



Area 'I' Official Community Plan Review

Interim Engagement Summary

"What We Heard" Report

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1.0 Introduction

The *Kootenay-Columbia Rivers Official Community (OCP) Plan Bylaw No. 1157* was adopted in 1996, and a Board resolution to approve the work plan to create a new OCP for Area 'I' was passed in 2016. Work including community engagement (neighbourhood meetings and a survey) took place in 2016 and 2017. The OCP update was paused to collect further information on the Shoreacres aquifer and Brilliant Head Ponds riparian area, and then due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the above studies, the RDCK also completed some region wide projects, such as, flood mapping, a Housing Needs Assessment and Community Heritage Register that will support the drafting of this OCP. Current projects that are currently underway that can also be incorporated include, the RDCK's Housing Action Plan, Wildfire Development Permit Consideration and the active transportation Castlegar-Nelson corridor feasibility study. Sub-regional OCP policy review ensures consistency in plans and that sub-regional growth is coordinated with RDCK municipalities.

In collaboration with the Local Area Director and Advisory Planning and Heritage Commission (APHC) for Area 'I' Planning staff revised the work and engagement plans to relaunch this project in the fall of 2022. At the December 8, 2022 Open meeting the Board resolved to *“direct staff to undertake the proposed engagement activities for the Area I Official Community Plan Update as described in the Area 'I' Official Community Plan Update – Engagement Plan report dated November 24, 2022”*.

Community input is essential to the OCP planning process. This Interim Engagement Summary - “What We Heard” Report summarizes the community feedback received so far. The engagement process was voluntary and the results summarized in this report may or may not reflect the views of the entire community. This report reflects the opinions of those who participated at the community meetings, workshops and kitchen table conversations held and or answered the community land use survey.

2.0 “What we did” - Phase One: Project Launch and Background Work

In 2016 and 2017, RDCK staff began the process of community engagement for the Area 'I' OCP review project.

2.1 Community Survey

In 2016, a *Community Land Use Survey for Electoral Area 'I'* was undertaken and 264 members of the public submitted survey responses with submissions received from respondents living in 8 of the identified communities. The majority of responses came from Pass Creek (24.24%), Glade (18.6%) and Shoreacres (15.9%).

A summary of the survey responses is provided below.

- Approximately 65% of those responding had lived in Area 'I' for 15 years or longer
- Home ownership accounted for 99.5 % of the housing tenure
- Approximately 85% of the housing stock was single detached
- Approximately 65% of the existing dwelling units were built before 1989
- Out of the 264 respondents only 41 answered the question about whether they had any rental accommodation (i.e. house, suite, manufacture home or room) on their property.
- Almost 75% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that agriculture was important to their community with over 80% agreeing that local food production was important
- Respondents felt that commercial services could be expanded the most in Playmor Junction West, Thrums, Tarrys and Brilliant

- Approximately 77% of those surveyed felt like industrial expansion would be best suited for the Playmor Junction West community
- Approximately 15% of respondents indicated that they operated a home based business, and less than 1% operated a bed and breakfast operation
- 80% of respondents support enhanced recreation opportunities in their community
- 30% of respondents were on a community water system with 53% accessing water from a private well and the remainder accessing water via a surface licence
- Over 85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that land use regulations protecting riparian areas (similar to those existing in other RDCK Electoral Areas) be introduced
- To address tree removal 62% support some type of local government regulation (i.e. tree removal bylaw or development permit) to address localized land slip and or drainage issues
- Approximately 73% of respondent supported the creation of a wildfire development permit area to address development in moderate to high risk zones
- The vast majority of respondents has concerns with existing environmental issues ranging from foreshore erosion, aquatic invasive species, logging and pesticide use to name a few

2.2 Community Planning Workshops

Following the survey, Regional District planning staff held several community workshops with residents of Electoral Area 'I' during the month of November 2016 to celebrate the community and solicit dialogue on the common themes of local land use and economy, social and cultural, natural environment, and parks and recreation. The meetings were held as working group discussions to build upon the land use survey conducted over the summer months. Notice of the workshops were made through the Pennywise, community mail drops, and by posters placed in the communities of Pass Creek, Brilliant, Thrums, Glade, Shoreacres and Playmor Junction West.

