

# What We Heard Report

## Sturgeon Valley

July 2024



## Executive Summary

In spring 2024, Sturgeon County engaged with the public to gather input about future development in the Sturgeon Valley. The County held an information and engagement session on May 30 and ran a survey from May 30 to June 16; 180 individuals attended the in-person session, and 439 people responded to the survey. The population in the Sturgeon Valley is approximately 4,000 people, and we received input from roughly 260 people who indicated they live in the Valley. Participants were not required to disclose where they live.

The County heard from existing Valley residents that most would like to maintain existing neighbourhoods, with no new development in those neighbourhoods. In the broader Sturgeon Valley Core, more than half of respondents indicated they don't support new development while 41.8% support development that complements existing neighbourhoods. Support for development was highest amongst those living outside of the Sturgeon Valley.

In the Sturgeon Valley South, which is contemplated to have a higher density, most respondents indicated they support development at lower densities, similar to existing neighbourhoods in the Sturgeon Valley Core. Those living in the Sturgeon Valley are less likely to support development at higher densities. Roughly one in every five respondents don't support any new development in the Sturgeon Valley South, while more than half of respondents indicated the anticipated pace of development is too fast.

The County received mixed feedback regarding the amenities that are important to respondents. It heard that some respondents want parks, open spaces, trails, outdoor recreation areas, improved transportation networks and neighbourhood commercial areas, while others don't want any amenities.

The What We Heard Report provides in-depth reporting of the feedback shared by respondents at both the in-person session and the survey.

## Project Overview

The Sturgeon Valley is a wonderful and unique community in Sturgeon County. It was founded in the 1960s and has grown over decades to have nearly 4,000 current residents in country residential and estate homes.

Sturgeon County has local planning authority for the Sturgeon Valley; however, it must follow the provincial *Municipal Government Act*, other provincial and federal planning and development legislation, and the policies of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board.

In 2021, the County approved two area structure plans following public input. Council adopted three bylaws that approved the Sturgeon Valley South Area Structure Plan and the Sturgeon Valley Core Area Structure Plan (near the existing neighbourhoods), and amended the Municipal Development Plan.

## Growth Potential

Most of the County's future growth is expected to occur in the Valley. The rate of development depends on market conditions and the interest of local landowners and developers. Current estimates suggest a moderate annual growth rate of 2.1%, which is similar to adjacent communities. Development would occur over several decades and only in defined areas, and would increase dwellings by roughly 150 per year initially, increasing to 300 dwellings per year in later years.

Lands in the Sturgeon Valley are owned by private landowners who may want to exercise their right to develop their land. The Valley continues to be very desirable for development, due to proximity to regional communities, access to transportation networks, good servicing potential, and abundant natural features.

Through planning for growth in Sturgeon Valley and listening to the community, the County has taken steps to respect the interests of existing residents and neighbourhoods, protect against future annexations, diversify Sturgeon County's taxation base, and capitalize on the area's location and existing infrastructure. At the same time, the County is enabling the creation of unique and distinct neighbourhoods that will meet the future needs of local and regional residents.

## What We Asked of You

Sturgeon County held an information and engagement session on May 30 at the Edmonton Garrison, where Sturgeon Valley residents and other interested individuals could learn more about the Sturgeon Valley. We asked attendees to provide input on the pace of development in the Sturgeon Valley, as well as amenities they wanted and didn't want to see in the community.

Following the session, Sturgeon County published and promoted a survey, which ran from May 30 to June 16. The purpose of the survey was to gather input from Sturgeon Valley residents and other interested individuals about the future of the Sturgeon Valley. The County committed to reviewing the input and considering it when deciding on the next steps for the area.

The survey included open- and closed-ended questions to gather input and data from respondents. Responses are detailed in this report.

## How We Asked

### Information & Engagement Session (May 30, 2024)

During the session, we invited the **180** attendees to provide input on the pace of development in the Sturgeon Valley, as well as identify amenities they wanted and didn't want to see in the community.

We asked attendees to place a sticker dot on the statement that best aligned with their perspective regarding the pace of development in the Valley. Of the **180** attendees, **14** attendees provided input.

We also asked attendees to tell us what amenities were important to them and which amenities they didn't want to see in the Sturgeon Valley. We accepted multiple inputs from attendees, and received a total of **31** submissions.

### How We Promoted the Session

The session was promoted using the following methods:

<b>1,564</b> website pageviews	<b>459</b> registration page visits	<b>2</b> app notifications sent	<b>3,274</b> social media impressions	<b>84,643</b> paid social media impressions
<b>2</b> e-newsletters sent to 620+ emails		<b>8</b> road signs deployed	<b>3,600</b> postcards mailed	<b>6</b> ads published

### Survey (May 30 to June 16, 2024)

Following the session, Sturgeon County published and promoted a survey. This survey was conducted online, and paper copies were available to attendees at the session and at Sturgeon County Centre to complete and send back to Sturgeon County. We received **438** online submissions and **one** hard-copy submission. Of the **439** submissions, **320** were fully completed.

