



growing opportunity

OUR HAMLETS, OUR FUTURE
HAMLET OF BUSBY
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
MAY 21, 2026

Prepared by:



**RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK**

We share this acknowledgement to reaffirm our responsibility and commitment to reconciliation. We also recognize that this land acknowledgment is just that, an acknowledgment; it is but one step in our journey. We commit to working to uphold the conditions of the treaties that govern this land.



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PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Westlock County initiated a hamlet development project titled Our Hamlets, Our Future with the description “A place to stay, a place to grow. Shaped by the people who live here.” The first phase of the project was to create Community Development Plans for their 3 southern hamlets in Westlock County – Busby, Pickardville and Vimy. In order to create these Plans for the 3 hamlets, Westlock County first wanted to conduct in-person engagement with residents, surrounding landowners, and community groups in each hamlet in the Spring of 2026 to gather feedback.

The County was looking to gather feedback in 5 areas: Housing, Businesses, Facilities, Programs and Infrastructure to assist in the creation of the Community Development Plans. It was important to the County to hear from community members what they would like to see in these 5 areas, as well as what they do not want to see. After the initial engagement, What We Heard reporting was to be compiled for each hamlet and utilized to create preliminary Community Development Plans for each hamlet.

To facilitate engagement with the three hamlets, Westlock County contracted a third-party, Rural Development Network, to conduct the in-person community consultation in each hamlet in the Spring of 2026, as well as provide What We Heard reporting to support the next steps of the Our Hamlets, Our Future project. Rural Development Network (RDN) was selected, since they are a non-profit organization that works with rural, remote and Indigenous communities and organizations across Canada. RDN collaborates to identify and bring focus to rural issues, build local capacity, and develop innovative, rural-based solutions to social and economic challenges.



PURPOSE AND PROCESS

The purpose of this engagement for the Our Hamlets, Our Future project was to gain resident feedback on community strengths, concerns/challenges and opportunities in relation to Housing, Businesses, Facilities, Programs and Infrastructure to assist in the creation of a Community Development Plan for the Hamlet of Busby. The in-person engagement session took place on the evening of May 21, 2026. Similar engagement sessions were also held in the Hamlets of Vimy and Pickardville on May 19 and May 20, 2026 for the same purpose.

The same four questions were asked in all three in-person sessions for the three hamlets, including Busby:

- *Tell Us What You Love About Your Community* (strengths)
- *Tell Us What We Need to Know About Your Community* (site analysis)
- *Tell Us the Concerns You See in Your Community* (challenges)
- *Tell Us the Opportunities You See in Your Community*

The first question, *Tell Us What You Love About Your Community*, was conducted as a sticky-note exercise that participants completed as they arrived at the venue, Busby Community Hall. Participants were not asked to provide their personal information, in order to maintain anonymity, and were asked to mark their general residential location on a map of the Hamlet of Busby instead.

The second question, *Tell Us What We Need to Know About Your Community*, was conducted as a group exercise with RDN facilitating and note-taking, in order to conduct a site analysis of the hamlet.