After a brief presentation as to the intent and format of the workshop, participants were broken into working groups comprised of residents or property owners of the same community. Working groups were then provided a package of table topics to discuss. Please see the below summary of meeting locations, dates and number of participants:

Meeting Location	Date	Number of Participants
Pass Creek Community Hall	November 9, 2016	18
Brilliant Cultural Centre	November 10, 2016	3
Tarrys Community Hall	November 16, 2016	16
Glade Community Hall	November 17, 2016	22
Shoreacres Community Hall	November 23, 2016	37
Crescent Valley Fire Hall	November 24, 2016	3

TOTAL: 99

Figure 1: Community Planning Workshop Attendance by Meeting Location

2.3 Community Planning Presentations

Regional District staff held three community meetings with residents of Electoral Area 'I' during the summer 2017 and providing presentation on the OCP, Community Wildfire Protection Plan and Brilliant Head Ponds Stewardship

Collective. Staff presenting included the RDCK's Community Fire Smart Coordinator; an expert on Community Wildfire Protection Plans; the regional district's Planning Manager; and a staff member from Living Lakes Canada. The first meeting was held at the Glade Community Hall on July 12, 2017 **with 40 attendees**. The next presentation session was held for the communities of Pass Creek and Brilliant on July 13, 2017 and **40 attendees participated**. On August 9, 2017 the last of the community planning presentations was held for the communities of Shoreacres, Voykin Subdivision and Playmor Junction West with **32 people in attendance**. A total of 112 members of the public attended these community meetings.

3.0 "What we heard" – Phase One

The below feedback was received from the community workshop and presentation sessions held in 2016 and 2017, and community survey undertaken in 2016, and provides a summary of "what we heard" during Phase One of the Area 'I' OCP review project.

General Themes

- Aging in Place
- Lack of public space and community amenities
- Wildfire interface issues
- Water – quality, quantity, governance and community specific aquifer vulnerability
- Creating a Diversity of housing options consistent with rural character
- Agriculture
- Improvements to existing Recreation Amenities
- Highway Safety

In 2016 and 2017 we asked residents about their priorities for the community. Broken down into the categories of community, environment, economy, governance, housing, and community (social) connections.

This is **What we Heard**:

Community

- 80% of survey respondents support enhanced recreation opportunities in their community.
- There are many special places in Area I, such as Kp'itl'els, Doukhobor Community settlement areas, cemeteries, community halls, and more.
- Need more day care options and places for children to play.
- Need more support and programming for seniors, including care facilities.
- Losing former school sites also means losing community programming. There are limited places in Area I to gather or socialize.
- A meeting place or general store could be a real asset.
- Need to provide more and also protect and enhance existing walking trails, mountain biking trails, and water access points. Connecting trails in different areas to create a network is a priority.
- There are many loved natural areas, such as Brilliant Flats, Sentinel Mountain Trails, the Trans Canada Trail, and more.
- Opportunities to improve existing parks and community buildings.

Environment

- Almost 75% of survey the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that agriculture was important to their community with over 80% agreeing that local food production was important.

- 30% of survey respondents were on a community water system, with 53% accessing water from a private well and the remainder accessing water via a surface licence.
- Over 85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that land use regulations protecting riparian areas (similar to those existing in other RDCK Electoral Areas) should be introduced,
- 62% of survey respondents support some type of local government regulation (i.e. tree removal bylaw or development permit) to address localized land slip and or drainage issues.
- Approximately 73% of survey respondents supported the creation of a wildfire development permit area to address development in moderate to high risk zones.
- The vast majority of respondents has concerns with existing environmental issues ranging from foreshore erosion, aquatic invasive species, logging and pesticide use to name a few. Brilliant Head Pond was noted as an area with sensitive habitat, along with a Blue Heron site between Sorokin Road and Pass Creek Road.
- Concerns raised about water quality, quantity, and the vulnerability of aquifers.
- Concern was noted that forestry practices are increasing wildlife conflicts, particularly with bears.
- Concerns were raised about illegal burning and air quality issues from wildfire smoke. Some participants raised Fire Smart measures as an idea to explore.

Economy

- Almost 75% of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that agriculture was important to their community with over 80% agreeing that local food production was important.
- Survey respondents felt that commercial services could be expanded the most in Playmor Junction West, Thrums, Tarrys and Brilliant.
- Approximately 77% of those surveyed felt like industrial expansion would be best suited for the Playmor Junction West community.
- Approximately 15% of survey respondents indicated that they operated a home based business, and less than 1% operated a bed and breakfast operation.
- Concerns raised in community events include concerns about logging on the environment, concerns about the impact heavy equipment has on roads, and concerns that industrial and commercial land uses are not appropriate in certain communities. People expressed a desire to see more vacation rentals.

