

Big Lakes County

Municipal Development Plan



Bylaw No. 25-2024
February 2025

Big Lakes County Bylaw

Bylaw No 25-2024

Being a bylaw of Big Lakes County, in the Province of Alberta to adopt the
Municipal Development Plan

WHEREAS the Municipal Development Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Part 17 of the Municipal Government Act, Revised Statutes of Alberta, 2000, Chapter M-26 as amended; and

WHEREAS, Council did provide opportunity to those persons affected by the Municipal Development Plan to make suggestions and representations; and

WHEREAS, Council held a Public Hearing and has given consideration to the representations made in accordance with the Municipal Government Act; and

WHEREAS, the Municipal Development Plan describes the way in which the future development of Big Lakes County may be carried out in an orderly and economical manner; and

NOW THEREFORE the Council of Big Lakes County hereby enacts as follows:

1. This Bylaw may be cited as the “Big Lakes County Municipal Development Plan.”
2. That Schedule “A” attached hereto, the document entitled “Municipal Development Plan,” is hereby adopted as part of this Bylaw.
3. Bylaw 02-2017 is repealed and replaced.
4. This Bylaw becomes effective on the date it is signed and passed.

Effective Date

This bylaw comes into effect after third reading and upon signing.

Read a first time this 11th day of December, 2024

Read a second time this 8th day of January, 2025

Read a third time this 26th day of February, 2025



Reeve



Chief Administrative Officer

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Plan

This document is the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) for Big Lakes County. The purpose of this MDP is to provide a policy framework to guide future land use and policy decisions within Big Lakes County. Under section 632 of the **Municipal Government Act (MGA)**, all municipalities must adopt an MDP, and include in it the following details:

- The future land use within the municipality;
- The manner of and the proposals for future development in the municipality;
- The co-ordination of future land uses, future growth patterns and other infrastructure with adjacent municipalities;
- The provision of the required transportation systems within the municipality and in relation to adjacent municipalities;
- The provision of municipal services and facilities.

The goals, objectives and policies outlined within this MDP have been created in consultation with the public, County staff, stakeholder groups, and existing strategic documents and studies. It is intended to be used as a tool to inform decisions on the way the County grows into the future and influence the creation of other municipal plans and processes. A plan of this nature is intended to provide general guidance on how the County should manage its development, now and into the future.

As communities grow and change, so too do the relevance of their guiding documents. This MDP was updated to reflect the changing dynamics and direction of the County since the previous MDP was adopted in 2017. It is intended to be a functional document used by County Staff, and the public to inform development decisions.

1.2 Interpretation

Throughout this MDP, the operative words “shall”, “should” and “may” are used to indicate varying degrees of obligation for following and/or enforcing the intended action of an applicable statement. These words shall be interpreted according to the following:

- **“Shall”** is used to indicate a direct obligation or requirement that is non-negotiable.
- **“Should”** is used to indicate a preferred course of action based on best practices but is not mandatory. Where the “should” statement applies to a developer/applicant, a justification of why the action relating to the statement will not be achieved is required.
- **“May”** is used to indicate that enforcement or compliance of the policy is at the discretion of the County based on the particular circumstances.



All cross references to policies that are made within this MDP are references to policies contained within this MDP, unless specifically noted otherwise. All references to “this Plan” mean a reference to this MDP.

1.3 Geographic Context

The County is located approximately 250 kilometers northwest of the City of Edmonton, encompassing a total land area of 1,213,056.0 hectares with a population of 5,046 (2023, Alberta Municipal Affairs).

The County contains five Hamlets (Kinuso, Jousard, Enilda, Faust, and Grouard), and encompasses four First Nations (Kapawe'no [Pakashan], Swan River, Driftpile and Sucker Creek) and three Métis Settlement areas (Peavine, East Prairie, and Gift Lake), operating under separate jurisdiction.

The Towns of Swan Hills and High Prairie are located in the southern portion of the County, and west of Lesser Slave Lake, respectively.

The County is also bordered by the following municipalities:

- Northern Sunrise County to the north;
- The Municipal District of Lesser Slave River No. 124 to the east;
- Woodlands County to the south; and
- The Municipal District of Smoky River No. 30 and the Municipal District of Greenview No. 16 to the west.

The natural landscape of the region includes boreal forest and open plains. A large portion of land within County boundaries is Crown land (1,011,750 ha), with the majority of developed urban areas located around the perimeter of Lesser Slave Lake. Lesser Slave Lake is the largest lake in the County and serves as the focal point for settlement and tourism activity.

Other major lakes include Winagami, Utikuma and Snipe Lake. Major rivers include the West Prairie River, East Prairie River, Driftpile River, Swan River and Heart River. Agricultural land cover includes 66,775.5 ha with some being provincial and/or protected lands (see [Figure 1 – Regional Context](#)).

1.4 Historical Context

The origins of settlement and development within the present-day County boundaries can be traced back to the growing fur-trading industry around Lesser Slave Lake in the early 1800s. Several posts were established in the area, including an important hub at Buffalo Bay, marking the beginning of settlement and commercial activity around the lake. By the mid-to- late 1800s the thriving fur trade had attracted further settlement and growth to the area, leading to the construction of some of Grouard’s most historic buildings, as well as other communities along the lake’s southern shore.

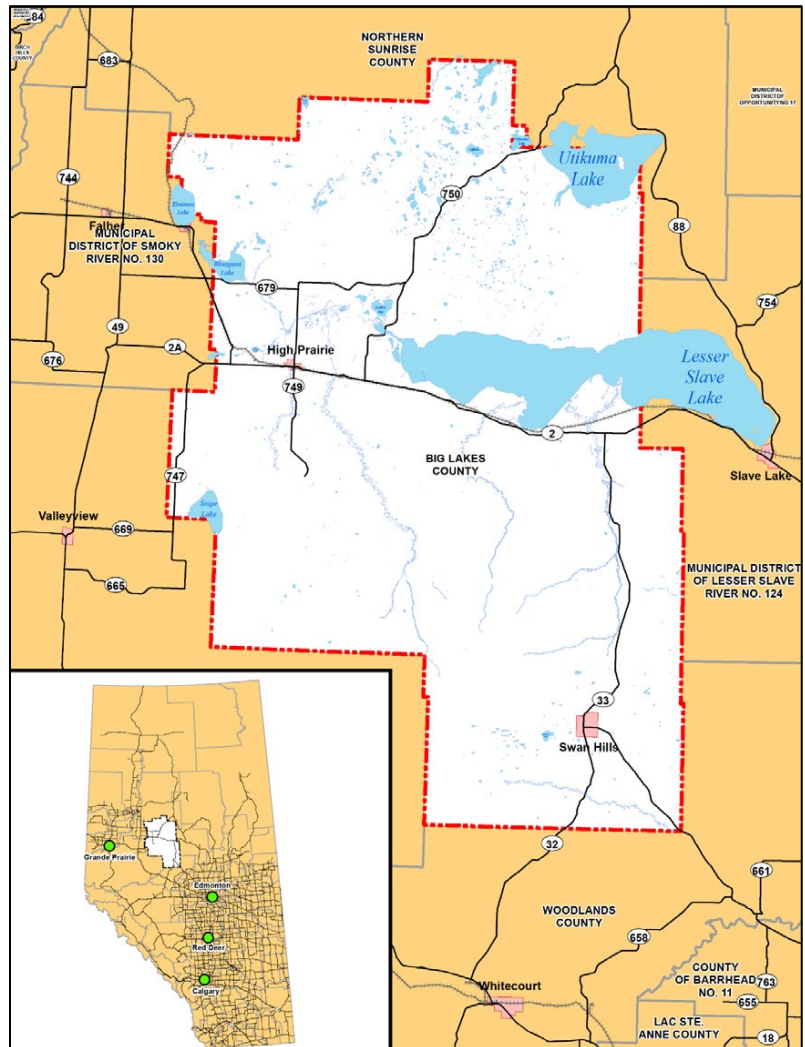
By 1915, a shift from fur trading and water-based transportation to rail and agriculture had begun. The construction of rail along the southern shore of Lesser Slave Lake, along with the encouragement of western settlement by the federal government, brought an influx of non-indigenous settlers in pursuit of inexpensive, fertile land. This shift also resulted in regional growth centering around the Town’s of High Prairie and Slave Lake, rather than Grouard.