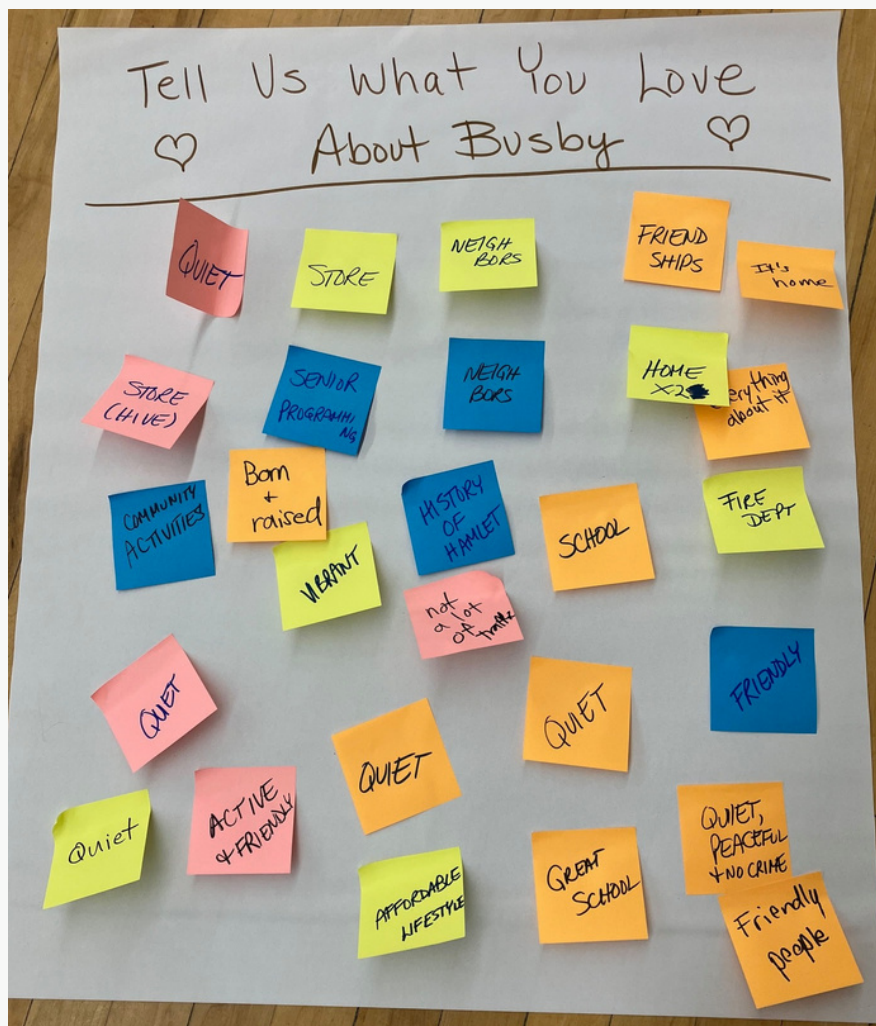
The third and final questions, *Tell Us the Concerns You See in Your Community* and *Tell Us the Opportunities You See in Your Community*, were both conducted as break-out sessions, where participants gathered in smaller groups to discuss the questions and Westlock County staff provided the note-taking in each group. Then each group's answers were shared with the larger group for discussion.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Strengths (What You Love about Your Community)

- The most popular response was *Quiet* (noted 6 times) including *Quiet, Peaceful and No Crime* regarding living in the Hamlet of Busby with the second most popular response being *Friendly/Friendly People* including *Active & Friendly* (noted 3 times).
- In third place were *Neighbours, Store (Hive), School* and *It's Home* (all noted 2 times each).
- Other responses noted *Friendships, Everything About It, Born & Raised, and History of Hamlet* which related to people's connections to the community.
- Other strengths noted were *Senior Programming, Community Activities, Not a Lot of Traffic, Fire Department, Vibrant, and Affordable Lifestyle* all speaking to the quality of living and amenities in the Hamlet of Busby.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Site Analysis (What We Need to Know About Your Community)

Busby is a hamlet of about 135 people in Westlock County, located about 70 km northwest of Edmonton and about 27 km south of the Town of Westlock. Highway 651 runs through the north end of the hamlet and Highway 44 is 3 km east of the hamlet. During the engagement session, participants were led through a discussion where they described their community to the RDN facilitators. This discussion was intended to start a conversation about the hamlet, without focusing on what was good or bad about it.

