REPORT TO THE

cochrane





## CAO'S MESSAGE

As Cochrane moves forward, we continue to balance progress with careful planning—advancing key projects while ensuring responsible financial stewardship. 2024 has been a year of action, investment and collaboration, delivering meaningful improvements in infrastructure, recreation and public services.

This year, we focused on refining how we deliver projects—improving processes, learning from past experiences and strengthening our ability to manage large-scale initiatives. Whether it's roadwork, recreation planning, or community engagement, our goal is to provide high-quality services that reflect the needs of our residents.

Looking ahead, 2025 will see major infrastructure projects completed, new transit options introduced and ongoing investments in community well-being. With a dedicated team and strong partnerships, we are well-positioned to ensure that Cochrane remains a thriving, well-connected and vibrant community.

Thank you to our residents, businesses and community partners for your continued engagement and support. Your input helps shape the future, and we look forward to building on this momentum together.

Mike Derricott, Cochrane CAO

## MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Council and Administration have been dedicated to shaping Cochrane's future. In 2024, we made real strides—expanding infrastructure, enhancing community spaces and planning for growth while staying true to Cochrane's unique identity. I'm proud to be part of these efforts and what we've achieved together as a community.

One of our biggest priorities has been tackling Cochrane's traffic puzzle. From widening Highway 1A, and upgrading Centre Avenue to adding safer, more accessible pedestrian routes, we're making it easier for people to move around town. With the Provincial Highway 1A/22 interchange nearly complete and the construction of James Walker Trail set to begin, we're taking major steps to improve traffic flow and connectivity.

But it's not just about roads. We're continuing to invest in what makes Cochrane a great place to call home—new recreation spaces, better transit options and strong advocacy for schools and services our growing community needs.

We've also been planning for the future of Cochrane through Envision Cochrane 2050. This initiative is guiding how we grow, ensuring that we create a community that remains vibrant, sustainable and true to our values well into the future.

As we look ahead to 2025, I'm excited about what's next. Thank you for your passion, engagement and commitment to Cochrane. Together, we're building a community that is strong, connected and ready for the future.

Mayor Jeff Genung

REPORT TO THE CO

**37,011** RESIDENTS

2024 MUNICIPAL CENSUS





**1,345**HOME SALES

↑ 42.4% YTD

47%

† INCREASE IN AVERAGE

HOME PRICES

**770**HOUSING STARTS



224 BUSINESSES OPENED

2,396
BUSINESS
LICENCES

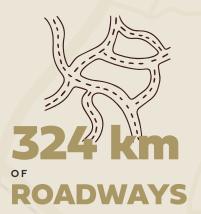


996

TOTAL

**ESTABLISHMENTS** 

1,046
HOME-BASED
BUSINESSES











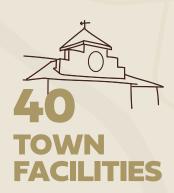
SERVICES















24,266
FOLLOWERS
ON SOCIAL MEDIA



## BY SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

A thriving local economy benefits everyone—creating jobs, enhancing services and shaping the character of our community. That's why Cochrane is committed to supporting businesses at every stage, from startups to established enterprises looking to grow.

## EMPOWERING ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH SMARTSTART

Starting a business is both exciting and challenging. Through SMARTstart, created by Community Futures Centre West, Cochrane provides new business owners with the tools, mentorship and expert guidance they need to navigate the critical early years. This year, seven local entrepreneurs successfully completed the eight-month training and mentorship program.

"There is a fear that comes with being an entrepreneur—you're taking a big risk. Being part of SMARTstart connects you with mentors and experts who help you check your parachute before taking the leap. I entered the program with just an idea, and now I'm ready to take on clients with confidence."

Karlene Myers, MyHRConsultant
 2024 SMARTstart cohort participant





## HELPING BUSINESSES GROW WITH THE COCHRANE BUSINESS INCUBATOR

For businesses beyond the startup phase, Cochrane's Business Incubator—located at The Station at Cochrane Crossing—offers a professional workspace, expert mentorship and a collaborative environment to support business growth. Through networking opportunities, training sessions and peer collaboration, local entrepreneurs gain the tools they need to scale up and succeed.