Figure 1: Regional Context

Capitalizing on the region’s natural resources and fertile lands, economic growth in the County throughout the 20th Century was leveraged by the agricultural and forestry industries and growth in the oil and gas sector.

From an administrative perspective, the County has changed and evolved since its establishment as an Improvement District in 1905. After 90 years as an Improvement District, the County incorporated as a Municipal District in 1995, followed by a change of name to Big Lakes County in March of 2015. This change did not bring with it any jurisdictional changes in governance, but rather the opportunity for the County to rebrand itself as it grows and evolves into the future.



1.5 Present Situation

Economic Drivers and Demographic Trends

The traditional sectors of agriculture, lumber and energy form the basis of the County's economic landscape. However, volatility in these industries has highlighted the growing importance of creating a resilient economy capable of adapting to shifts in the industry balance. Emerging sectors, like tourism, can play an important role in the County's future economic prosperity.

A background analysis of the demographic trends indicated the County is experiencing an aging population, attracting fewer immigrants than other parts of the province, has a lower household income compared to High Prairie and the Province, and a relatively large and increasing indigenous population. Sectors where employment is concentrated include agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, public administration, educational services and construction, with a smaller concentration of knowledge-based industries. When assessing some of the existing assets that could lead to further economic development in the region, the County's existing physical infrastructure, cultural and natural heritage features, strong presence of educational facilities (Northern Lakes College), and the presence of regional economic community groups such as Lesser Slave Lake Economic Alliance, were identified.

Tourism

The County's natural environment provides many opportunities for outdoor tourism activities. An analysis of tourism trends in the region indicated several opportunities for potential growth in this sector. It was found that most tourism visitations to the County occurred from other Albertans visiting friends and family, or participating in outdoor leisure activities including camping, fishing, visiting seasonal recreational residences, hunting and snowmobiling. To better accommodate these activities, the analysis indicated a need for increased fixed-roof accommodations (hotels, motels, etc.), the need to balance campground sites with marinas and lake access, marketing and promotion, and creating partnerships with indigenous communities and regional bodies to support tourism expansion.

Oil and Gas

The oil and gas industry still plays an important role in the County's traditional economy. The County is in close proximity to two distinct oil and gas related opportunities. Immediately to the north lie the Peace River Oil Sands, a deposit which in conjunction with the other oil sands deposits in Alberta comprise one of the world's largest recoverable deposits of oil.

With the recent completion of the Seal Lake connector road running north from High Prairie to the Seal Lake oil region, accessibility to and from the County has been improved significantly. In the southern half of the County lie considerable conventional oil and gas deposits, however production has been waning. While the increased development of these areas presents several opportunities for related business activities within the County (including the development of support services, and material manufacturing), their impacts on the region's natural environment, infrastructure, and quality of life of residents should be considered. The County supports the development of an alternative energy sector as opportunities arise.



2.0 Guiding Principles and Growth Strategy

Future growth within the County requires new initiatives and policy direction that will encourage smart and sustainable growth while recognizing historical development patterns. The guiding principles of the MDP are as follows:

- 1. Fiscal Sustainability** – The County supports fiscally responsible development where the cost of building and managing community infrastructure and public services is affordable and not burdensome on future County residents.
- 2. Economic Development** – The County supports new development and tourism concepts that are compatible with other County developments and logical for future sustainable development.
- 3. Environmental Sustainability** – The County recognizes the importance of its natural environment in providing a high quality of life for its residents, its potential for tourism development, and supports environmentally responsible development.
- 4. Community Fiber** – The County recognizes the historical value and promotes a continued community spirit through collaboration and understanding between its regional neighbours and differing land uses.
- 5. Land Use** – The County will continue to maintain a degree of certainty in terms of its development and future land use planning.



3.0 Agriculture Policy

Overview

Agricultural production and related activities remain an important part of the County’s economy and cultural identity, with over 237,156 hectares of farmland. Main crops include wheat, barley, oats and canola in addition to a substantial ranching and livestock industry. The distribution of agricultural land remains fairly clustered throughout the County, with concentrations surrounding Kinuso, Jousard, and a majority of the lands located in the County’s western portion as indicated on [Schedule C-1](#).

As the County develops in the future, a key strategy for maintaining the economic viability of its agricultural industry will be through proper management and protection of its highest quality lands. To this end, the County aims to minimize the loss and fragmentation of high-quality agricultural land and encourage the development of **Value-Added** and **Market Garden** opportunities.

As a whole, agriculture and related uses, as identified within the County’s LUB shall be the primary intent of lands within the Agricultural Area, as indicated on [Schedule C-1 and C-2](#).

The County recognizes the need for occasional non-agricultural uses to serve as supportive services for rural populations. Where considered necessary, the County will evaluate proposals for non-agricultural uses based on their potential impact to agricultural and surrounding lands. A clear set of criteria to help evaluate these proposals is important to guide future development decisions.

Objectives

1. Support the long-term viability of the agricultural industry in the County.
2. Minimize the loss and fragmentation of better agricultural lands.
3. Responsibly guide development of non-agricultural uses within agricultural areas to reduce land use conflicts.

General Policies

- 3.1 **Land Use** Agricultural uses shall be the predominant land use within the areas identified as Agricultural on the regional context maps in [Schedules C-1 and C-2](#). However, the County may support the development of non-agricultural uses within this area provided the policies of this plan are met.



- 3.2 **Right to Farm** In support of Alberta’s Agricultural Operation Practices Act, the County shall notify applicants for non-agricultural subdivision and development within the identified Agricultural Area that agricultural use and operations maintain precedence over other uses.
- 3.3 **Identification of “Better” Farmland** The County shall utilize the Rural Farmland Assessment (RFA) data to identify the location of its **better agricultural land** (lands with an RFA rating of 28% or greater), to help inform decisions over future growth and development.
- 3.4 **Preservation of Productive Farmland** Development of non-agricultural uses should not be located on better agricultural land and shall not impede the productivity of surrounding agricultural lands, notwithstanding Agricultural (AG) District regulations in the **Land Use Bylaw**.
- 3.5 **Subdivision of Agricultural Land**
- (a) **Number of Parcels:** The County shall limit the subdivision of agricultural land to a maximum of one (1) parcel out of an unsubdivided quarter section.
 - (b) **Location of Parcels:** New parcels subdivided out of a quarter section shall be clustered near the boundaries of the quarter- section, to minimize the fragmentation of the remaining farmland.
 - (c) **Parcel Size:** Notwithstanding First Parcel Out, the County shall limit the minimum size of parcels subdivided out of an agricultural quarter section to 16.2 hectares, in order to limit the fragmentation of farmland.
 - (d) **Legal Access:** Public road access to the proposed lots shall be maintained.
 - (e) **Servicing:** Proposed lots shall be of sufficient area to provide for private servicing if the proposed lots will not be connected to municipal servicing.
- 3.6 **Natural Fragmentation** Where agricultural land is severed by a physical feature and as a result cannot be economically farmed, development may be allowed for non-agricultural use provided there are no conflicts with adjoining land uses. Examples of such physical features include: railways, public roads and natural features.
- 3.7 **Variety of Agricultural Uses** The County shall encourage a variety of agricultural uses and practices, to promote a diversity of agricultural production.
- 3.8 **Market Gardens** The County shall support the development of smaller-scale Market Gardens to increase production variety within the County and meet local market demand.
- 3.9 **Alternative Energy Development on Agricultural Lands**
- (a) Applications for Solar Energy Facilities, Wind Energy Conversion Systems and other large scale alternative energy projects shall not be located on **better agricultural land** (lands with an RFA rating of 28% or greater).
 - (b) The County requires a decommissioning and reclamation plan as part of an application for Solar Energy Facilities, Wind Energy Conversion Systems and other large scale alternative energy projects.