- As is typical in most of Alberta, the predominant wind direction is from the west or northwest; participants also indicated that wind came from the northeast on occasion. Since the sewage lagoon is north of the hamlet, residents don't experience adverse effects from it.
- Participants indicated that the land around the hamlet is primarily pasture for cattle, with both open grass and bush areas. They indicated that there is very little crop land in the area and what exists is primarily grain. There is a large cow/calf operation about 3 km from the hamlet (no direction provided), but there are no odor issues from it. There is also a large chicken operation outside of the hamlet (no distance or direction provided). In the spring, there are odor issues when manure is spread on nearby fields. Finally, there is an alfalfa plant at Legal, 20 km east, but there are only odor issues when the wind is from the east.
- The Canadian National Railway (CN) runs along the west side of the hamlet. According to participants, the train goes through town about 5 times per day, and everyone is very accustomed to the noise and train whistles. In the past, there was a water tower and grain elevators along the tracks, but like many other rural areas, these have been removed. An abandoned line on the northwest side of the hamlet veers west via a wye in the track. Between the abandoned and operating tracks were the former pond and channels and water tower for the trains. While this land is now privately owned, participants felt it has historical and environmental significance.
- In terms of things to do in the hamlet, participants talked about the sports grounds, which include several ball diamonds, a concession stand and bleacher seats. This area is owned by a local community group and maintained with County support. The grounds are available for rent and have hosted such events as a gymkhana in the riding arena, slow pitch, minor ball, a farmer's day event, a festival and other events.
- Other activities in the hamlet include an outdoor skating rink, karaoke at the Busby Countryside Saloon and Bar, an amazing antique and collectibles store called The Hive (in the former United Church building).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Site Analysis (What We Need to Know About Your Community) – CONTINUED

- The hamlet has a good-sized community hall, with a kitchen and stage, that is well used by residents. Activities in the hall include monthly jamborees, a Christmas market, seniors drop-in, to name a few. The hamlet also has a cemetery, which people felt should be made a historical site.
- A Kindergarten to Grade 6 school, with about 115 students who come from Pickardville, Busby and surrounding areas, is located on the north side of Highway 651. The highway runs through the north end of the community. The school has been recently renovated and is a very important part of the community. It hosts many extra-curricular activities such as a volunteer appreciation BBQ, garbage cleanup, Terry Fox Run, soccer tournaments, to name a few. After Grade 6, the school children are bussed to Westlock.
- Participants expressed concerns about speeding along Highway 651, especially in the school corridor, as well as noise from the traffic that goes through the hamlet. Since there are no sidewalks along the highway, children must walk on the side of the road and then cross at the crosswalk to the school.
- When residents are looking for groceries, medical services or household goods, they travel to Westlock (27 km), Legal (20 km), Morinville (35 km), St. Albert (51 km) or Barrhead (52 km).
- Some of the participants indicated that they work from home, but most (about 60%) commute to Westlock, St. Albert or Edmonton for work.
- The hamlet has a good mix of seniors, young people and families. Participants were passionate about ensuring their community would continue to thrive, by keeping their school, hall, sports grounds and other community attributes in place.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Challenges (What Concerns You See in Your Community)

During the session, participants identified several concerns about the community that included infrastructure & services, quality of life & safety, recreation, and housing & commercial development.

- **Infrastructure & Services** – During discussions, residents raised the following concerns about infrastructure and services:
 - Water drainage issues throughout the hamlet
 - Recommended a site drainage assessment
 - Water system
 - Water pressure and hook-ups were a concern
 - No water fill station in the hamlet
 - Roads
 - Frost heaves
 - Potholes
 - Pavement gets soft then ruts
 - Snow removal needs improvement
 - Response not timely after a snowfall
 - Limited grading
 - Spring road maintenance response needs improvement (impacts resale value of housing)
 - Poor street lighting
 - Lack of sidewalks, especially on highway and for the winter, when it gets dark
 - Sidewalks are needed for school kids, especially on the highway (crossing the highway is an issue)
 - Need signalized crosswalks, especially for crossing highway
 - School zone should be playground zone (longer hours of reduced traffic speed)
 - High property taxes (currently)
 - Concern that growth could raise taxes
 - Need for local childcare
 - Need for transportation/handibus for seniors to get to appointments
 - Concern about more commuters, if the community grows



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Challenges (What Concerns You See in Your Community) - CONTINUED

