
VILLAGE OF MCBRIDE MUNICIPAL SIGNAGE DESIGN & STRATEGY

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

MAY 2026

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Village of McBride is developing a Municipal Signage Design and Strategy to strengthen community identity, improve navigation, and create welcoming gateways for residents and visitors. This *What We Heard Report* summarizes feedback collected through public and stakeholder engagement activities and is intended to inform the next phase of strategy and design development.

What is Wayfinding?

Wayfinding is how people move from place to place. It can include signs, maps, and markers that help people:

- Know where they are
- Know where they are going
- Choose the best route
- Discover new places

Why is Wayfinding Important?

Wayfinding can benefit communities in many ways:

- Find downtown, trails and key places
- Encourage visitors to stop and explore
- Support local businesses
- Improve safety for walking and biking
- Create a strong sense of place

PROJECT TIMELINE



WHAT WE DID

Engagement occurred in May 2026 and included the following elements:



PUBLIC SURVEY



The public was invited to participate in an online survey hosted on the Village of McBride website between May 4 and May 15, 2026. Printed copies of the survey were also made available at the Village office to encourage broader community participation. To support engagement, participants were entered into a draw for a \$50 gift card upon completion of the survey. The survey gathered feedback related to community values, priorities, design preferences, destination locations, and overall perceptions regarding signage and wayfinding within McBride.



STAKEHOLDER SESSIONS

Three stakeholder engagement sessions were held as part of the Wayfinding Strategy process on May 4, May 5, and May 7, 2026. Two sessions were conducted in person at the Robson Valley Community Centre, while one session was held virtually through Microsoft Teams. Discussions focused on community identity, storytelling, tourism, opportunities and challenges, and the role of signage and wayfinding in McBride's future.



VERTISEE MAPPING

An interactive mapping tool called Vertisee was embedded within the StoryMaps project page to support community engagement and spatial feedback. The web-based map allowed participants to drop pins throughout the community and provide input on topics such as local destinations and places of interest, difficult or confusing crossings, and tourism destinations or locations they would recommend to visitors.



PROMOTION

The project was promoted through a number of channels:

- 1 full-page ad in the Little McBride Paper
- 1 ad in the Village of McBride May newsletter
- 2 posts on Village of McBride Facebook page
- 1 post on McBride Tourism Facebook page
- 1 post on Village of McBride website news

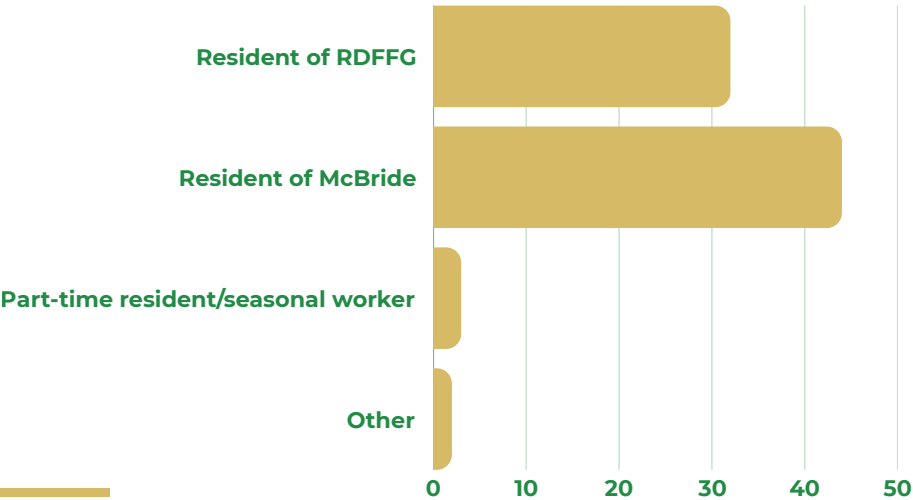


WHO WE HEARD FROM

81

SURVEY RESPONSES

The majority of participants identified as local residents, ensuring strong representation of community perspectives.