The purpose of the survey was to gather input from Sturgeon Valley residents and other interested individuals about the future of the Sturgeon Valley. The County committed to reviewing the input and considering it as Council decides on the next steps for the area.

## How We Promoted the Survey

The survey was promoted using the following methods:



## Who Provided Input Information & Engagement Session

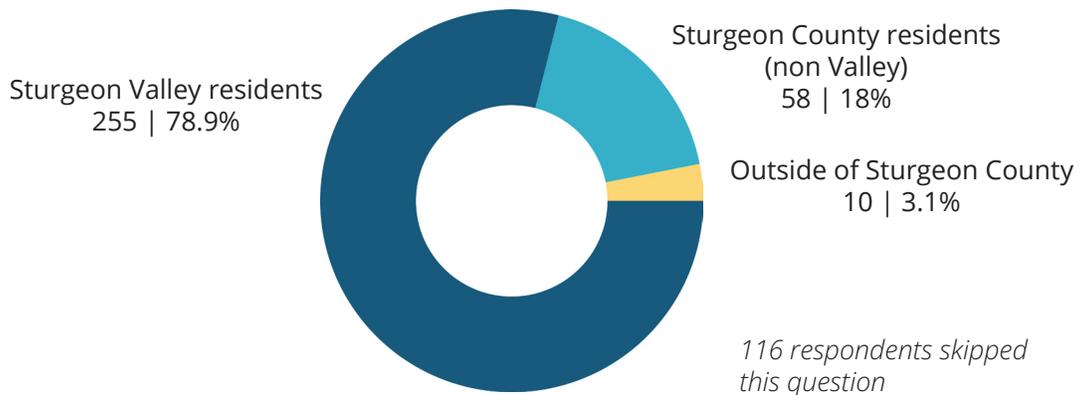
### Where They Live

Of the **180** attendees at the information and engagement session, **51.1%** of attendees (92) indicated they live in the Sturgeon Valley. **18.3%** of attendees (33) didn't know if they live in the Sturgeon Valley and **23.3%** of attendees (42) do not live in the Sturgeon Valley.

## Survey

### Where They Live

Of the **439** respondents to the survey, **323** provided information about where they live. Of those, **78.9%** of respondents (255) indicated they live in the Sturgeon Valley. **18.0%** (58) indicated they live in Sturgeon County but not in the Sturgeon Valley, and **3.1%** (10) indicated they do not live in Sturgeon County.



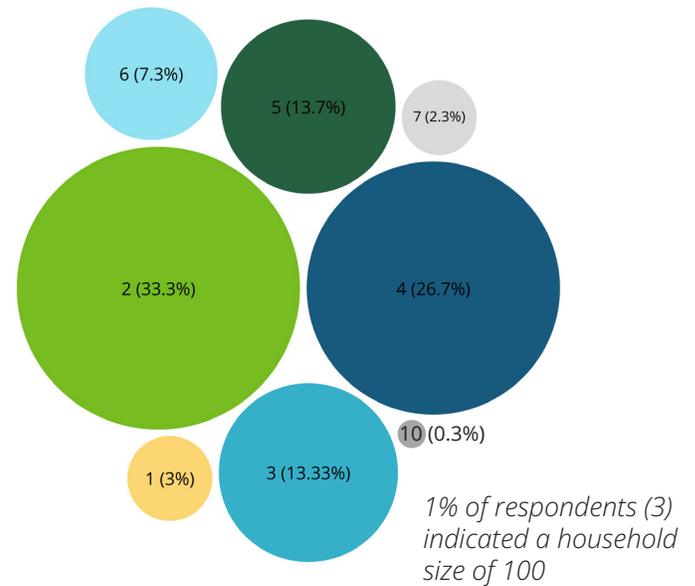
## Survey (continued)

### Length of Residence in the Valley

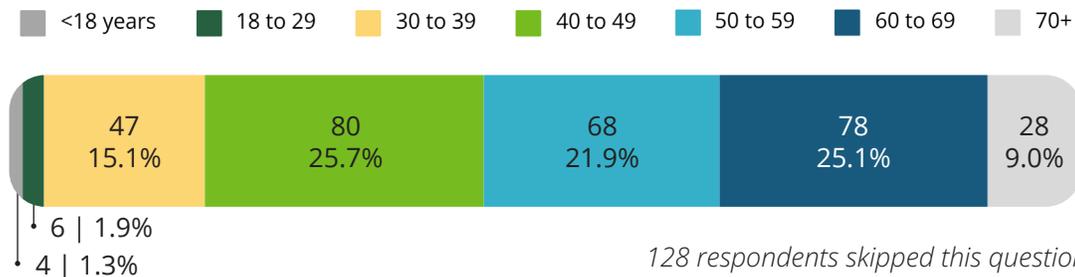
Of the **255** respondents indicating they live in the Sturgeon Valley, they have lived there for...