- **Quality of Life & Safety** - Community members spoke about some safety and quality of life concerns:
 - Speeding/traffic through hamlet
 - Need for enforcement (speed limits, crosswalks and highway)
 - Consider speed bumps
 - Large truck traffic
 - Use of jake brakes
 - Several unsightly properties that need to be cleaned up, including multiple vehicles on a single property and abandoned properties
 - School grounds have lots of gopher holes
 - Timing of the train whistles - no consistency and seven times a day
 - Need for weed (thistle) control on highways and roads
 - Lack of community involvement
 - Lack of beautification (more murals)
 - Drug control (residents don't want it to become a big problem)
 - City expectations in a rural area
- **Recreation** - When discussing recreation in the hamlet, residents advised on a couple of items:
 - Need to upgrade school playground
 - Having more recreation options
 - Lack of funding for skating rink/new rink
- **Housing & Commercial Development** - In regards to housing and commercial development, community members discussed:
 - Developing vacant and contaminated lots first, before new lots
 - Some lots available on either side of Highway 651
 - Contaminated lot east of hall cannot be developed
 - Old garage site - can build on top, but not dig up
 - Need for more diversified housing, such as apartments, townhouses and duplexes
 - Need for housing for senior housing and independent living
 - Lack of available property (no bare land sites; would like more 1-acre parcels)
 - Limited affordable housing rental options
 - Would like to attract more residents, especially young families
 - Limited commercial space and businesses
 - Not enough restaurants
 - No gas station
 - Need businesses to capture lake traffic

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Opportunities (What Opportunities You See in Your Community)

During the session, participants identified several opportunities for the community including business development, recreation & volunteerism, housing, and services.

- **Business Development** – In regards to business development, residents suggested and discussed the following:
 - Potential businesses
 - Coffee shop/cafe
 - Gas station/convenience store (potentially on contaminated site)
 - Car wash
 - Businesses along highway for commuters and lake travellers
 - Incentives for developers that want to build commercial development
 - Concern there are no buildings to repurpose
 - Tourism
 - Tourist attraction, like world's largest bee hive
 - Agri-tourism, such as farm tours with Busby Hive stop
 - Partnering with Northwest of 16 regional tourism association
 - Open to a manufacturing or processing facility on the outskirts
 - Land is reasonably priced for industrial development
 - Railway
 - Developing spur/siding for business
 - Potential flour mill (lupins and pulses) – ship via rail
- **Recreation & Volunteerism** – Community members discussed some recreation options to consider:
 - Outdoor skating rink with boards and shack
 - Skating rink and park on vacant contaminated lot near school (look at remediation grants to facilitate this)
 - Walking trails (bird and wildlife watching)
 - Campground
 - More recreational opportunities and organized activities
 - More funding to Lions Club for recreation groups
 - Community hall could be used for more activities, plus school gym
 - Offering incentives to encourage volunteerism