28

SESSION #1

11 participants

SESSION #2

12 participants

SESSION #3

5 participants

STAKEHOLDERS

Invitations were sent to 60+ stakeholder groups. Over 22 community organizations were represented in the sessions, including:

- BKB Cedar
- Cougar Den Cabins
- McBride and District Chamber of Commerce
- Forever Printing and Signs
- Whistle Stop Gallery
- McBride Visitor Centre
- Village of McBride Council
- Village of McBride Staff
- Regional District of Fraser-Fort George Area H
- Welcome Home Café and Gifts
- McBride School Sports
- Principle Project Group
- Northern BC Tourism Association
- Orion Business Design
- McBride Seniors Society
- Uncle Marks
- McBride Hotel Bar
- Fraser Headwaters Alliance
- McBride Big Country Snowmobile Association
- Simpcw First Nation
- Lheidli T'enneh First Nation
- Yellowhead Ski Club
- Robson Valley Community Services

COMMUNITY IDENTITY & VALUES

Across all engagement formats, participants consistently described McBride as:

- Welcoming, friendly, and safe
- A small-town, boutique community with a strong sense of belonging
- Rooted in authenticity, resilience, and pioneer spirit

Participants emphasized that signage should reinforce McBride's *real, human, and self-made* character rather than feeling overly polished, corporate, or generic. Maintaining authenticity while allowing for thoughtful modernization was a recurring theme.



PURPOSE OF WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE

81%

OF SURVEY RESPONDANTS SAID
THAT HAVING A CLEAR AND
WELCOMING WAYFINDING SIGNAGE
SYSTEM FOR MCBRIDE WAS VERY
IMPORTANT.

Survey data showed strong agreement that a clear and welcoming wayfinding system is important. Participants identified several core purposes for signage in McBride:

- Helping visitors find downtown and Main Street, which are not highly visible from Highway 16
- Encouraging people to stop, explore, and stay longer, rather than passing through
- Improving navigation for parks, trails, community facilities, and attractions
- Creating a sense of arrival at key gateways

Stakeholders emphasized that signage should serve both functional navigation and cultural storytelling roles.

STORIES TO BE TOLD & ARRIVAL EXPERIENCE

When asked “*What should McBride’s signs say about the community?*”

62%

MOUNTAIN &
OUTDOOR ADVENTURE
BASECAMP

Participants want signage that communicates:

- Small-town friendliness and warmth
- Mountain and outdoor adventure opportunities
- Local history and stories
- Arts, culture, and creativity
- Quiet, uncrowded, authentic experiences

57%

SMALL-TOWN
FRIENDLINESS

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of telling ***under-recognized stories***, including agriculture, Indigenous presence, community builders, and local ecological features.

When asked **how people should feel upon arriving in McBride**, common themes included:

- Welcomed and included
- Calm, safe, and relaxed
- Curious and inspired to explore
- Connected to nature, history, and community

Many described McBride as a place to *exhale, slow down, and feel at home*—sentiments participants felt should be clearly reflected in signage.

***“a place to
exhale, slow
down, and
feel at
home”***



PRIORITY LOCATIONS

The public and stakeholders were asked to drop a pin/sticker on the map to identify known concerns or solutions

Survey results and stakeholder discussions identified priority locations including:

- Highway 16 gateways and entrances
- Downtown and Main Street
- Parks, trails, and trailheads
- Tourism attractions (e.g., Whistle Stop Gallery, Train Station)
- Community facilities
- Parking areas and visitor nodes

Respondents also emphasized that gateway signage should create a stronger arrival moment, not simply mark the Village boundary.



40+

POINTS WERE MAPPED

15+

ATTRACTIONS

When asked “What are 3 locations that you take visitors when they come to McBride?”

Rank	Destination/Attraction	Approx. Mentions
1	McBride Peak / Teare Mountain / Halfway Lookout	~28–32
2	Rainbow Falls	~18–20
3	Beaver Falls / Holmes FSR	~11–12
4	Horseshoe Lake	~10–12
5	Train Station / Railway / CN Station	~10–11
6	Welcome Home Café	~8–9
7	Main Street / Downtown / Shopping	~8–9
8	Whistle Stop Gallery / Visitor Centre / Museum	~6–7
9	Mountain & Trail Network (general hiking/biking trails)	~6–7
10	Sandbars / Fraser River	~5–6
11	Bell / Lucille Mountain Areas	~4–5
12	Ancient Forest	~3–4
13	Dore River / Dore FSR	~3–4
14	LaSalle Lake	~3