- 3.10 **Agri-Business and Processing** The County shall support the development of agricultural related activities and businesses including processing, minor servicing, storage and repair businesses, provided the activities and businesses adhere to the policies of this section.
- 3.11 **Topsoil and Peat Moss Conservation** To manage and conserve the County’s topsoil and peat moss supply for agricultural purposes, the proponent of any development requiring the excavation of materials shall indicate to the County how the topsoil and peat moss will be retained for future use and reclamation purposes, prior to development approval.
- 3.12 **Confined Feeding Operations** Decisions related to the approval and registration of **Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs)** and manure storage facilities fall under the jurisdiction of the Province, under the Agricultural Operations Practices Act (AOPA). The County may support the development of **CFOs** provided that:
- (a) The proposed facility is not within 3.2 km of a hamlet;
 - (b) The proposed facility is not within 0.8 km of any institutional, commercial, residential or recreational uses;
 - (c) The proposed facility is not within 0.8 km of watercourses, waterbodies, or environmentally significant features.
 - (d) The proposed facility is within 0.8 km of a provincial highway, arterial road or collector road as indicated in the regional context maps in [Schedules C-1 and C-2](#).



4.0 Parks, Trails and Recreation

Overview

The natural landscape of the County lends itself to a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors and remains an important part of the County's identity. Although the County has realized much of its recreational potential through facilitating lakeside development opportunities, trail development and the creation of public facilities, the proper management of these assets represents challenges moving forward. Limited public access to Lesser Slave Lake, undermaintained trail networks, and underutilized facilities with mounting operational costs remain key areas of concern within the context of County recreation.

It is the intent of this Plan to meet the recreational needs of the County, while balancing operational and environmental considerations. Investigating opportunities to maximize access to recreation assets, expanding existing networks, and exploring alternative methods of management through partnerships and collaboration represent key opportunities to improve recreation in the County.

Objectives

1. Maximize County recreation opportunities to promote a healthy lifestyle, quality of life and economic opportunities related to tourism growth.
2. Increase public access opportunities to Lesser Slave Lake.
3. Accommodate the diverse recreational needs of the County.
4. Encourage partnerships and collaboration to improve maintenance and operations.

General Policies

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| 4.1 | Asset Inventory | The County shall inventory the County's recreation assets (hard and soft facilities), to better manage and inform decisions related to recreation development. |
| 4.2 | Open Space Linkages | The County shall encourage the linkage of open space areas, municipal and environmental reserves spaces, where possible, to create a comprehensive open space network. |
| 4.3 | Collaboration | The County shall encourage coordination and collaboration with other jurisdictions, community organizations and County residents to best identify trail and park development. |



- 4.4 **Universal Accessibility** The County shall incorporate principles of universal accessibility in the design of parks, trails and recreation facilities.
- 4.5 **CPTED** The County encourages the incorporation of ***Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)***, in the design of parks, trails and recreation facilities.
- 4.6 **Lakeshore Access**
- (a) The County shall recognize the lakeshore (especially around Lesser Slave Lake) as a primary location for recreation and public enjoyment, and endeavor to maintain and increase public access opportunities where possible;
 - (b) The County should create a waterfront development and access plan for Lesser Slave Lake to identify public access points for the entire shoreline including within hamlets, First Nations and Métis Settlements;
 - (c) The County shall collaborate with ***First Nations*** and ***Métis Settlements*** when identifying public access points that may fall within these lands.
 - (d) Where suitable, the County shall require the dedication of ***Municipal Reserve (MR)*** lands along the lakeshore to facilitate future public access and recreation opportunities.
- 4.7 **Trail Development**
- (a) **Trail Master Plan** – The County should investigate opportunities for the development of multi-use trails within hamlets and along lakeshores, and support the creation of a master trails and open space plan;
 - (b) **Network** – The County should encourage the development of a system of walking trails within hamlets that connect residents to lake access and commercial points;
 - (c) **Surfacing** – Trails that are developed shall be surfaced in an appropriate manner to be accessible, and accommodate the anticipated range of users;
 - (d) **Visibility** – Where possible, trails should be visible from public roadways or houses when located within a residential area;
 - (e) **Utility Corridors** – The use of utility corridors for trail development may be encouraged by the County, where the corridor can facilitate the further connection and extension of recreational trails.
 - (f) **ASPs** – Multi-purpose trails should be developed as part of new multi-lot developments and identified in **ASPs** in alignment with the Development Requirements in [Schedule A](#).
- 4.8 **Maintenance Agreements** The County may enter into maintenance agreements with a society, association or other community group as an alternative method of maintaining and caring for trails, parks and facilities.
- 4.9 **Snowmobile and Quadding Networks** The County should develop a strategy for accommodating all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) within a trail network, while minimizing the potential impact of other users on the natural environment, and nearby residents.
- 4.10 **Commercial Recreation Development** New commercial recreation development that is proposed of 1 acre or more such as bareland resorts and golf courses shall have an ASP prepared in alignment with the Development Requirements in [Schedule A](#).



5.0 Housing and Reserves

Overview

The majority of residential land use in the County remains concentrated within its five Hamlets and consists mainly of single-detached and modular homes. Several bareland recreational developments occur throughout the County, particularly in proximity to the lakeshore, attracting a significant seasonal summer population. It is the intent of this Plan to provide for the efficient and orderly development of a variety of residential types, while maintaining compatibility with adjacent land uses, and respecting sensitive natural features.

To facilitate a more compact form of development that utilizes existing services and infrastructure, it is the intent of the County to encourage future residential development within existing nodes, including *Hamlets*. There is some concern related to the availability of special needs and seniors housing and related care facilities. The County aims to monitor the demand for these housing types and support their development when necessary.

While the County recognizes some multi-lot country residential development will occur in rural areas outside of hamlet boundaries, it is the intent of this Plan to support a form of development that minimizes land consumption, preserves unique natural features, avoids *better agricultural land* (lands with an RFA rating of 28% or greater) and utilizes existing municipal servicing, where possible.

Objectives

1. Regulate and direct development of new residential subdivisions to areas that accommodate municipal servicing.
2. Provide for a variety of residential housing forms and types to meet the needs of the County’s population.
3. Balance conversion of non-residential lands with housing demand in a manner that does not conflict with surrounding land uses.