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

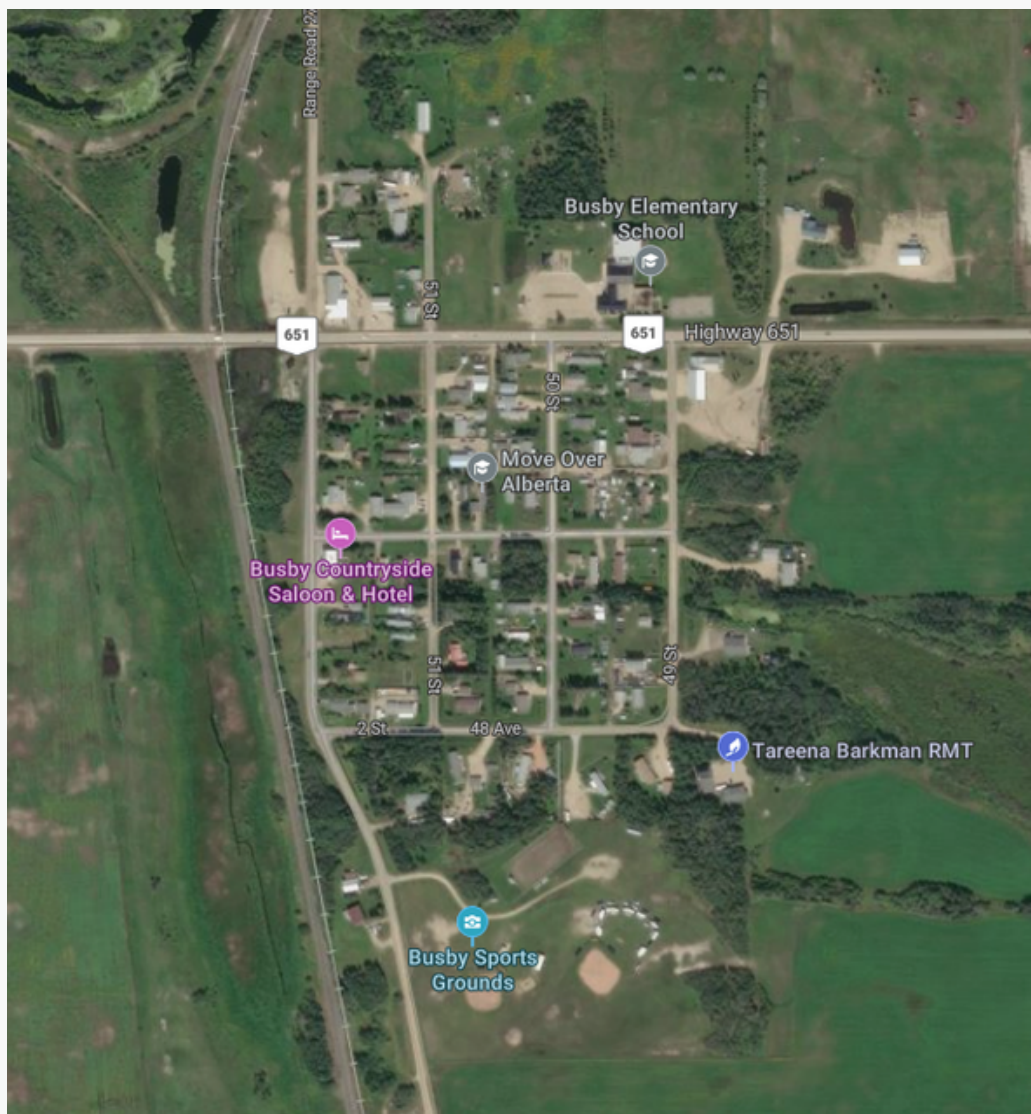
Opportunities (What Opportunities You See in Your Community) - CONTINUED

- **Housing** – In regards to housing, residents suggested:
 - Incentives for developers that want to build residential development, plus incentives to develop vacant lots
 - Filling the vacant lots first, but there are concerns that lots may be small and whether landowners are willing to sell
 - More housing options
 - Seniors housing
- **Services** – During discussions, the community mentioned several items to consider under servicing:
 - Infrastructure expansion
 - Expand water and sewage capacity
 - Water fill station
 - Street improvements, such as sidewalks and vegetation
 - Transportation
 - For example, shuttle bus from Busby to Pickardville to Westlock
 - Summer employment for youth to create future citizens
 - Signage at Highway 44 to bring travellers to Busby
 - Consider issues with development, such as traffic



NEXT STEPS

- In the Fall of 2026, there will be a second round of in-person engagement in all three hamlets (Vimy, Pickardville and Busby), facilitated by the Rural Development Network. The purpose of the Fall engagement is to bring information back to the Hamlet of Busby in regards to:
 - What We Heard reporting from the initial engagement in the Spring,
 - A draft Community Development Plan,
 - Gathering additional resident feedback on the draft Community Development Plan, and
 - Discussing next steps needed to execute the Community Development Plans.