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

11 Guiding Principles were presented for people to vote on to shape the strategy and design.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO STOP & STAY LONGER

Rank #1 | 69 votes

TOURISM & EXPERIENCE

HELP PEOPLE EXPLORE MCBRIDE & THE REGION

Rank #2 | 58 votes

UNIVERSAL ACCESS

EASY FOR EVERYONE TO USE & UNDERSTAND

Rank #3 | 48 votes

FUNCTINALITY & WAYFINDING

MAKE NAVIGATION CLEAR & EASY

Rank #3 | 48 votes

IDENTITY & BRANDING

REFLECT MCBRIDE'S IDENTITY & CHARACTER

Rank #5 | 46 votes

ACTIVE LIVING

SUPPORT WALKING, BIKING & ACTIVE MOVEMENT

Rank #6 | 41 votes

PLACEMAKING, ARTS & CULTURE

ENHANCE VIBRANCY THROUGH ART & CULTURE.

RANK #6 | 41 VOTES

HERITAGE & STORYTELLING

TELL MCBRIDE'S STORIES IN AN AUTHENTIC WAY

Rank #8 | 36 votes

CONNECTIVITY & TRAILS

CONNECT PEOPLE ACROSS TOWN & INTO NATURE.

Rank #8 | 36 votes

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

PROTECT THE LANDSCAPE & KEEP SIGNAGE SIMPLE.

Rank #10 | 28 votes

DIGITAL INNOVATION

USE DIGITAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT NAVIGATION.

RANK #11 | 7 VOTES



DESIGN CONCEPTS

We asked the community "What design concepts do you like best?"

CONCEPT #1 - TOWN ON TRACK - HERITAGE & RAILWAY

materials

steel | wrought iron | timber | black metal

character

historic | rugged | industrial | timeless

form

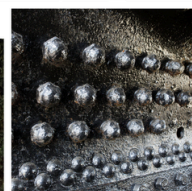
linear | structured | engineered | scrollwork

atmosphere

heritage | nostalgic | journey

The "Town on Track" concept is rooted in McBride's railway history and its identity as a traditional small rail community. It reflects the Village's heritage through materials like wood and steel, and design details inspired by early railway towns.

This approach creates a consistent and recognizable downtown identity that reinforces McBride's sense of place and arrival, especially around Main Street and the historic station.



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VOTES

CONCEPT #2 - MCBRIDE ALIVE - OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

materials

wood | stone | denim | canvas

character

adventurous | vibrant | welcoming | lively

form

dynamic | flowing | organic | open

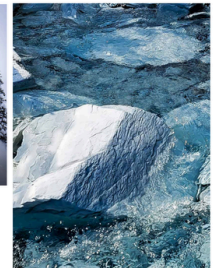
atmosphere

wild | scenic | uncrowded | alive

The "McBride Alive" concept reflects McBride as a vibrant outdoor town, surrounded by mountains, rivers, and wilderness. It highlights the variety of outdoor adventure and the unique experiences available throughout the region.

This direction uses natural materials, bold imagery, and a more dynamic visual style to reflect exploration, movement, and discovery. It is designed to help visitors quickly understand McBride as a place to stop, stay, and experience the outdoors.

The goal is to encourage exploration of trails, attractions, and "hidden gems," while supporting McBride's identity as an active, welcoming, and nature-focused community.



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VOTES

CONCEPT #3 - BLENDED- TOWN ON TRACK X MCBRIDE ALIVE

materials

wood | steel | stone | leather | patina

character

authentic | welcoming | rugged | vibrant

form

layered | structured | integrated | human-scaled

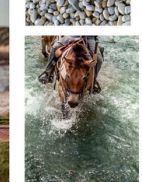
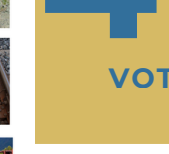
atmosphere

connected | inviting | scenic | active

The Blended concept brings together McBride's railway heritage and its outdoor adventure identity into one unified system. It reflects a community that is both historically grounded and actively embracing a new way of exploration.

This approach blends heritage-inspired materials with a more modern, natural aesthetic to create a balanced and flexible design system. It connects downtown, trails, and outdoors into one clear journey while maintaining McBride's character and sense of place.