General Policies

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| 5.1 | Variety of Housing | Provide for a variety of land use districts within the <i>Land Use Bylaw</i> to accommodate a full range of housing types, lot sizes and lifestyles. |
| 5.2 | Location of Residential | Residential development shall be prioritized within existing built-up areas, including hamlets, to maximize the efficient use of existing municipal service networks and land. |



- 5.3 **Country Residential**
- (a) **General Location** – The County shall encourage the location of country residential development within close proximity of existing hamlets, to take advantage of existing services.
 - (b) **Agricultural Criteria** – The County may allow Country Residential development within agricultural areas provided the development:
 - I. Is not located on **better agricultural land** (lands with an RFA rating of 28% or greater)
 - II. Is compatible with adjacent agricultural uses and does not interfere with the ability to farm;
 - III. Does not cause fragmentation to existing agricultural lands that would render them unproductive;
 - IV. Meets the subdivision evaluation criteria outlined in **Policy 3.5**.
 - (c) **Cluster Country Residential Development** – Multi-lot country residential developments shall be encouraged to incorporate a clustered lot design to maximize land efficiency and minimize servicing costs.
 - (d) **Proximity to Resource Extraction** – Discourage the location of new residential subdivision and development near existing extraction activities.
- 5.4 **Communal Recreation Resorts**
- (a) The County should consider **bareland condominium development** in the **communal recreation areas** provided:
 - I. The development is located adjacent to a lake, waterbody or focal amenity feature;
 - II. The development provides at least 10% of the gross development area for common space for recreational purposes, in addition to any **MR** or **ER** dedication that may be required;
 - III. A minimum standard of landscaping, screening and/or buffering from adjacent landowners is met, in accordance with requirements outlined in the **LUB**.
- 5.5 **Multi-lot Country Residential Development** New multi-lot country residential development that is proposed for more than six (6) lots shall have an ASP prepared in alignment with the Development Requirements in **Schedule A**.
- 5.6 **Senior’s Housing** The County will support in principle, proposals for senior’s housing and assisted living facilities in appropriate locations, to enable seniors to age in place.
- 5.7 **Panhandle Lots** The County should discourage the creation of panhandle lots as a method of providing legal and physical access to municipal roadways unless there are no feasible alternatives.
- 5.8 **FireSmart Design Principles** The County encourages development proponents within forested areas to incorporate fire prevention and mitigation measures into the design.



- 5.9 **Municipal Reserves** Pursuant to the **MGA**, the County shall require at the time of subdivision, that 10% of the land being subdivided, less the amount of any land taken as environmental reserve or that will be subject to an environmental reserve easement, be dedicated as:
- (a) **Municipal reserve (MR)** where multi-lot residential development is proposed in the form of land for the purpose of providing schools, open space, trails and recreational areas for public use;
 - (b) Money in lieu of **MR** where the dedication of land for recreational purposes is impractical, such as within industrial or commercial developments or the amount of land to be dedicated is of insufficient size to be of value as public park and/or open space; and/or
 - (c) A combination of land or money.
- 5.10 **Community Service Reserve** In the event that a school board that holds an interest in a **municipal reserve** and/or school and municipal reserve no longer requires the reserve lands, the municipality may designate the lands as community service reserve for the purpose of creating community and/or social facilities, in accordance with the **MGA**.
- 5.11 **Environmental Reserves**
- (a) Pursuant to the **MGA**, the County shall require the delineation of wetlands and other environmentally significant lands required for ER dedication, by the developer as part of the subdivision process.
 - (b) ER setbacks shall be measured from the top of bank of rivers and streams, and/or the high-water mark of wetlands and lakes. The County may require geotechnical or hydrogeological studies carried out by a professional engineer to determine the top of bank and/or high-water mark and determine a site-specific setback.



6.0 Commercial

Overview

At present, limited commercial development exists within the County, mainly concentrated within hamlet areas, serving limited local needs. Concerns have been raised about the limited availability of comprehensive commercial services within the County, causing residents to travel outside to places like Slave Lake and High Prairie for retail and personal services.

It is the intent of this Plan to support the continued growth of commercial activities in a responsible manner, to meet the needs of residents and visitors. Smaller-scale, mixed-use commercial growth that respects overall existing character and scale will be encouraged within hamlets to reinvigorate local economic activity. Larger-scale highway commercial activity is encouraged along major transportation corridors, to accommodate a larger variety of supplies and services to local, industry and regional markets. Accommodating *home-based businesses* in a manner that considers impacts on adjacent residential areas also represents an opportunity for increased commercial activity.

Regional tourism centered around the County’s natural and heritage assets has great potential for generating increased commercial opportunities. To maximize the commercial viability of the tourism sector, the County recognizes the need for partnerships with tourism- based organizations/initiatives, as well as the orderly development of tourism-related activities including marinas and recreational resorts.

Objectives

1. Facilitate commercial sector growth that supports both local and regional markets.
2. Encourage commercial development within Hamlets.
3. Support the development of highway commercial nodes.
4. Identify adequate supply of commercial lands to supply market trends.

General Policies

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 6.1 | Land Use Maps | Future commercial development shall be directed to those areas identified as future business, as indicated on the hamlet maps contained in Schedules C-3 through C-7 . |
| 6.2 | Supply of Commercial Lands | (a) The County shall monitor its supply of commercial lands to accommodate current and future demands. |



- (b) The County should prioritize the development of existing commercial lands, prior to rezoning new areas for commercial development.

- 6.3 **Commercial Development** New multi-lot commercial development that is proposed to contain four (4) or more lots shall prepare an ASP in alignment with the Development Requirements in **Schedule A**.

- 6.4 **Home-Based Businesses** The County shall support **home-based business** development within **Hamlet** areas as a means to facilitate increased commercial activity, provided the following criteria are met:
 - (a) compatibility of use and scale of surrounding lands;
 - (b) secondary in nature to the residential use of the property; and
 - (c) align with home-based business regulations outlined in the **LUB**.

- 6.5 **Highway Commercial Development**
 - (a) **General Location** - Encourage highway commercial development along major highways.
 - (b) **Type/Use** – Highway commercial developments shall be of a **larger- scale** and use, not compatible for location within hamlet centers, and provide services and uses for the travelling public and regional residents, including eating establishments and accommodation;
 - (c) **Aesthetics** – Due to its high visibility, highway commercial development shall have a high-standard of building design, landscaping and signage, and may be required to submit a landscaping plan, at the discretion of the development authority.

- 6.6 **Tourism Sector** The County should encourage regional and local commercial development that responds to, and supports, growth of regional tourism trends.

- 6.7 **Commercial Recreation Developments** The County may allow the development of commercial recreation facilities such as recreational resorts, marinas, and golf courses, provided:
 - (a) Adequate buffering from adjacent residential areas is provided;
 - (b) Sensitive natural features, including lakeshores, are avoided and/or preserved using setbacks and buffers;
 - (c) All other applicable policies within this Plan are followed.



7.0 Industrial

Overview

While volatility in the regional industries of agriculture, oil and gas, and forestry is a reality, these still remain an important part of the County’s economic development. Proximity to the Peace River Oil Sands region, an abundance of natural resources, and access to key infrastructure like the Seal Lake Connector Road, Highway 2, and regional rail networks are important assets that make the County an attractive place for business development. The proximity of industry represents an opportunity for the development of oil industry support sectors including machinery and equipment manufacturing, fabrication, and other general purpose industrial services.

The County is also home to an active forestry industry, with numerous companies holding **Forest Management Agreements (FMAs)** over crown lands. Wood processing and **value-added** activities should continue to play a role in the County’s responsible development of the forest product sector.

It is the intent of this Plan to encourage the growth of manufacturing and **value-added** industrial activities that complement existing sectors, in a manner that maximizes economic opportunity while managing land use conflicts and negative environmental impacts.

Objectives

1. Reduce conflict of industrial land uses with non-industrial uses.
2. Support a variety of industrial uses.
3. Accommodate and encourage industrial uses that will support existing industry (oil and gas, forestry).
4. Facilitate the responsible and environmentally sustainable development of natural resource industries as per provincial guidelines through good communication and collaboration.

General Policies

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|
| 7.1 | Supply of Industrial Lands | (a) The County shall monitor its supply of industrial lands to accommodate current and future demands.