### Household Size



### Age of Respondents



### Attendance at Engagement Sessions

Of the 439 respondents to the survey, **30.8%** (135) indicated they attended the information and engagement session on May 30, 2024. The remaining **69.3%** (304) indicated they did not attend the information and engagement session.

Of the 439 respondents to the survey, **23.2%** (102) indicated they participated in engagement sessions in 2020 and 2021, as part of the "Our Future Valley" project which helped create development plans for the area. **59.5%** (261) indicated they did not attend previous engagement sessions, **5.5%** (24) didn't know if they attended previous engagement sessions and the remaining **11.9%** (52) selected "other" and provided more information.

Of those respondents selecting "other," **53.9%** (28) indicated they were unaware of the previous sessions, **15.4%** (8) indicated they did not live in the area at the time, and **7.7%** (4) indicated the sessions were not held at convenient times for their schedules.

# What You Told Us

## Information & Engagement Session

### Pace of Development

Pending approval of private applications and consideration of market conditions, the population of the Sturgeon Valley could increase by about 2.1% each year (roughly 150 dwellings per year initially and increasing to 300 dwellings per year in later years) in designated areas in the Sturgeon Valley.

14 attendees provided the following input on the pace of development:

- 2 people support the pace of development
- 2 people indicated the pace of development is too slow
- 6 people indicated the pace of development is too fast
- 4 people do not support any new development in the Sturgeon Valley

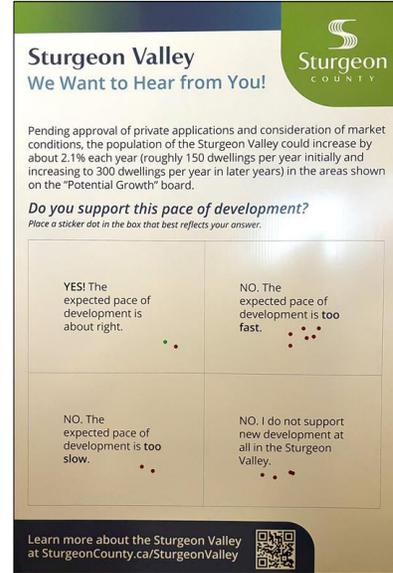


Photo of inputs received at event

### Amenities

We received a total of 19 submissions for amenities attendees want to see in the Sturgeon Valley, including the following:

- Parks – including dog parks – and natural areas
- Trails and pathways to neighbourhoods and St. Albert
- Sidewalks and bike lanes
- Small-scale local commercial development like cafes, medical facilities and grocery stores
- Policing

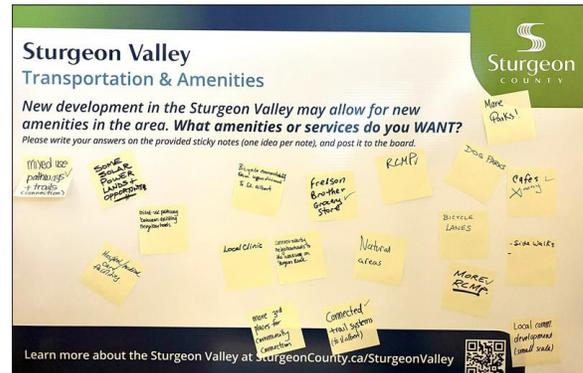


Photo of inputs received at event

We received **12** submissions in response to our question about amenities attendees **do not want** to see in the Sturgeon Valley; some of the submissions were not focused on amenities. Submissions include the following:

- Parks, including dog parks
- Sidewalks, curbs and bike lanes
- Commercial development
- Golf courses
- Buses