APPENDIX 1: ENGAGEMENT NOTES

Hamlet of Busby – May 21, 2026

Tell Us What You Love About Your Community

- Quiet/Quiet, peaceful and no crime (x6)
- Store (Hive)/Store (x2)
- Neighbours (x2)
- Friendships
- It's home/Home (x2)
- Senior programming
- Everything about it
- Community activities
- Born & raised
- Vibrant
- Friendly/Friendly people/Active & friendly (x3)
- History of hamlet
- Not a lot of traffic
- School/Great school (x2)
- Fire department
- Affordable lifestyle

Tell Us About Your Community

- N/NE/NW wind
- Lagoon – 1 north and another potential
- Bush and not great agricultural land – pasture
- Drainage along rail tracks
- Has rail line (there is also an abandoned track)
- CN water lagoon for trains (has deep water)
- Channels (island)
- Used to have water tower and grain elevators
- Train – 5 times daily (no stopping); used to noise (whistles)
- Some cattle; mainly crops and grain
- Two miles – large cow/calf operation (no smell issues)
- No smell from lagoons
- Road noise – semis braking (logging trucks)
- Large chicken operation – spring manure spread smell & chicken carcasses
- Alfalfa plant at Legal – wind direction
- Speed an issue including school zone and crosswalk
- Big pond – 15 feet deep (on private property)
 - Birds
 - Drains to low land
 - Include on map

- Ball diamonds (sports grounds)
 - Owned and operated by association with County support
 - Rent for private events
 - Gymkana (riding arena)
 - Slow pitch drop-in
 - Used to have Blue Suede festival (Elvis theme)
 - Farmers day
 - Minor ball
- Hotel bar – karaoke
- Hive – antique store in old United Church
- School (K-6)
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Volunteer appreciation, BBQ, soccer tournament, Christmas concert
 - 115 students from Pickardville and Busby
 - Garbage clean-up
 - Terry Fox Run
 - Water fight
- Skating rink (outdoor) – frozen ice only
- Monthly jamborees
- Christmas market
- Fire appreciation
- Seniors – drop-in cards; Lions with Fire (same building)
- Mix seniors and younger people/families
- For retail and doctor, Westlock, Legal, Morinville, St. Albert, or Barrhead
- Work from home, Westlock, St. Albert and Edmonton; most commute (60-70%)
- Hotel – oldest building
- CN lagoon – steam trains
- Cemetery is a historical site
- School – important and renovated
- Kids play – school playground and sports grounds; bikes on one paved road
- Kids walk on highway if no path

Tell us the Concerns/Challenges in Your Community

Group #1

- Limited commercial space; not enough restaurants
- Gas station – there is none
- Roads during winter – limited grading
- High property taxes

Group #2

- Sidewalks, especially on the highway
- Poor job of snow clearing
- Crossing highway - pedestrians
- Proper crosswalks signalized (barriers?)
- School zone should be playground zone, so longer hours
- Enforcement of speed limits and crosswalks (consider speed bumps)
- Condition of the roads in hamlet (frost heaves)
- Water drainage needs fixing
- Need business/store to capture lake traffic

Group #3

- Snow removal
- Poor quality of roads
- Lack of sidewalks, especially on highway and in the winter/dark
- Spring road maintenance lacking
- Lack of recreation options
- Lack of available property - bare land; 1-acre parcels
- Property upkeep - unsightly
- Lack of community involvement
- Lack of funding for skating rink/new rink
- Lack of beautification (more murals)
- Lack of businesses
- Spring road maintenance response needs to improve - impacts resale value
- Limited rental opportunities - affordable
- Street lights very poor - lights within hamlet very weak
- Old playground needs upgraded
- Drug control (don't want it to become a big problem)
- No childcare

Group #4

- Highway enforcement
- CN engineers protocol for horn (seven times a day) - no consistency
- Site drainage assessment
- School grounds - gopher holes
- Thistle control
- Unsightly property clean-up

Group #5

- Old garage – can build on top but not dig up
- Unsightly properties – many
 - Lots of vehicles on a single property
- Sidewalks needed for school kids
- Roads
 - Snow removal takes too long after snowfall
 - Lots of potholes on gravel
 - Pavement gets soft then ruts
- Abandoned properties that are vacant
- More diversified housing types
 - Apartments
 - Townhouses
 - Duplex
- Seniors housing – independent living; Homeland Housing
- Gas station is missed in the community
- Growth could raise taxes