(b) The County prioritizes the development of existing industrial lands, prior to rezoning new ones. |
| 7.2 | General Location | The County should encourage the location of new industrial development within or adjacent to existing industrial parks, and near major transportation infrastructure, including Highway 2, the Seal Lake Connector Road, and rail networks. |



- 7.3 **Industrial Development** New multi-lot industrial development that is proposed to contain four (4) or more lots shall prepare an ASP in alignment with the Development Requirements in [Schedule A](#).
- 7.4 **Buffering** Industrial lands adjacent to residential and other uses shall require buffers in the form of vegetation, berms, fencing, or natural dividing landscape features, in accordance with the requirements outlined within the *LUB*.
- 7.5 **Impact on Supporting Infrastructure** Approvals for large industrial development shall consider impacts on rural infrastructure, roads, bridges, traffic flows, and environmental impacts.
- 7.6 **Concentration of Industrial Development** Industrial developments that require large lot sizes and are of a nature that may produce various forms of nuisance (odor, dust, noise, etc.) shall be encouraged to develop near other similar developments.
- 7.7 **Rail Industry and Use of Rail Infrastructure** (a) The County shall work in conjunction with the rail companies.
(b) The County shall encourage the expansion of rail-accessible industrial development, as a means to attract new industry, and utilize existing rail infrastructure.
- 7.8 **Types of Industry** The County should actively encourage, through marketing and other means, the oil industry supporting activities such as fabricated metal manufacturing, commercial and industrial machinery and equipment manufacturing, coating, engraving, heat treating and allied activities, as well as other general purpose machinery manufacturing.
- 7.9 **Forestry Industry** The County recognizes the ongoing economic role of the forestry and manufactured wood product sector and should continue to support the responsible development of this industry and related services.
- 7.10 **Resource Extraction** In relation to natural resource extraction activities, the County shall:
- (a) Require applications to address potential impacts on adjacent land uses, such as dust and other air pollutants, noise, hours of operation, traffic generation and environmental impacts;
 - (b) Collaborate with industry to identify future opportunities, and review their potential impacts on future land uses, and the environment;
 - (c) Work with industry to actively engage with the public, and provide education opportunities related to extraction activities; and
 - (d) Require activities to adhere to existing provincial standards and regulations.



8.0 Crown Lands

Overview

Over 84% of lands within the County boundaries are owned by the crown, with large swaths in both the southern and northern areas, known as the **Green Area**. The **Green Area** is outside the jurisdiction of the municipality and the County has a limited ability to influence how development occurs within these areas. Crown lands are often leased for grazing purposes, or for the development of natural resources.

A large portion of crown lands are covered by **Forest Management Agreements**, as shown on **Figure 2 – Forest Management Agreement (FMA) Areas**. It is the intent of this Plan to encourage the maintenance and development of crown lands in a manner that considers the best interests of County residents, and the natural environment.

Objectives

1. Encourage the appropriate use of Crown lands to minimize conflicts with private lands.
2. Facilitate access to Crown lands and maintain their viability for a variety of users.

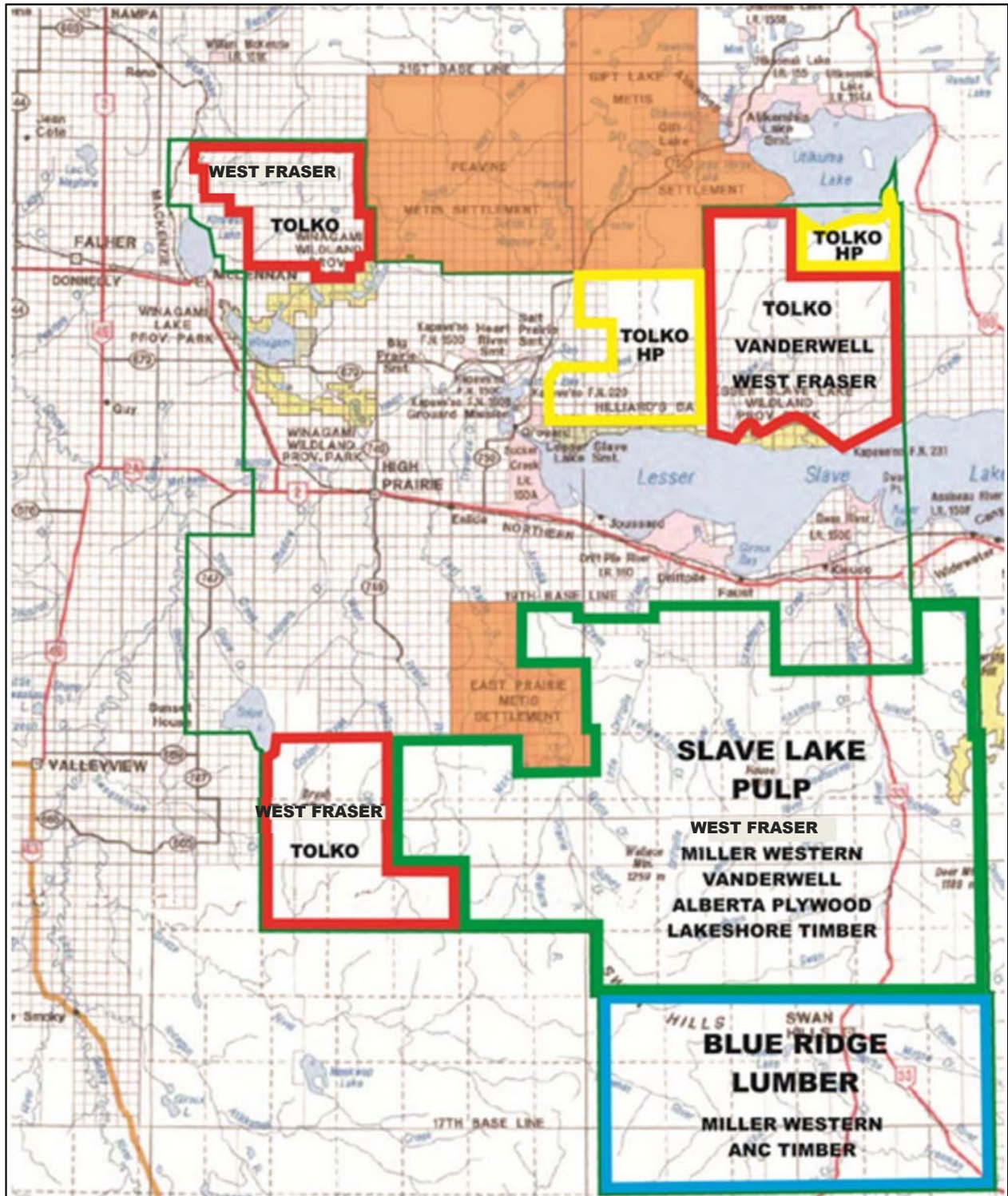
General Policies

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 8.1 | Maintaining Provincial Relationships | The County shall establish and maintain a working relationship with Provincial agencies as a means to facilitate County involvement in decision-making over future land use decisions on Crown lands, especially where Crown and private lands are adjacent to each other. |
| 8.2 | Crown Leases | (a) The County shall support the Crown in its efforts to maintain agricultural leases in the Green Area ; and

(b) The County shall support the development of Crown lands where feasible and warranted, for recreational and other public uses that will not conflict with existing land uses on private lands. |
| 8.3 | Best Interests of County Residents | The County may not support the sale and/or lease of Crown Lands to private interests where the sale or lease is, in the opinion of Council, not in the best long-term interests of the residents of the County. |



Figure 2: Forest Management Agreement (FMA) Areas



Note: This figure depicts a general location of FMAs within the County boundaries.
 Source: County Website (2015).