Governance

- Many survey respondents would be willing to take on more regulations (i.e. development permit areas) in order to protect watercourses and their habitats and to reduce risks from natural disasters like floods and fires.
- Community priorities raised in public engagement included some areas the province is responsible for, such as forestry practices, illegal dumping, childcare spaces, affordable housing, transit, and highway safety.
- Making it possible to walk/bike safely on Highway 3A and improving bus service routes and frequency will take active advocacy to the province and collaboration.

Housing

- Being able to “age in place” or stay in community as people age is important.
- People are open to RDCK reviewing minimum lot sizes and subdivision potential for land to support infill development.
- Accessory dwelling units (i.e. carriage houses) should be considered as long as they fit in with the rural character of the area.
- People support short-term and vacation rentals.
- There’s concern that if manufactured homes are allowed for immediate family members that they will become rental units instead.
- Small apartment complexes like the one in Crescent Valley could be appropriate.

Community (social) Connections

- There is a lack of public space and community amenities. There is no real place for people to socialize, no general store, coffee shop, or other meeting place.
- Need a dedicated indoor children’s play area.
- Need more day care options.
- Community halls and existing community places should be maintained and looked at for various improvements, maintenance, and programming options for creative community multi-purpose use.
- Opportunity to use former school sites.
- Concerns about bus routes and scheduling as well as walking and cycling options (Highway 3A not safe).
- Cemeteries are important cultural places.

Where are we in the planning process?

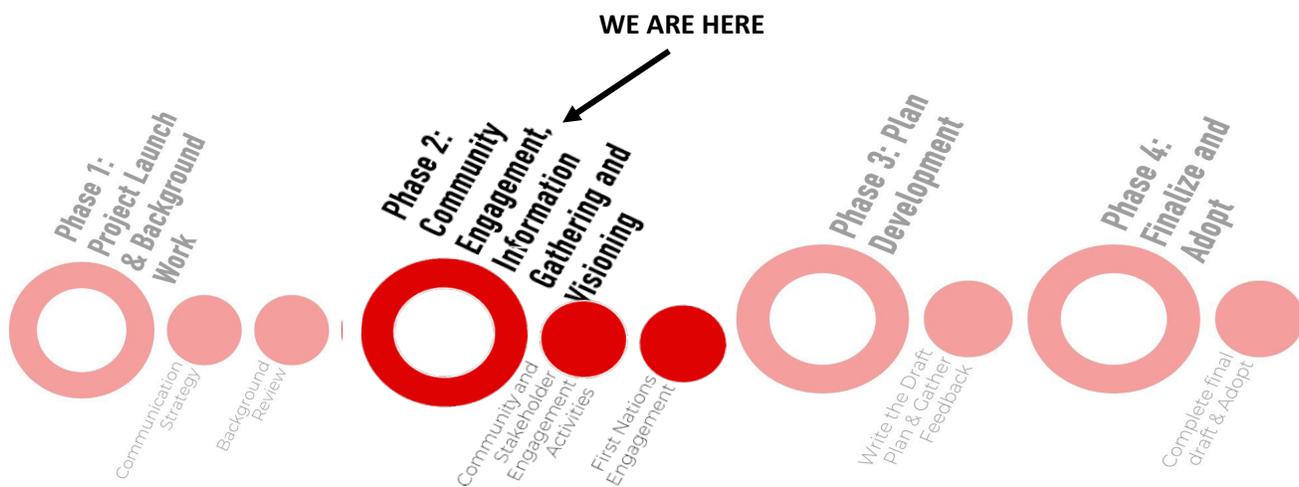


Figure 2: Where We Are in the OCP Review Process

4.0 “What we just did” – Phase Two: Community Engagement, Information Gathering and Visioning

In December 2022, Planning staff updated the OCP review project page website to re-launch the Area ‘I’ OCP review project as a place where community members and other interested parties were and continue to be invited to learn more about this project.

The project website - <https://www.rdck.ca/EN/main/services/community-planning/area-i-community-plan-review.html>

Project email is - OCPReview@rdck.bc.ca

The Area 'I' OCP review project page provides:

- Project background information including timelines.
- Project backgrounders on various land use planning themes ranging from Residential Land and Housing, Economy and Jobs, Climate Resilience, Mitigation and Energy to Local Infrastructure and Servicing, and Food, Agriculture and Rural Lands.
- Relevant Projects and Studies, such as, the Brilliant Head Ponds Stewardship Collaborative, Aquifer Vulnerability Assessment for Shoreacres Aquifer, the Community Heritage Register and Regional Housing Needs Assessment.
- Kitchen Table Conversation Discussion Guide and Workbook.
- Engagement opportunities/how to get involved.