"Anyone getting into business should participate in a program like SMARTstart or the Business Incubator. It provides a strong foundation in business fundamentals, and those skills are transferable across industries. As mentors, we're proud to support local businesses because their success strengthens our entire community."

Ron Farrell, Beneficial Insurance
 2024 SMARTstart mentor



## INVESTING IN COCHRANE'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

Programs such as SMARTstart and the Business Incubator aren't just about business support—they're investments in Cochrane's long-term economic success. By fostering entrepreneurship and creating opportunities for local businesses to grow, we're strengthening our local economy, attracting new investment and ensuring Cochrane remains a vibrant place to live, work and do business.



Cochrane is growing, and so are the demands on our transit system. After five years of on-demand service, one message has come through loud and clear—residents want a transit system that is reliable, accessible and financially sustainable. Now, that vision is taking shape.

Shaped by extensive community input and a comprehensive transit study, Cochrane is introducing a new hybrid transit model designed to balance flexibility with efficiency. Council has approved additional funding to refine a detailed service plan, paving the way for a mix of fixed routes and on-request service. This means scheduled routes along three key corridors, while still maintaining the convenience of on-request transit.

Proposed 2025 COLT Network

Route 1

Route 3

Fixed Route Stops

On-Request Stops

1 2 km

Community voices played a crucial role in shaping this shift. During Phase II engagement, 71% of respondents supported modest tax and fare increases to enhance service reliability and accessibility. Residents also emphasized the need for transit that grows with the community, operates during more convenient hours and remains financially responsible.

With this direction in place, Administration developed a detailed service design, presented to Council in February. Now, with Council's approval, implementation planning is in full swing, leading up to a soft launch of the new transit network in 2025.

This next phase of COLT reflects what the community has asked for—a transit system that not only meets today's needs but also plans for the future. By combining fixed-route service with on-request flexibility, Cochrane is building a more connected, accessible and efficient transit network.

The journey doesn't end here. Ongoing engagement will continue to shape the future of transit in Cochrane, ensuring it remains responsive to the needs of the community.





## A COMMUNITY-BUILT VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Cochrane is a community that values its identity. And as our community continues to grow, we need a plan to ensure Cochrane remains a place where people feel connected, supported and proud to call home.

In 2024, we started working on Envision Cochrane 2050. One of our most important planning documents, Envision Cochrane 2050 guides how Cochrane grows and develops over the next 25 years. And it was a plan created with and for the community.

## HOW COCHRANE CAME TOGETHER TO PLAN FOR 2050

Over 18 months, the Town engaged with residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations and Council to build a plan that reflects the community's values, aspirations and priorities. More than 2,000 people participated - an impressive 5.6% of the population.

"The level of participation was incredible," says Mark Krysinski, Director of Community Growth, Town of Cochrane. "The phrase 'At home in the hills', was shared by a resident and we ended up adopting it as the vision statement tagline. It really speaks to how this plan was created collaboratively with the community in mind."

## A SMART APPROACH TO GROWTH THAT IS PLANNED AND INTENTIONAL

A key focus of the plan is managing growth in a way that enhances Cochrane's character rather than changing it. Most new growth will be concentrated along main streets and in the downtown core, encouraging mixeduse buildings, where retail spaces sit below office or residential units.

As we design and plan for future communities, the vision is to create convenient neighbourhoods where residents have centralized amenities, such as parks, playgrounds, schools and retail shops. They would include a diverse range of housing types and provide connections to other communities and to the downtown. As we redevelop some of our existing neighbourhoods and our downtown, the plan is focused on increased building intensification and residential density while maintaining the neighbourhood's character.

## HOW COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SHAPED THE PLAN

The community's commitment to Cochrane's "small-town feel" was a guiding value in developing this plan. We asked participants: "What does 'small-town feeling' mean to you?" And we heard: Knowing your neighbors, feeling safe in your neighbourhood and having a sense of connection to your community. While some residents wanted to slow or stop growth entirely, many acknowledged that growth in Cochrane is inevitable – but it needs to be managed responsibly.