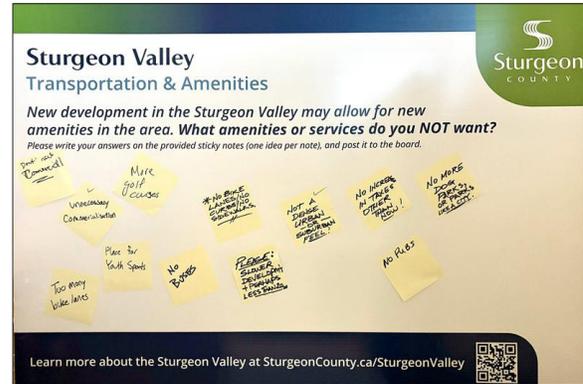


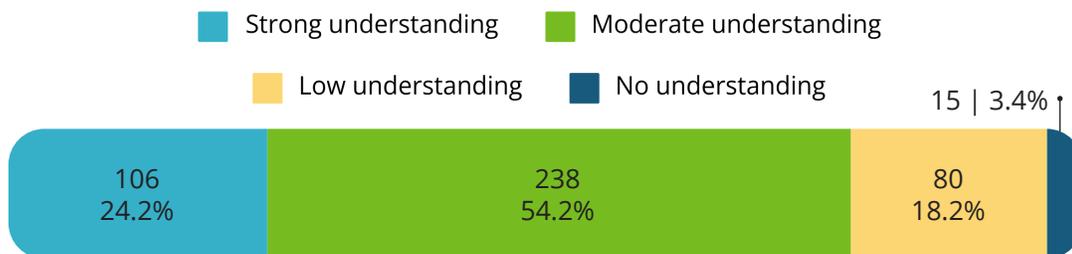
Photo of inputs received at event

## Survey

Respondents could skip some survey questions or exit the survey before completion. This means the number of people responding to each question differs. We've communicated the findings based on the number of responses per question. Some respondents didn't indicate where they live, so the totals based on place of residence may not equal the total number of responses received. Findings were rounded to the nearest decimal point, so the findings may not add up to exactly 100%.

### Level of Understanding of Development Possibilities

Of the 439 respondents to the survey, **24.2%** (106) indicated they have a strong understanding of future development possibilities in the Sturgeon Valley. **54.2%** (238) indicated they have a moderate understanding, **18.2%** (80) indicated they have low understanding and **3.4%** (15) indicated they have no understanding.



### Qualities to Protect and Preserve

We asked respondents to share what they love about the Sturgeon Valley and what they want to protect and preserve. Respondents shared the following:

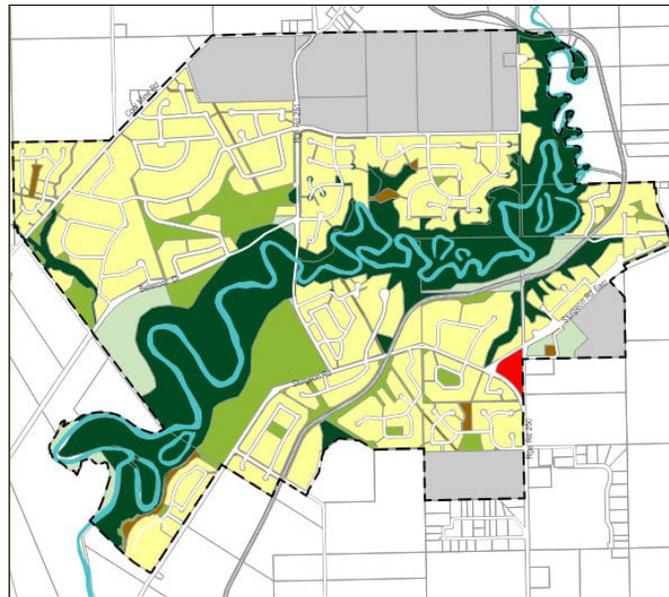
- peaceful, quiet lifestyle
- nature and wildlife
- green, open spaces
- community feel
- safety
- agricultural landscape
- river valley and ecosystem
- low density (housing units per net residential hectare)
- property values
- lower taxes compared to urban centres

## Sturgeon Valley Core

Most existing neighbourhoods are located in the Sturgeon Valley Core area. Existing neighbourhoods should expect no change under land use plans, but could see some road improvements, more trails, and increased access to green spaces in the years to come.

Most of the Sturgeon Valley Core is developed at a very low density (of less than two housing units per net residential hectare), with most homes being large, single-detached estate homes.

Pending approval of private applications and consideration of market conditions, the population of the **Sturgeon Valley Core** could increase by about 2.1% each year (with about 65 dwellings per year initially and increasing to 80 dwellings in later years). Over a 25-year period, the population of the **Sturgeon Valley Core** could increase by up to 5,500 residents.



Map of Sturgeon Valley Core

## Impact on Existing Neighbourhoods

The proposed plans for the area have new neighbourhoods contemplated for areas surrounding the existing neighbourhoods; existing neighbourhoods would expect no change (no new development) under land use plans. We asked respondents if they support this approach. Of the 364 responses to this question, **74.2%** of respondents (270) support this approach, while **25.8%** (94) do not support this approach. Of the respondents indicating they live in Sturgeon Valley, **75.8%** (175) support this approach.

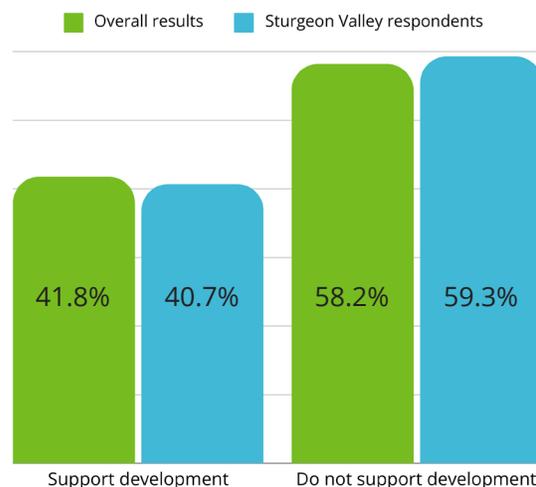
## Development in the Core

Respondents were more supportive of lower-density development in the Sturgeon Valley Core compared to higher-density development similar to that of River's Gate, with 10-to-15 housing units per net residential hectare.