4.1 Virtual Community Open House – Area 'I' OCP Review Re-launch

A virtual community open house event was held on January 26, 2023 at 6:00 pm using the RDCK's Webex virtual meeting platform. The open house provided a chance for residents to learn about the re-launch of the OCP rewrite project, to ask questions and provide initial feedback on emerging direction and considerations. **Approximately 26 members of the public attended** this event (* due to the virtual nature of this event staff was unable to determine if there was more than one person attending virtually from the same phone number et al.).

A presentation (Attachment 'A') by Planning staff was delivered that covered:

- Electoral Area 'I' Community Profile
- What's an OCP?
- Emerging Planning Themes
- Project Overview
- Next Steps & Your Feedback
- Questions & Answers
- Closing

The virtual open house re-launch presentation can be found in Appendix 'A'.

4.2 Kitchen Table Community Conversations

The RDCK's Planning Services team hosted five in-person "Kitchen Table Conversations" in the communities of Pass Creek, Glade, Shoreacres/Voykin Subdivision, Brilliant and Tarrys/Thrums during the first two weeks of March 2023.

Kitchen Table Conversations are small table discussions and are generally considered a good alternative to larger public engagement events where some people may feel intimidated or self-conscious about sharing with a bigger group. The intent was to generate and receive ideas for the new OCP in a fun and relaxing way to share big ideas and aspirations for the Electoral Area. The in-person sessions included a presentation made by staff with opportunities for questions followed by staff facilitated small group kitchen table conversations to obtain feedback for the goals, objectives and policy direction for this OCP review. To help guide these conversations a discussion guide and workbook were created and handed out at each small group table (Appendix 'B').

Meeting Location	Date	Number of Participants
Pass Creek Community Hall	March 7, 2023	43
Glade Community Hall	March 8, 2023	27
Shoreacres Community Hall	March 9, 2023	26
Brilliant Cultural Centre	March 15, 2023	22
Tarrys Community Hall	March 16, 2023	33

TOTAL: 151

Figure 2: Kitchen Table Community Conversations Attendance by Meeting Location

4.3 Kitchen Table Discussion Guide and Workbook Kits

The kitchen table discussion guides and workbooks were available from the project webpage for use by the community from the beginning of March to March 31, 2023. The intent was to empower members of the public to host their own kitchen table conversations with their family, friends and neighbours about the OCP process and to provide another option for residents who were unable to attend the five in-person sessions. The kits provided participants with the same background information and discussion guides used at the staff hosted in-person community kitchen table conversation meetings. In response to this self-directed exercise the OCP review email address received one completed workbook, two partially completed workbooks and three general comments letters or emails.

The engagement exercise (whether in-person or held on their own) provided participants with background information about an OCP including what stage we are in the OCP review process, and discussion guides for each activity. In total, there were three activities:

1. **Ice breaker exercise** to warm up the group discussion
2. **Review background material** in the discussion guide and **pick a topic as a group for discussion.**
3. **Generate objectives and actions for the topic(s)** discussed as a group.

5.0 Who got involved?...and “What we heard” – Phase Two

In total, **over 150 people in 25 groups participated in the kitchen table conversation exercises** whether in-person led by the RDCK’s planning staff or as a self-directed group or individual.

This is a summary of **WHAT WE HEARD** from our community engagement in spring 2023.

In a regional district, complete communities could be seen as the hubs that are part of a connected network to our member municipalities. Coming out of the pandemic, it’s arguably, not surprising to uncover that many participants spoke about a preference to **enhance community connections and social hubs**. All communities, whether urban, suburban or rural have the potential to be more complete, regardless of their existing context and physical characteristics. A range of identified community goals with many interrelated benefits were discussed, and are summarized generally by theme below (but not limited to):

General Themes:

- Accommodating slow growth while maintaining rural character and lifestyle
- Maintaining ALR land for primarily farming and food production
- Protecting the natural environment
- Protection of groundwater (i.e. aquifer) water quality and quantity