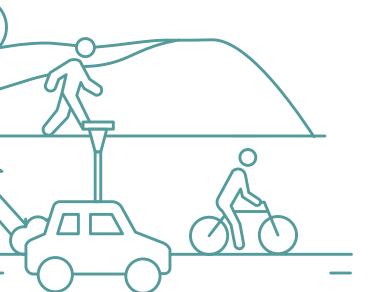
"What we consistently heard was that residents want to preserve what makes Cochrane special – its small-town feel, western heritage, natural environment and active lifestyles," says Krysinski. "At the same time, they want thoughtful growth that enhances daily life—such as more local shopping and recreational opportunities—while maintaining that close-knit feel."

Envision Cochrane 2050 addresses these needs by setting standards that preserve Cochrane's unique identity, while ensuring that future neighbourhood designs consider convenient access to schools, parks, employment and shopping. This will create more opportunities for residents to connect with their neighbours within their neighbourhood, biking or walking to their destination and having the added benefit of reducing traffic, keeping that community small-town feel even as Cochrane grows.

During the engagement sessions, business owners voiced the need for flexible spaces that can evolve as the economy changes. Envision Cochrane 2050 has policies for strategically locating future employment lands and engaging with the local business community on an ongoing basis to understand their needs.

## **WHAT'S NEXT?**

With a strong foundation built on community input, Envision Cochrane 2050 will help guide Cochrane's future—preserving what makes it special while planning for a future reflective of our community's values, aspirations and priorities.





CETHER

Strategic investments in our main corridors and roadways are transforming how we navigate Cochrane. Each road we widen, bridge we construct and pathway we improve is a deliberate step toward building a more connected, accessible and safe community.

In 2018, we invested in improvements to **Griffin Road**, leading to the SLS Centre. The addition of two traffic circles, streetlights and a sidewalk improved pedestrian access and set the stage for the future **Jack Tennant Memorial Bridge**. A year later, **Centre Avenue** saw its first phase of improvements, adding a dedicated right-turn lane and expanding southbound access from Highway 1A.

The opening of the Jack Tennant Memorial Bridge and James Walker Trail connection reduced local commute times, eased congestion on Highway 22 and created a popular pedestrian route across the Bow River. This was a huge milestone for our community, but we knew it was just one piece of a much larger puzzle.

The work continued with **Highway 1A improvements**, expanding the corridor from two to four lanes between Centre Avenue and Fifth Avenue. It also included the realignment of Fourth Avenue to Fifth Avenue, the addition of turning lanes and the installation of new sidewalks and a multi-use pathway to ease congestion and prepare for the **Provincial Highway 1A/22 interchange** upgrades. The **River Avenue** enhancements in 2023 and Centre Avenue's recent expansion, which now provides two through lanes in all directions, have further improved access to Cochrane's historic downtown.

Beyond the roads, we're investing in spaces that make Cochrane feel like home. The **Fourth Avenue Wall enhancements** have created a fresh, welcoming gateway to Cochrane, while upgrades to the **Historic Ranche & Glenbow pathways** are improving accessibility and ensuring residents can safely enjoy our trail system year-round. Looking ahead, the interchange project is expected to be completed in late 2025, marking another major milestone in our journey to a more efficient road network. Phase 3 of the **James Walker Trail** project will also begin, establishing a key thoroughfare to enhance connectivity between the northern and southern parts of the community.

While construction comes with its challenges, every completed project brings us closer to a future where getting around Cochrane is smoother, safer and more enjoyable. We're not just solving a traffic puzzle—we're shaping the future of Cochrane, one piece at a time.

Clockwise from top: Griffin Road and Jack Tennant Memorial Bridge, Highway 1A realignment in progress, completed realignment and wall enhancements, and Cochrane interchange before construction.



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT YOUR VOICE MATTERS

1,967
REGISTRANTS



14% ENGAGEMENT RATE

percentage of visitors who submitted a contribution

## **TOP 5 PROJECTS**

- 1. Help shape the future of transit
- 2. Your community, your future
- 3. Envision Cochrane 2050
- 4. Cochrane budget
- 5. Cochrane age friendly





## REFLECTING ON LAST YEAR'S PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN COCHRANE

Cochrane took big steps in 2024 to involve the community in key decisions shaping the future of the town. From planning for the next 25 years, to improving transit, public input played an important role in decision–making.

## A YEAR OF STRONG PARTICIPATION

Cochrane's engagement efforts saw great success in 2024, with 17,000 visits to Let's Talk Cochrane, marking a 5,000-visit increase from the previous year. Nearly 2,000 new residents signed up to stay informed and be involved in local initiatives.

