner	2	3.4%

Prefer not to say	2	3.4%
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3.2 Respondent ages

The Town heard from 59 respondents, beginning with the 25-34 age category. No respondents under the age of 25 appear to have participated in this Land Use Bylaw Survey. Interestingly, the 35-44 age group represented roughly half of all respondents and therefore has a significant influence on the survey results. This is not surprising as families often move to Calmar for housing affordability and to raise children, and this age group is generally active in the community. Note that the response shares exceed 100%, as some respondents selected more than one category.

Age range	Responses	Share of responses
25-34	8	13.6%
35-44	29	49.2%
45-54	9	15.3%
55-64	7	11.9%
65+	6	10.2%
Unknown/unclear	1	1.7%

4. What's Next?

Town Administration continues to work on the draft LUB and is developing resources to help the community stay informed about the process. A LUB Frequently Asked Questions section is being added to the LUB Review web page.

It will also be important to remind the community of what the Land Use Bylaw can and cannot do. While the Town can regulate certain things, other concerns like the Building Code and the location of telecommunication towers are outside the Town's jurisdiction.

Prior to bringing the Land Use Bylaw to a public hearing, another round of public engagement events will be advertised and held, with a more specific focus on the proposed regulations. The Town will also engage directly with the local business community to gather feedback on the upcoming proposals. The consultations will also follow up on themes that emerged during this round of engagement. Administration remains available to answer questions and receive feedback from the community throughout the LUB Review process.