Of the 364 responses to this question, **41.8%** of respondents (152) indicated they **support** the development of new neighbourhoods – that complement existing neighbourhoods – on identified lands in the Sturgeon Valley Core. **58.2%** (212) indicated they **do not support** the development of new neighbourhoods on identified lands in the Sturgeon Valley Core.

Levels of support for development were greatest amongst those living in Sturgeon County (non Valley) with **54.4%** support (31 of 57 respondents), followed by Sturgeon Valley residents with **40.7%** support (94 of 231 respondents).

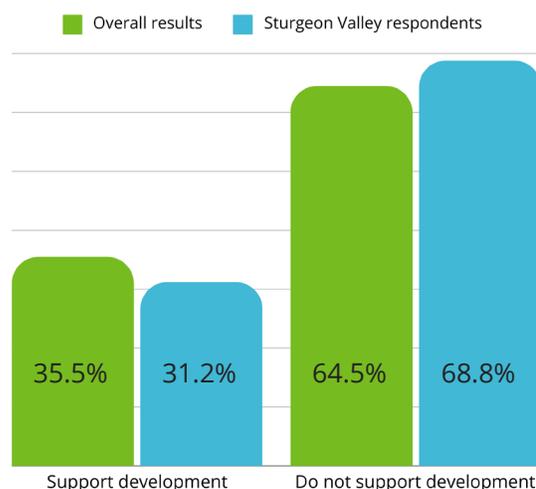
*We did not receive a significant amount of responses from those living outside of Sturgeon County.*



Of the 344 responses to this question, **35.5%** of respondents (122) indicated they **support** development at a density similar to or slightly lower/higher than River's Gate (close to 10-to-15 housing units per net residential hectare) in the Sturgeon Valley Core. **64.5%** (222) indicated they **do not support** development at this density.

Levels of support for development at a density similar to River's Gate were greatest amongst those living in Sturgeon County (non Valley) with **50.9%** support (29 of 57 respondents), followed by Sturgeon Valley residents with **31.2%** support (72 of 231 respondents).

*We did not receive a significant amount of responses from those living outside of Sturgeon County.*



Below are the most common themes for why respondents said they don't support development in the Sturgeon Valley Core:

- traffic and infrastructure concerns
- opposition to high-density development
- potential increase in crime
- impacts on quality of life of existing residents
- environmental and wildlife impact
- loss of agricultural land
- impacts on property values and taxes

### **Additional Input**

Respondents had an opportunity to share additional information about development in the Sturgeon Valley Core. Many inputs highlighted topics that were already addressed in the survey, such as reasons the respondent didn't support development.

Respondents indicated a desire to have opportunities to provide input, and some raised concerns about how prior engagement was promoted and executed.

## Sturgeon Valley South

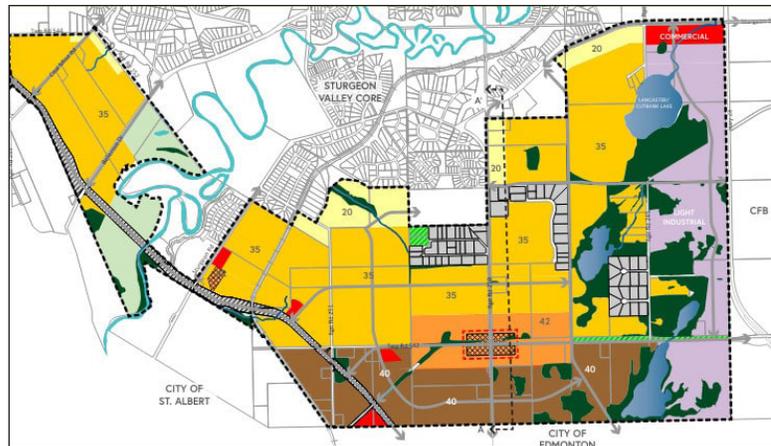
The Sturgeon Valley South area is located west, south and east of most existing neighbourhoods in the Sturgeon Valley. Proposed development would include trails connecting to parks, abundant natural spaces, and some limited commercial areas.

The Sturgeon Valley South is proposed to have a higher density, with a minimum of 35 housing units per net

residential hectare, as required by provincial/regional policy. This means the lots would be smaller than existing residential neighbourhoods in the Valley and could include single-detached homes, with a mix of townhouses, duplexes and three- and four-storey multi-unit apartments.