Group #6

- City expectations
- Live here, but not part of community
- Some lots either side of 651
- Contaminated lot east of hall cannot be developed
- Empty lots have been vacant for years – would be nice to see them developed
- Streets are a concern
- Water system (pressure, hook-ups)
- Fill station
- Speed through hamlet
- Some drainage – across from school
- More commuters if community grows
- Would like to attract more residents (young families)
- Large truck traffic
- Jake brakes

Summary of Challenges

- Speeding through hamlet – need enforcement
- City expectations in a rural area
- Vacant lots/contaminated lots – develop first before new lots
- Water pressure/no fill station
- Transportation/handibus (seniors)
- Drainage issues through hamlet (new assessment)
- Unsightly properties – County lots maintained
- Sidewalks for school kids – crossing highway is an issue through hamlet and on highway
- Upgrading roads – frost heaves/potholes
- School grounds – gopher holes
- Train whistles (CN) – timing

- More diversified housing – developers
- Weed (thistle) control on highways and roads
- Housing for seniors (Homeland Housing)
- Childcare
- Limited commercial business opportunities – no restaurant/gas station (capture lake traffic)
- Taxes increasing
- Recreation options – skating rink
- Need to upgrade school playground
- Lack of community involvement
- Limited affordable rental options
- Poor lighting

Tell Us the Opportunities You See in Your Community

Group #1

- Businesses along highway for commuters or lake travellers
- Good coffee shop
- Gas station/car wash
- Incentives for developers that want to build residential/commercial development
- World's largest bee hive attraction
- Open to some kind of manufacturing or processing facility on the outskirts but don't know what it could be
- County tours or farm tours (agri-tourism) with Busby stop
- Housing options
- Water fill station
- Outdoor rink with boards and shack

Group #2

- Fill the empty lots first
- Lots are small
- No buildings to repurpose
- Primary access is 651 or road to the south
- Walking trails/campground
- Seniors housing
- Transportation

Group #3

- Infrastructure expansion – expand water and sewage capacity
- Development of vacant lots if landowners are willing to sell
- Skating rink and park on vacant contaminated lot near school (look at remediation grants to facilitate this)
- Shuttle bus from Busby to Pickardville to Westlock
- Gas station on contaminated site
- Convenience store within gas station
- Street improvements – sidewalks, vegetation
- More funding to the Lions Club for recreation groups

Group #4

- Summer employment for youth (“green space”) creating future citizens
- Signage at Highway 44 – capture traffic
- Industrial business – land is reasonably priced
- Have railway – is there potential for spur (siding)
- Incentives to develop vacant lots
- More recreational opportunities
- Water fill station
- Community hall could be used for more activities
- Require volunteers – offer incentive or use the stick instead of the carrot

Summary of Opportunities

- Lots – fill what’s empty but small lots are tough to use; develop vacant lots
- Walking trails, campground (bird/wildlife watching)
- Seniors housing
- Businesses – cafe, coffee shop
- Incentives for developer to build commercial or residential
- Park on site east of school
- Gas station on contaminated site
- Signage to bring travellers to Busby
- World’s largest bee hive
- Manufacturing/processing facility outside of hamlet
- Agri-tourism/recreation opportunities – make hall more busy
- Housing options
- Outdoor rink; water fill station
- Shuttle bus
- Consider issues with development (traffic)
- NW 16 tourism association – agri-tourism
- Flour mill (lupins and pulses) – rail

Index Card Feedback

- Good job!
- Thank you for the opportunity of looking to the future for our small town and sharing our ideas.
- More organized recreational activities and modification infrastructure to allow us to use the hall and school gym for things like pickleball, walking track, dance lessons, crafting sessions, childcare, kids activities, etc.
- Update community info on County website.



growing opportunity

July 30, 2026