9.0 Hamlets

Overview

The County’s five **Hamlets** of Enilda, Jousard, Grouard, Faust and Kinuso serve as the highest density settlement areas, with a concentration of housing, municipal servicing and commercial development. Much of the County’s historic cultural assets can be found in these areas. Although the hamlets have experienced a modest rate of growth over the past few years, a clear direction for growth management will reduce the likelihood of land use conflict moving forward. The compatibility of adjacent land uses, preservation of riparian areas, screening of bareland recreational uses, and public access to lakes have been identified as challenges to harmonious hamlet development.

It is the intent of this Plan to recognize **Hamlets** as the preferred location for residential and small-scale commercial growth in the County and provide general land use direction for undeveloped lands within the hamlet boundaries. Preserving existing rural character while facilitating accessibility, and the proper development of open space, will remain key objectives for hamlet development.

Objectives

1. Consider the function and character of **Hamlets** when assessing new applications.
2. Provide sufficient servicing and infrastructure necessary for a high standard of life and to facilitate future growth.
3. Support hamlets as the preferred location for residential growth within the County, including affordable and senior’s housing.
4. Encourage economic vitality and social well-being within hamlets.

General Policies

- 9.1 **Land Use**
 - (a) Future land uses within **Hamlets** shall occur in accordance with the hamlet maps contained in **Schedules C-3 through C-7** and, where existing, the adopted **ASP**.
 - (b) The County shall review the **ASPs** in Jousard, Grouard and Faust every 5-10 years or as stated in a given **ASP**, so that they remain relevant to evolving community needs.
 - (c) The County shall prepare **ASPs** for the **Hamlets** of Kinuso and Enilda.
- 9.2 **Industrial Development**

Industrial development located in **Hamlets** shall be of a type and nature that is compatible with residential development.



- 9.3 **Hamlet Commercial Development** (a) The County shall encourage smaller-scale commercial development that serves the everyday needs of the local population within **Hamlets**.
 (b) The County shall support commercial development within **Hamlets** provided the scale, design and use is compatible with adjacent residential uses, and the character of the settlement.
- 9.4 **Compact Centres** The County shall continue to promote a single compact business district within each hamlet, serving as a commercial hub.
- 9.5 **Vacant Lots** The development of existing vacant or derelict lots should be encouraged as an alternative to hamlet expansion.
- 9.6 **Marketing and Signage** (a) The County should develop a marketing and signage program along Highway 2 to inform the travelling public of tourism and commercial opportunities that exist within each community.
 (b) The County should develop a wayfinding sign strategy within **Hamlets** for improved navigation.
- 9.7 **Character and Design** The County shall require all residential and commercial development within hamlets to maintain a standard of design that is compatible with the hamlet’s rural character, and adjacent land uses, as regulated within the **LUB**.
- 9.8 **Heritage Preservation** The County shall work with local and regional community groups and agencies to identify heritage assets within **Hamlets** and support the conservation of these assets.
- 9.9 **Infrastructure Investment** The County should encourage investment in infrastructure and development within hamlets, to revitalize existing communities, reduce sprawl, and preserve agricultural land.



10.0 Economic Development and Tourism

Overview

The County’s natural and cultural assets represent opportunities for an increased presence of tourism related activities.

It is the intent of this Plan to strike a balance between facilitating the development of traditional industries, while supporting the County’s capacity to meet the needs of a regional tourism base. Supporting an adequate supply of fixed-roof accommodation (hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts), campground sites, access to lakes, and developing/maintaining trail networks for a variety of outdoor activities represent opportunities to strengthen the County’s ability to meet the demands of a changing market, while maintaining activities in traditional sectors. In addition, where opportunities present themselves, the County should explore opportunities to establish markets for alternative energy practices, including wind, solar and *biofuel*, for example.

Objectives

1. Broaden the range of commerce and trade opportunities within the County.
2. Strengthen employment opportunities and attract new investment into the County.
3. Facilitate the growth and management of the tourism sector.
4. Responsibly manage development related to resource industries.

General Policies

- 10.1 **Economic Diversity** The County shall encourage the growth of a multi-faceted economy that prioritizes growth in a variety of sectors (including resource extraction, agriculture, tourism, alternative and renewable energy, and knowledge-based businesses) to allow for a level resiliency during times of economic uncertainty.
- 10.2 **Collaboration** The County should collaborate and partner with existing regional economic groups and indigenous communities, including the Métis Settlements General Council, to maximize growth opportunities.
- 10.3 **Marketing and Promotion** The County should engage in regional marketing opportunities and develop a strategy for promoting the County’s tourism assets, including clear directional signage along Highway 2, and wayfinding signage within Hamlets.



- 10.4 **Tourism Asset Inventory** (a) The County shall conduct a comprehensive inventory to identify tourism assets, including businesses, heritages sites, campgrounds, restaurants, trails, etc. to identify strengths and gaps.
(b) The County should strive to update inventories on an annual basis.
- 10.5 **Heritage Interpretive Centre** The County should work with local heritage groups to establish heritage interpretive centres throughout the County, especially within Grouard.
- 10.6 **High-Speed Internet** The County should support the expansion of high-speed telecommunications networks into underserved areas of the County as a means to encourage **home-based businesses**.
- 10.7 **Funding Programs** The County shall continue to pursue funding programs which assist municipalities and the private sector to develop and operate recreation sites and tourist facilities.
- 10.8 **Eco and Agri-Tourism** The County should support the development of eco-tourism and agri-tourism opportunities as a means of diversifying the County’s tourism asset base.
- 10.9 **Resource Industry Development** The County should support responsible resource extraction development and related activities provided reasonable measures are taken to protect the natural environment, adjacent landowners/uses, and the best interests of the County residents.



11.0 Natural Environment

Overview

One of the County’s greatest assets is its large areas of undeveloped natural landscape, with Lesser Slave Lake as the focal point for recreation, and tourism. The proper management and protection of these natural environments are important not only for the maintenance of ecological health but also maintaining quality of life for County residents. Lifestyle and tourism opportunities are inextricably linked to the quality of the natural environment.

A technical report examining the health of the Lesser Slave Watershed completed in May of 2015 outlined concerns related to the impacts of human activity on river and lake health. Concerns included increased levels of algal blooms due in part to point-source river run-off related to industrial activities, and a potential future decline in fish populations, related to water quality and habitat destruction. Providing clear guidance and regulation around shoreline development, and natural features is an important step in mitigating ecological impacts.

It is the intent of this Plan to establish a clear framework for guiding growth in a manner that adequately considers the impact of development on the natural environment, with an aim to preserve a safe and healthy place of leisure, residence, and work for present and future generations.

Objectives

1. Identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas.
2. Promote environmental stewardship.
3. Mitigate the risks of **hazard lands** on development.

General Policies

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------|--|
| 11.1 | Inventory | The County should create an inventory of environmentally sensitive areas , including wetlands, to help guide the location of future development away from these areas. |
| 11.2 | Fragmentation | The County shall discourage the fragmentation of natural features and environmentally sensitive areas, and encourage the creation of natural networks |
| 11.3 | Wildlife Corridors | The County shall consider the movement of wildlife through natural corridors, when assessing subdivision and development applications, including the placement and linkage of municipal and environmental reserve lands. |



- 11.4 **Development Near Waterbodies** The County shall require development setbacks from all waterbodies and watercourses (permanent and intermittent) in accordance with the **LUB**.
- 11.5 **Tree and Vegetation Retention** The County shall encourage the retention of existing treed areas and vegetation where possible, especially near lakeshore areas and steep slopes.
- 11.6 **Wetlands** The County shall recognize the intrinsic value of wetlands in their ability to manage drainage and run-off and support the avoidance and conservation of wetlands as an alternative to compensation, where possible.
- 11.7 **Development Impacts to Wetlands** Any impact to existing permanent water bodies and/or wetlands shall be compensated and/or regulated in accordance with Provincial regulation, at the expense of the developer.