There would be transitions to provide a “buffer” between existing neighbourhoods and denser future neighbourhoods. Closer to existing homes in the Sturgeon Valley Core, it is proposed that development densities would be higher than River’s Gate (approximately 20 housing units per net residential hectare) but still primarily focused on single-family dwellings. Closer to Edmonton and Anthony Henday Drive, development densities would transition up to double that density (45 housing units per net residential hectare) to align with adjacent developments in the City of Edmonton (Goodridge Corners).

Pending approval of private applications and consideration of market conditions, the population of the **Sturgeon Valley South** could increase by about 2.1% each year (with about 80 dwellings per year initially and increasing to 235 dwellings in later years). Over a 25-year period, the population of the **Sturgeon Valley South** could increase by up to 8,300 residents.



Map of Sturgeon Valley South

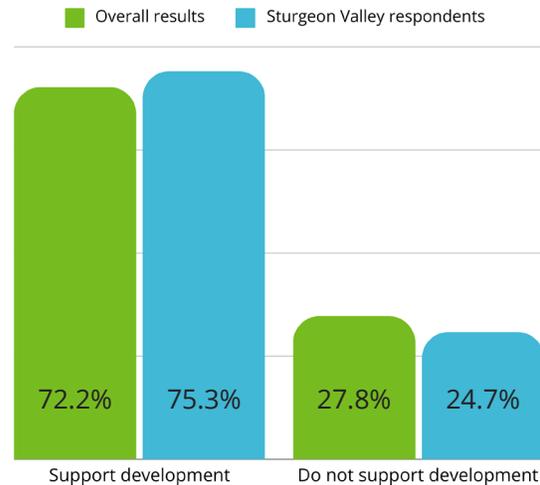
## Development in the South

Similar to the results for development in the Sturgeon Valley Core, respondents were more supportive of lower-density development compared to higher-density development.

Of the 248 responses to this question, **72.2%** of respondents (179) indicated they **support** the development of new neighbourhoods with development densities similar to existing neighbourhoods in the Sturgeon Valley Core. **27.8%** (69) **do not support** the development of new neighbourhoods with a similar development density to existing neighbourhoods in the Sturgeon Valley Core.

Levels of support for neighbourhoods with densities similar to existing neighbourhoods in the Sturgeon Valley Core were greatest amongst those living in the Sturgeon Valley, with **75.3%** support (140 of 186 respondents), followed by those living in Sturgeon County (non Valley) with **63.3%** support (31 of 49 respondents).

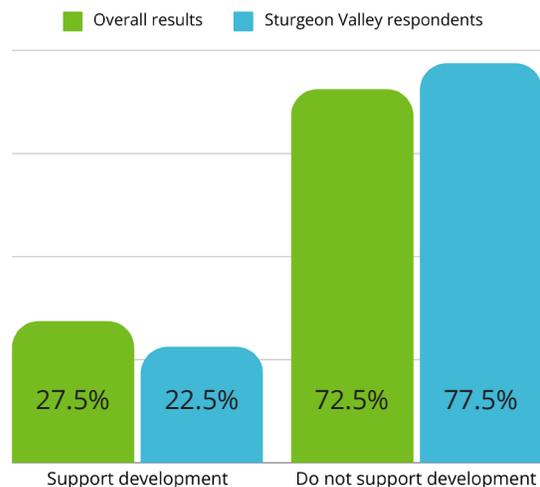
*We did not receive a significant amount of responses from those living outside of Sturgeon County.*



Of the 273 responses to this question, **27.5%** of respondents (75) indicated they **support** the development of new neighbourhoods with more diverse housing options at a higher density. **72.5%** (198) **do not support** the development of new neighbourhoods with more diverse housing options at a higher density.

Levels of support for diverse housing options were greatest amongst those living in Sturgeon County (non Valley) with **40.8%** support (20 of 49 respondents) followed by Sturgeon Valley residents at **22.5%** support (42 of 187 respondents).

*We did not receive a significant amount of responses from those living outside of Sturgeon County.*



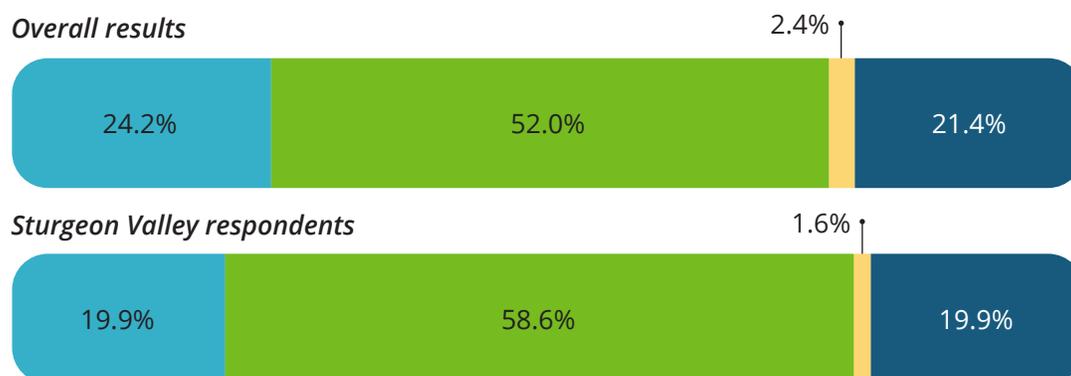
Below are the most common themes for why respondents said they don't support development of new neighbourhoods in the Sturgeon Valley South:

- traffic and infrastructure concerns
- opposition to high-density development
- potential increase in crime
- impacts on quality of life of existing residents
- environmental and wildlife impact
- impacts on property values and taxes
- loss of agricultural land

## Pace of Development

Pending approval of private applications and consideration of market conditions, the population of the Sturgeon Valley could increase by about 2.1% each year (roughly 150 dwellings per year initially and increasing to 300 dwellings per year in later years) in designated areas in the Sturgeon Valley.

■ Support pace of development ■ Pace is too fast ■ Pace is too slow ■ Don't support development



Of the 248 responses to this question:

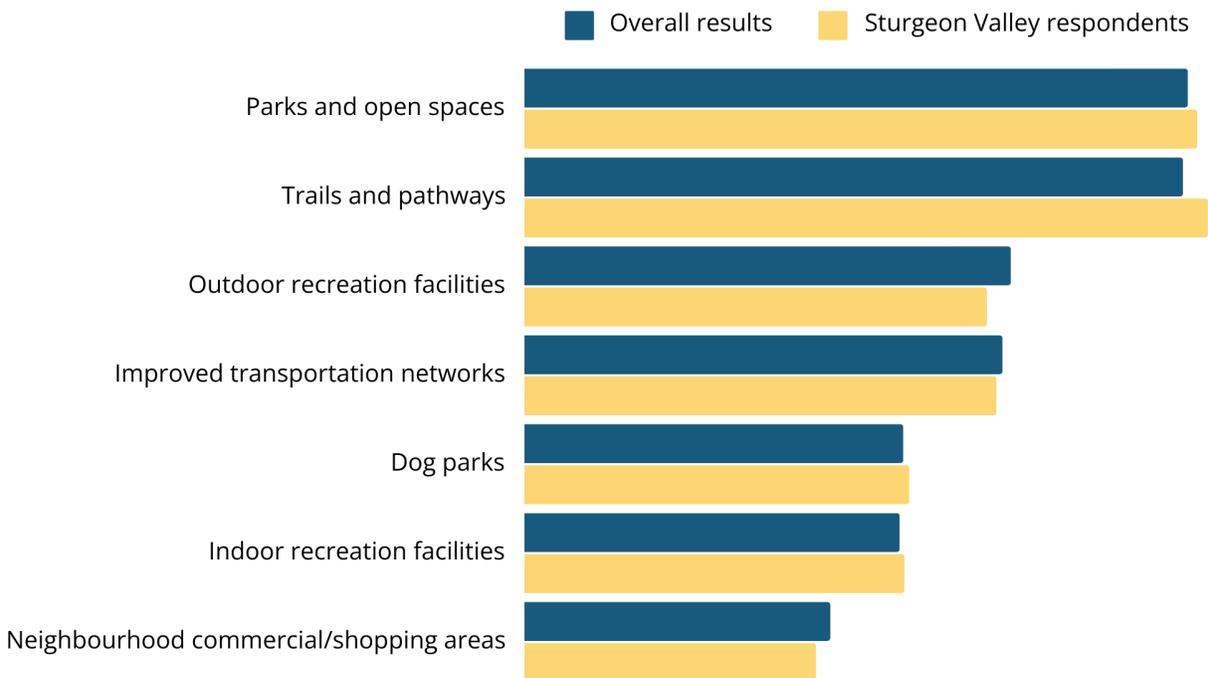
- **24.2%** of respondents (60) **support** the pace of development. **19.9%** of respondents (37 of 186 respondents) living in the Sturgeon Valley support the pace of development compared to **32.7%** of respondents (16 of 49 respondents) living in Sturgeon County (non Valley).
- **52.0%** of respondents (129) indicated the pace of development is **too fast**. **58.6%** of respondents (109 of 186 respondents) living in the Sturgeon Valley think the pace of development is too fast compared to **36.7%** of respondents (18 of 49 respondents) living in Sturgeon County (non Valley).
- **2.4%** of respondents (6) indicated the pace of development is **too slow**. **1.6%** of respondents (3 of 186 respondents) living in the Sturgeon Valley think the pace of development is too slow compared to **4.1%** of respondents (2 of 49 respondents) living in Sturgeon County (non Valley).
- **21.4%** of respondents (53) **do not support any new development** in the Sturgeon Valley South. **19.9%** of respondents (37 of 186 respondents) living in the Sturgeon Valley do not support any new development in the Sturgeon Valley South compared to **26.5%** of respondents (13 of 49 respondents) living in Sturgeon County (non Valley).