- Housing options
- Climate Change
- Protecting rural character and quality of life
- Governance (i.e. exploration of how the RDCK regulates land use)
- Increased transportation options
- Highway safety
- Improved accessibility and age-friendliness planning
- Understanding growth in the context of the Area’s existing servicing and infrastructure limitation
- Fostering and promoting opportunities for community connections

Residents and community members provided feedback that included comments on:

- **Exposure to Natural Hazards such as wildfires and flooding** are an item of concern for many residents. Many participants wish to see the OCP include objectives and policies aimed at reducing risk from these hazards.
- **The natural beauty and access to parks and recreation** is highly valued by residents. Some wish to see further protection of natural areas and the expansion of trail, parks and recreation infrastructure (i.e. boat launches, parking, amenities etc.).
- **The freedom from regulation and culture of independence** of the area is highly valued by residents. Some residents identified potential tensions between the desire to see limited regulation and the need to address unsafe buildings, unkept properties, bylaw enforcement, etc.
- **Lack of services and utilities** including safe drinking water in locations such as Glade were a priority for some residents living in affected areas.
- **Many residents do not want to see rapid changes to Electoral Area ‘I’** and envision the community looking similar in the future to how it looks now.
- **Accommodating growth** and how residential infill opportunities should be considered was a concern with many participants commenting that the City of Castlegar and areas with existing servicing infrastructure would be better suited for development.
- **Need for “Age-Friendly” planning** and understanding the changing demographic profile of the Electoral Area was raised routinely as a priority with participants agreeing about the importance of creating more diverse housing options, supports and facilities that can accommodate an aging population.
- **Strong Community Attachment** with participants noting that residents look out for each other, but with new community members moving in there is also a desire in some communities to foster more community connections.

Table 1: What is Needed to Make Area ‘I’ Even Better

Rural lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow incremental growth while maintaining the rural character and conserving the natural environment of the Electoral Area. • Support sensitive infill development where community infrastructure is already in place. • Focus growth in existing municipal centres and adjacent semi-urban areas with appropriate community servicing infrastructure to maintain “slow growth”.
Community Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of community hubs (i.e. community halls) via enhance programming to foster more opportunities for social connections with a specific focus on the area’s aging population and youth. • Work to increase the sense of community and social interactions of residents by maintaining and investing in existing community halls, parks and facilities to provide spaces for community events, gatherings and programming (i.e. daycare space(s), activities for seniors and youth, outdoor community garden spaces etc.) •
Natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steward and protect the area’s natural features, including sensitive ecosystems and habitat. • Manage and protect watercourses to maintain their natural habitat and environmental quality. • Integrate measures to sustain environmental quality and consider impacts on the environment in future land use decisions.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow for sensitive residential infill development on existing lots for secondary suites or accessory dwellings where servicing and lot size permits • Create incentives to foster the construction of more diverse housing forms, including multi-generational housing, secondary suites, carriage homes, duplexes etc. • Understand the concern behind some residents not wanting “renters” in their communities • Support affordable housing to allow for aging in place
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support an expanded regional transit system with increased service levels (i.e. more bus drivers) • Safe, reliable and accessible transportation options for everyone (i.e. transit stops) • Advocate to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) for highway improvements to improve overall safety (i.e. Highway 3A and Pass Creek Road) and better road maintenance and road clearing (particularly in winter) • Look at car sharing opportunities • Create an active transportation corridor with secure trail networks with connections and linkages through Area ‘I’ and end of trip facilities (i.e. bicycle parking etc.)
Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support efforts to protect and manage water resources, including both surface and ground water for residential, agricultural and ecosystem health. • Integrate measures to sustain environmental quality and consider impacts on the environment in future land use decisions. • Increase cooperation with provincial ministries, local purveyors and landowners to better conserve, protect and enhance surface, ground and aquifer water sources.
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to build and promote the area’s trail systems and look at improvements to existing park and recreational spaces (i.e. existing beaches and boat launches).
Natural hazards and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore ways to reduce risks from natural hazards, such as wildfire and flooding, and support the adaption and greenhouse gas reduction initiatives to enhance community

resilience.