Environmental Easements

- 11.8 **Environmental Reserve Easement** Where lands eligible to be taken as environmental reserve **ER** in accordance with Section 664(1) of the **MGA** do not represent opportunities for public access, the County may prefer the dedication of an **Environmental Reserve Easement (ERE)**.
- 11.9 **Restrictive Covenants** The County should require a restrictive covenant be applied to lands containing environmentally sensitive features or hazards, in order to further mitigate potential negative development impacts.

Hazard Lands

- 11.10 **Floodplain Identification**
- (a) The County shall support the identification of all floodways and flood fringes, for the purpose of guiding development decisions, and may require the proponent of a development or subdivision to supply floodplain information if the County considers the location of development to be flood-prone.
 - (b) The County should prepare a flood-mapping **GIS** system to better identify flood-prone lands
- 11.11 **Development within Floodplains** Development within identified floodplains shall be discouraged; however, structures may be supported in these areas provided proper flood-proofing is incorporated into the design by a certified engineer. Confirmation of flood-proofing shall be submitted to the County.
- 11.12 **Development on Unstable Soils** The County may require the proponent of a development containing or in close proximity to a wetland, watercourse, waterbody, coulee, swamp, marsh, slope or other natural feature that may impact the stability of soils for construction, to submit a geotechnical investigation, indicating the site is suitable for development, prepared by a certified professional indicating development recommendation(s).



11.13 Steep Slopes

The County shall not consider development on ***steep slopes*** (as defined in the Land Use Bylaw), unless the proponent submits a geotechnical report prepared by a certified professional engineer, indicating the site is suitable for development.

11.14 Brownfield Sites

The County encourages the rehabilitation and development of ***brownfield sites***.



12.0 Transportation Infrastructure

Overview

The County has an extensive network of highways, collector and local roadways that are integral to facilitating the movement of people, goods and services on a regional and local scale, as shown on [Schedule C-1 and C-2](#). The maintenance, operation and continual development of safe and efficient transportation networks are important in supporting the everyday functional movement of County residents and facilitating economic activities. Concerns have been raised relating to the consistency of road design, development in proximity to an aging rail network, and the maintenance and operation of new roadways to service remote new developments.

It is the aim of this Plan to facilitate the optimization of its transportation network through proper coordination with developers and Provincial bodies and support the expansion and integration of various modes of transportation, where possible and appropriate.

Objectives

1. Provide proper maintenance and expansion of road networks to facilitate safe and efficient connectivity and movement of goods and people.
2. Encourage the maintenance and development of active transportation infrastructure.
3. Manage development near rail and airports.
4. Encourage coordination and collaboration between jurisdictions and the private sector to facilitate safe and efficient connectivity, and movement of goods and people.
5. Maintain consistent road building standards.

Roadways

- 12.1 **Road Classification and Design** The County shall classify all roads within its jurisdiction according to projected future capacities, and all roads should be in accordance with the County's *Municipal Engineering, Construction, Development, and Design Standards Policy*.
- 12.2 **Road Upgrading** Upgrades to existing road networks should be made as necessary, in response to the County's needs.



- 12.3 **Private Roads** Private roads constructed within *bareland condominium developments* shall be designed and maintained in accordance with the County's *Municipal Engineering, Construction, Development, and Design Standards Policy*.
- 12.4 **Road Widening** As part of the subdivision process, road widening shall be implemented to bring existing roads to the approved classification width. Generally, road widening will follow the practice of 50% of the required additional width coming from each adjoining property except where development constraints make this approach impractical.
- 12.5 **Active Transportation** The County should consider the integration of active transportation infrastructure (trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.) within right of ways, where there is an opportunity to connect to or expand an existing transportation network.
- 12.6 **Collaboration** The County shall support the coordination of local, regional and provincial transportation networks with appropriate agencies, and consider partnerships with industry for road development of mutual benefit.

Airports

- 12.7 **Development Near Airports** The County shall regulate development within proximity to existing airports through the *LUB*.
- 12.8 **Transport Canada** The County shall work cooperatively with Transport Canada on issues related to air transportation within the municipality.



13.0 Servicing and Utilities

Overview

The availability of core services including water, sanitary and drainage infrastructure are key factors that influence the quality of life of residents and visitors to the County. It is the intent of the County to facilitate the provision of these services in a safe and efficient manner, while considering network capacity, form, function and feasibility as development occurs.

At present, the County provides a network of water and sanitary services extending to the existing concentrated areas of development, including hamlets, with a varying degree of private sanitary and water servicing within hamlet boundaries. Due to the large area of the County, **private water and sanitary systems** are operated in areas not serviced by municipal networks.

As the population of the County grows, key considerations include managing increased pressure on existing service networks due to the seasonal increase in tourist population, as well as collaborating on a regional level to implement a regional water system, as outlined in the 2015 *Regional Water Feasibility Study*.

Objectives

1. Maintain and expand municipal servicing networks where necessary, to provide services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
2. Encourage development within the limits of existing piped networks prior to expansion.
3. Support regionalization of the County's water supply and treatment system.
4. Provide direction on the management of private and communal waste systems.
5. Manage stormwater runoff to reduce impacts to adjacent lands, and the environment.

General Policies

- 13.1 **Infrastructure Plan** The County should prepare a 10-year capital infrastructure plan which will guide County investment in water and sanitary infrastructure in and around existing hamlets to ensure that adequate land is available to accommodate future growth and maintain quality of life for the public.
- 13.2 **Off-Site Levy Bylaw** The County should create an off-site levy bylaw sufficient to cover the costs of required municipal infrastructure.



Water and Wastewater

- 13.3 **Regionalized Water Supply** The County supports a regionalized water supply and treatment system with an aim to reduce the number of water treatment plants within the County and improve water quality.
- 13.4 **Municipal Water System**
- (a) The County shall require new developments to tie into existing municipal water and wastewater services where available.
 - (b) the proponent of a development shall demonstrate adequate capacity of the existing servicing to accommodate the new development.
 - (c) Areas currently not serviced by municipal water services may be required to tie into future systems, at the expense of the owner or developer.

Stormwater

- 13.5 **Stormwater Ponds/Dry Ponds**
- (a) Where possible, the County should encourage the integration of stormwater ponds with **MR** lands through the provision of public access trails along the pond's perimeter.
 - (b) Where possible and practical, the County should encourage the integration of sports fields into **dry pond** designs.
 - (c) Stormwater ponds shall be designated as a **Public Utility Lot (PUL)** on a Plan of Survey where practical.

Utilities

- 13.6 **Utility Corridors**
- (a) In **rural areas** utility corridors established through easements are acceptable; however, easements established through exact metes and bounds descriptions and/or survey plans should be preferred over blanket easements.
 - (b) In **urban areas** and within multi-lot subdivisions, utility rights-of way shall be established through a Plan of survey.
 - (c) The County shall require the location of utility rights-of-way in a manner that does not cause fragmentation of existing land parcels.
 - (d) The County should require the integration of utility services within existing corridors and road rights-of-way as much as possible.
- 13.7 **Communications Technology** The County shall support the upgrading and expansion of communications towers in appropriate locations to facilitate increased connectivity and communications, as well as opportunity for **home-based businesses**.



14.0 Culture and Heritage

Overview

The County is rich in history, with roots dating back to early settlement and the fur-trade with First Nations in the early 1800s. As a result, the area is complete with both tangible and intangible cultural and heritage assets that are essential in contributing to quality of place. By acknowledging these assets, and supporting the development of strategies for their preservation, the County can benefit from an increased understanding of their culture and heritage, while leveraging these assets to improve sense of place and tourism sector development.

It is the intent of the County to support the development and preservation of its cultural and heritage assets through the identification of existing built/tangible features, collaborating with existing community groups, institutions (including museums), and First Nations and supporting public events that celebrate the County’s cultural essence.