The goal is to create a practical, future-ready system that feels authentic to McBride today while supporting growth, tourism, and everyday navigation into the future.



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VOTES



OPPORTUNITIES & CONCERNS

Participants shared several opportunities and caution areas:

Opportunities

- Strengthen McBride's identity and first impressions
- Support sustainable, values-aligned tourism
- Improve visibility of businesses and amenities
- Expand walking tours, heritage interpretation, and art integration

Concerns

- Volunteer burnout and local maintenance capacity
- Overtourism and inappropriate backcountry promotion
- Losing authenticity through over-design or excessive signage
- Ensuring signage is durable, legible, and maintained over time

Stakeholders emphasized that growth should remain community-first, with tourism as a complement rather than a driver.



A scenic landscape photograph of a wetland area. In the foreground, there is a dense field of tall, dry, brown reeds. To the right, a calm pond reflects the sky and the surrounding trees. The middle ground features a line of green trees and shrubs. In the background, a range of blue mountains with patches of snow is visible under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds.

APPENDICES

STAKEHOLDER SESSION #1 & #2

Some key themes that emerged from the in-person stakeholder sessions are below.

Authenticity defines McBride.

Residents consistently described McBride as a welcoming, small-town community rooted in authenticity, resilience, and strong local relationships. Maintaining community character while thoughtfully modernizing was identified as a key priority.

Strong Community Values.

- “Community first, tourism second” mindset
- Strong volunteer culture and local pride
- Safe, family-oriented, and welcoming atmosphere
- Desire to retain independence from large chains and big-box development

Wayfinding & Storytelling.

Wayfinding was seen as more than signage — it should communicate McBride’s identity and stories.

Key Themes

- Strong gateway and arrival experiences
- Photo opportunities and public art
- Natural and heritage interpretation
- Locally inspired, durable sign design
- Indigenous and community storytelling

Untapped Assets Identified.

Participants highlighted several under-recognized features that contribute to McBride’s unique identity:

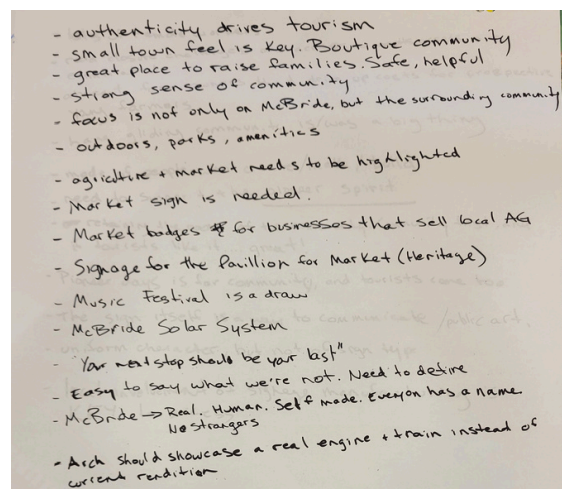
- Bird sanctuary
- Historic caribou migration route
- Great Divide Trail access
- Mountain goat corridor
- Outdoor recreation and snowmobiling
- Fraser River access and recreation

Vision for the Future.

The community wants McBride to be known for:

- Belonging
- Nature & recreation
- Resilience
- Authenticity

—not for scale, commercialization, or mass tourism.



STAKEHOLDER SESSION #3

Some key themes that emerged from the virtual stakeholder session are below.

A Community in Transition.

- McBride is shifting away from a traditional resource-based identity.
- Tourism, recreation, and new local opportunities are becoming more important.

Strong small-town quality of life

- People described McBride as welcoming, caring, safe, and connected.
- Residents value the walkable downtown, local services, and family-friendly environment.

Growing appeal for families and newcomers

- More young families and returning residents are choosing McBride.
- The slower pace and supportive community were seen as major draws.

Outdoor recreation is a defining strength

- Trails, water, viewpoints, and winter recreation are central to McBride's identity.
- Many participants felt these assets need to be better highlighted.

Wayfinding can support tourism and local discovery

- Signage should help people find key places, explore downtown, and discover lesser-known destinations.
- There was strong interest in showing that McBride is more than a highway stop.

Future growth should reflect local identity

- Participants discussed balancing heritage themes with outdoor and nature-based branding.
- Growth should be respectful, community-driven, and mindful of volunteer capacity.