- Minimize flood and wildfire hazards to people and property in existing and any proposed new development.
 - Review and update wildfire protection approaches based on changing community circumstances, climate change driven conditions and mitigation techniques.
-

Taking it one step further many kitchen table conversation groups began drafting possible OCP objectives, which include the following:

- *“To create and enhance gathering places and public spaces like parks to ensure they accommodate everyone’s needs.”*
- *“Develop community infrastructure and services that fosters a healthy and engaged community.”*
- *“Support the development of community activities, programing and facilities that encourages residents to meet and get to know each other.”*
- *“Work to increase the sense of community and social interaction for everyone by creating gathering places for everyone.”*
- *“To promote conservation best practices to ensure abundant and healthy wildlife in the area and human-wildlife conflicts are significantly reduced.”*
- *“Ensure a healthy intact river system by maintaining and enhancing habitat values in aquatic, riparian and upland forest ecosystems.”*
- *“To maintain...agricultural use of land for future generations through supporting the ALR, and promoting best practices for land stewardship and food security.”*
- *“Preserve the Shoreacres and Glade aquifers by limiting residential density to protect groundwater quality and quantity.”*
- *“Promote regenerative farming practices.”*
- *“Ensure ongoing safe, abundant and affordable water resources for area residents.”*
- *“Improving the completeness of Electoral Area ‘1’s existing small communities from which people travel to developed municipal cores for employment, services, shopping, school and or recreation.”*

5.2 Youth Engagement – Update

The Regional District’s Planning team have been working with the City of Castlegar’s OCP review consultants to specifically target three different high school social studies classes due to its curriculum at Stanley Humphries Secondary School. Acknowledging that an OCP is a long range planning document that ultimately sets out a community’s vision and future development and land use management strategy for the next 25 + years connecting with the community’s youth was a priority to obtain feedback from our younger populations.

Youth (and children in general) are not usually included in decision making that shapes their environment, their communities, and the places they visit and use daily. This cohort(s) are users of specific places such as schools and parks, but it is adults who give shape to these places and control how youth/children use them. Planning staff have found their ideas are especially helpful in planning cities that are more sustainable, user-friendly, and inclusive.

To avoid duplication with students and to collaborate with the City’s OCP review process, Castlegar’s consulting team facilitated the youth engagement sessions in May 2023 that involved three different social studies classes, which focused discussion on the four OCP themes below:

- Where youth gather and play - focus on recreation amenities
- How youth move - focus on trails, bike lanes, connectivity
- How young people connect - focus on what you love about your community, what's important, community spaces and services
- Where we live - what kinds of housing are missing and where do young people go

Students worked in table groups to identify “key places/things” on large format maps related to the above themes. For most students, they expressed that many youth amenities are lacking (e.g. a youth centre to hang out in the evenings, feel safe, connect, play games, etc.). More detailed feedback from these engagements sessions will be included at the next community open house, and will inform the first draft of this OCP.

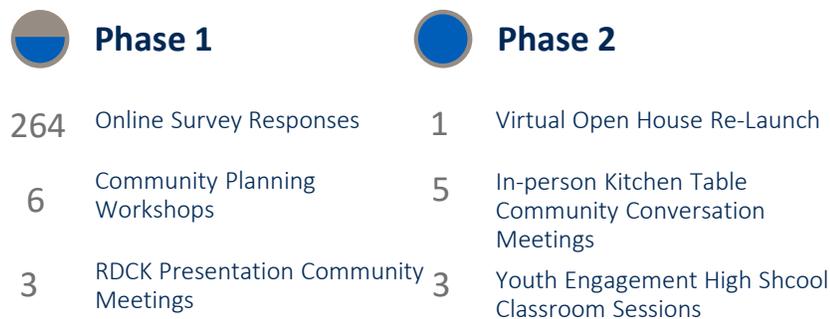


Figure 3: Snapshot of Community Engagement to date



Figure 4: Community Engagement to still to come

6.0 Next Steps

Moving into **Phase Three: Review and Refinement**, the RDCK’s Planning Services team’s next step is to write a first draft of the OCP for Area ‘I’ that includes staff, the Area ‘I’ APHC and Board input, community feedback and technical expertise (RDCK interdepartmental staff and external stakeholders, including First Nations). Many of the great ideas raised in the survey, community workshops, public meetings and at the most recent kitchen table conversations will inform the first draft of the OCP. The OCP can respond to community values and circumstances such as population growth, housing, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, strengthen farming and it will set targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Once the first draft of the OCP is complete (summer 2023 target), the RDCK will once again ask the community, adjacent municipalities and government agencies, rights holders for their input as required under the *Local Government Act*. The Planning team will work with the local APHC to review the initial draft, and then determine the best date and venue for hosting one community engagement session to present the draft OCP, and to obtain feedback from residents on the policy direction before reviewing and refining the draft Plan.