In Fall 2023, Cochrane asked residents for feedback on public engagement—what worked well and what could be improved. The insights gathered were compiled into a 'What We Heard' report and shared with Council. These findings helped shape the Town's new public engagement policy, which came into effect in June 2024. This updated policy will guide future outreach and ensure that residents continue to be part of the decision-making process.

## **ENVISION COCHRANE 2050**

One of the biggest projects taking place last year was Envision Cochrane 2050, a key planning document that will provide direction for municipal growth, infrastructure, servicing needs and land use over the next 25 years. More than 2,000 people participated – an impressive 5.6% of Cochrane's population, well above the average of most municipalities. Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their thoughts over an 18-month period through surveys, pop-up events and community displays around the community.



## **HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF TRANSIT**

With Cochrane's transit service in operation for five years, the Town launched a review last year to explore future options. Two rounds of engagement attracted feedback from over 1,200 residents, leading to a hybrid transit model that blends fixed routes with on-request service.

## YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR FUTURE

Public input also guided improvements in Cochrane's parks, recreation and cultural offerings. More than 2,500 residents shared their experiences, helping the Town to understand what activities were in demand and how satisfied residents were with current options. More opportunities to engage will be available this Spring and will be focused on prioritizing what we heard last year. Feedback received from the community will be used to guide decisions on how the town will manage these cherished spaces over the next 10-15 years.

## **AGE FRIENDLY**

The Town also advanced its Age-Friendly Initiative to ensure people of all ages and abilities can access services, programs and spaces. Residents shared insights on transportation, housing, recreation and health services. Their feedback helped create an action plan to guide future improvements.

## **COCHRANE BUDGET**

In addition, budget engagement remained a priority. A third-party consultant gathered input from 407 residents for the second year in a row, revealing that 54% felt they received good to excellent value for their property taxes. Most preferred maintaining current service levels, and their feedback helped shape the 2025 budget.

## **GUESS OUR POPULATION**

In April, we asked residents to guess Cochrane's population before the municipal census. One lucky guesser came within 23 people of the actual count of 37,011!

2025 promises to be another exciting year full of interesting and fun initiatives. For more information to register, visit **letstalkcochrane.ca**.







## WHAT'S AHEAD IN 2025

2025 marks a transformative year with key infrastructure upgrades, improved mobility and enhanced community spaces. From easing traffic congestion to expanding recreation options and advancing transit, strategic investments will shape the town's future while preserving its unique charm. With thoughtful planning and community input, Cochrane is building a sustainable, connected future.

Key capital projects will take center stage in 2025, bringing long-awaited improvements to infrastructure, mobility and community spaces. Construction on Stage 3 of James Walker Trail will begin, alleviating congestion, enhancing connectivity between north and south Cochrane and reducing pressure on River Heights Drive.

Infrastructure maintenance remains a top priority, with projects like the Glenpatrick Drive Infrastructure Replacement ensuring our roads, utilities and essential services remain reliable. Additionally, a new Asset Management Coordinator will focus on assessing municipal assets and developing a long-term maintenance plan to support strategic priorities and enhance service delivery.

Investments in recreation and open spaces will also take shape. The Parks, Culture & Active Living Master Plan, set for completion in late 2025, will help guide how we develop and manage some of our most valued public spaces. Community feedback is essential in shaping this plan, ensuring it reflects the priorities of our residents for the next 10 to 15 years.

2025 will also bring advancements in transit, with the rollout of a new hybrid model of fixed routes and on-request service. These updates will improve accessibility, efficiency and convenience for transit users.

Later in the year, work will commence on servicing and grading the Horse Creek lands, paving the way for a new high school and multiple outdoor recreational facilities.

Finally, 2025 will also be a year of civic engagement, with a municipal election giving residents the opportunity to help shape the future of Cochrane. Stay informed and get all the details at **cochrane.ca/election**.

With so much to look forward to in 2025, it's clear that Cochrane's future is bright. From game-changing infrastructure projects to exciting new community spaces, this year will be a celebration of progress, collaboration and growth. Together, we're building a vibrant, connected community that's ready for whatever comes next.



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