## Planning Jurisdiction

Majority of respondents indicated it's important or very important for Sturgeon County to maintain its ability to plan/approve developments in the Sturgeon Valley South. Of the 248 responses to this question, **56.9%** of respondents (141) indicated this is very important, **25.8%** (69) indicated this is important, **10.9%** (27) indicated this is slightly important and **6.5%** (16) indicated this is not at all important.

## Amenities

When asked for input on the amenities respondents most want to see in the Sturgeon Valley South, respondents indicated the following:

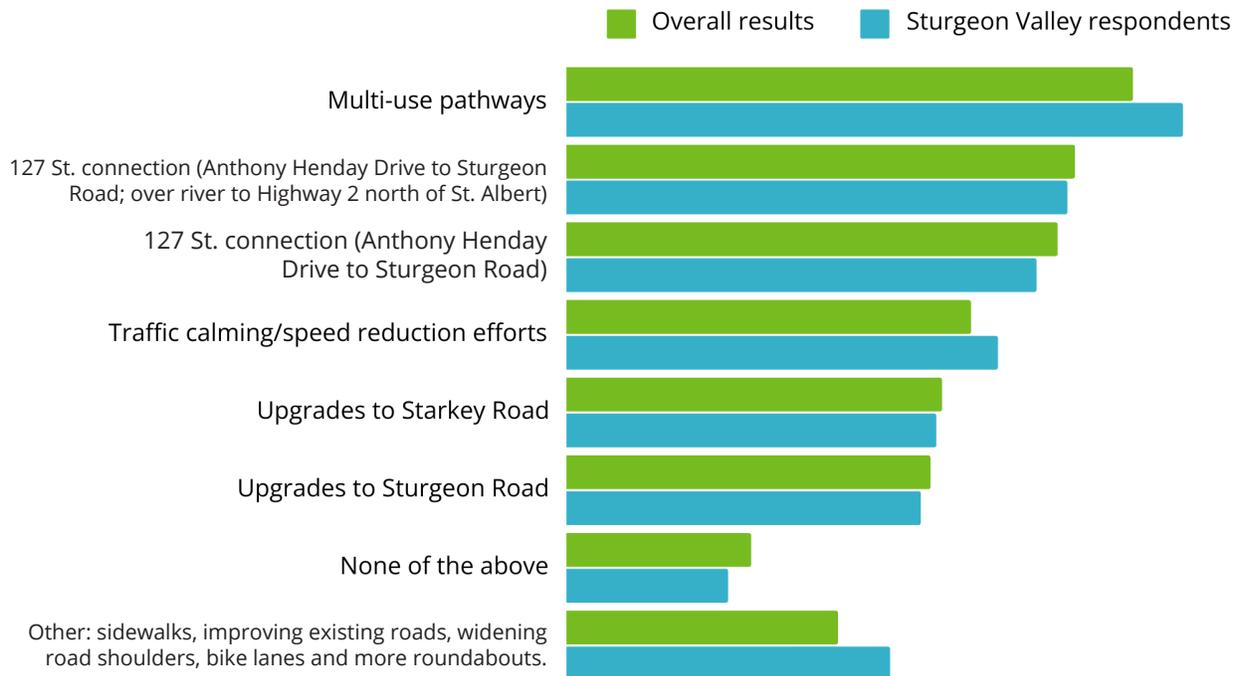


Below are the common themes for other amenities important to respondents:

- safe roads and sidewalks
- emergency services
- medical facilities
- infrastructure improvements
- schools
- community halls
- public transportation
- small commercial developments
- no amenities; they want to leave the space as it is

## Transportation Improvements

When asked which transportation improvements would benefit the area, respondents indicated the following:



## Diverse Housing Options

Of the 273 responses to this question, **22.3%** of respondents (61) indicated they or people they know want more diverse housing options that would allow them to stay within the Sturgeon Valley over time. **66.7%** (182) indicated they do not, and **11.0%** (30) indicated they didn't know.

Levels of support for diverse housing options were greatest amongst those living in Sturgeon County (non Valley) with **38.8%** support (19 of 49 respondents) and, finally, Sturgeon Valley residents with **16.0%** support (30 of 187 respondents).

*We did not receive a significant amount of responses from those living outside of Sturgeon County.*

### Additional Input

Respondents had an opportunity to share additional information about development in the Sturgeon Valley South. Many inputs highlighted topics already addressed in the survey, such as level of support for development, traffic and infrastructure needs and concerns, and input on density.

## What We're Doing Now/Next

Sturgeon County Council is considering the public's input and is expected to make a decision about next steps in summer/fall 2024. For the latest information and updates, visit [SturgeonCounty.ca/SturgeonValley](https://SturgeonCounty.ca/SturgeonValley).