Objectives

1. Preserve and enhance existing cultural and heritage assets.
2. Contribute to an increased quality of place through asset management and development.

General Policies

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| 14.1 | Identification and Cataloguing of Historic Sites | (a) The County shall work with Provincial and local groups to catalogue existing historical sites, in order to better manage development decisions in relation to these sites.

(b) The County should partner with community groups, museums and First Nations to identify and catalogue both tangible and intangible (ideas, stories, song, music, etc.) cultural heritage assets. |
| 14.2 | Management Partnerships | The County should partner with community groups, museums and First Nations to establish a strategy for managing and promoting the County’s cultural assets. |



15.0 Intergovernmental Relations

Overview

A proactive approach to communication and collaboration with neighbouring municipalities, communities, and Provincial and Federal agencies is important in maintaining the coordination of land use and other issues of mutual interest in the region.

It is the intent of this Plan to foster productive and meaningful relationships with all of its regional and intergovernmental partners through communication and collaboration. Key regional partners include the Towns of High Prairie and Swan Hills, the surrounding municipal districts, First Nations and Métis Settlements.

Objectives

1. Foster productive working relationships with Provincial and Municipal agencies, as well as First Nations and Métis Settlements to reach common goals.

General Policies

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| 15.1 | Referrals | (a) The County shall review and share updates and amendments to statutory plans with adjacent municipalities, First Nation and Métis Settlements , where these documents may affect lands near adjoining boundaries.

(b) The County shall refer all rezoning, discretionary use development and multi-lot subdivision applications adjacent to rural municipalities, First Nation and Métis Settlements where applications are within 0.8 km of their boundaries. |
| 15.2 | Intermunicipal Development Plans | The County supports the continued use of Intermunicipal Development Plans with neighbouring municipalities as a means of coordinating land use and development. |
| 15.3 | Parks and Open Space Integration | The County shall coordinate the interlinking of parks and open space with adjacent urban municipalities (High Prairie and Swan Hills), through any established or approved recreation Plans. |
| 15.4 | Regional Cooperation and Partnerships | The County shall actively encourage working together with adjacent municipalities, First Nation and Métis Settlements to reach regional tourism and economic development, infrastructure, environmental or other mutually beneficial agreements and/or goals. |



16.0 Implementation and Monitoring

Overview

The objectives and policies within this Plan are meant to be used to inform the municipal decision-making process relating to a variety of matters, as well as the creation of implementation plans like the **Land Use Bylaw** and other related planning initiatives. As the community grows and develops over time, so too will the relevance of its guiding policies. To maintain the effectiveness and relevance of objectives of this document, regular reviews that include a public engagement process should be conducted.

Objectives

1. Achieve consistency between all guiding policy documents.
2. Monitor the effectiveness and applicability of the Plan over time.

General Policies

- 16.1 **Application Review** Development permit and subdivision applications, amendments to statutory Plans and bylaws shall be reviewed and decided in accordance with the provisions of this Plan.
- 16.2 **Plan Consistency** The provisions of all County **Statutory Plans** and bylaws including **ASPs, LUB** and other strategic plans or policies, shall be consistent with the provisions of this Plan.
- 16.3 **Review and Amendment**
- (a) A comprehensive review of this Plan shall occur at least once every five (5) years and include a significant public engagement component.
 - (b) County Staff shall record comments and suggestions for improvements to this Plan on an on-going basis, and carry-out an annual amendment to reflect these comments.
 - (c) Amendments to this Plan shall be in accordance with the requirements of the **MGA**.



Schedule A:

Development Regulations

A-1 Purpose and Intent of an Area Structure Plan

An Area Structure Plan (ASP) is a long-range land use and servicing plan, adopted by bylaw and prepared in accordance with the MGA. It provides guidance for shaping land use patterns and providing infrastructure. The purpose of an ASP is to provide a framework for subsequent subdivision and development of an area and evaluate how the plan impacts adjacent land or the existing community.

According to Section 633 of the MGA, an ASP must describe:

- The sequence of development proposed for the area,
- The land uses proposed for the area, either generally or with respect to specific parts of the area,
- The density of population proposed for the area either generally or with respect to specific parts of the area,
- The general location of major transportation routes and public utilities, and
- May consider any other matter that Council considers necessary.

ASPs deal with a range of technical issues pertaining to transportation, servicing, the location of schools, open space, and commercial nodes along with the density and the type of permitted uses. Specific issues may also be addressed such as sour gas wells and environmental or geotechnical concerns.

ASPs are prepared in close consultation with landowners, municipal service providers, outside agencies (e.g., school boards), and affected local interest groups.



A-2 When an Area Structure Plan Is Required

- a) An ASP will be required to be prepared for the following situations, as identified by the policies of the MDP:
 - i. To guide the long-term planning of County *Hamlets*,
 - ii. For new multi-lot country residential development that is proposed to contain six (6) or more lots,
 - iii. For new multi-lot commercial development that is proposed to contain four (4) or more lots, and
 - iii. For new multi-lot industrial development that is proposed to contain four (4) or more lots.
- b) An ASP Amendment will be required for development in any *Hamlet* where the proposed development does not align with the standing *ASP*.
- c) Notwithstanding the above, new multi-dwelling development on a single lot that results in more than 2 dwelling units on a parcel less than 32 ha (80 ac) in size, or 4 dwelling units on a parcel greater than 32 ha (80 ac) in size, requires a Conceptual Scheme in alignment with the MGA.

A-3 Development Considerations

SERVICING

- a) Private water and sanitary systems shall comply with:
 - i. All relevant provincial legislation and regulations (e.g., Alberta Health Act, Private Septic Regulations, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas);
 - ii. All relevant National Building Code - 2019 Alberta Edition (NBC(AE)) regulations; and
 - iii. All applicable County standards, bylaws, procedures, policies including this MDP and the *LUB*.
- b) The use of communal water servicing may be considered if:
 - i. The development cannot be connected with municipal services;
 - ii. Communal systems are designed by a qualified professional engineer in Alberta; and
 - iii. Systems are approved by applicable Provincial agencies;
- c) The County may assume ownership of a communal service if it is constructed to minimum municipal standards.
- b) Future development shall demonstrate it meets County standards for emergency fire servicing.

TRANSPORTATION

- e) In areas where subdivision and development are occurring, the County shall ensure that sufficient rights-of-way are provided for the future upgrading of roads to meet the higher traffic demands created by the development.
- f) Multi-purpose trails developed in an *ASP*:
 - i. May be proposed in *municipal reserve* parcels and along subdivision road rights-of-way,
 - ii. Should be designed to allow access for people of all abilities and shall comply with County standards, and
 - iii. Should support connectivity between adjacent development where possible.



SETBACKS

- g) Pursuant to the MGA, a license, permit, approval, or other authorization granted by a provincial regulatory body shall prevail over any bylaw or land use decision rendered by the County.
- h) Setback guidelines and minimum setback distances shall be implemented as required by the applicable provincial regulatory bodies.
- i) Residential subdivision and development shall not be approved if the setback distance is less than setbacks outlined by the applicable provincial regulatory body, and pursuant to the ***Alberta Matters Related to Subdivision and Development Regulation (MRSDR)***, unless written approval from the regulatory body for a lesser setback distance is provided.
- j) All subdivision and development applications that are located within 1.5 kilometres of a sour gas facility shall be referred to the *Alberta Energy Regulator (AER)*.
- j) Development near-rail shall consider the guidelines outlined in the *Guidelines for New Development in Proximity to Railway Operations* document.

SAFETY

- k) FireSmart principles should be applied to new multi-lot residential developments that are located within high-risk wildfire areas.
- l) CPTED principles should be considered in the site design for public facilities such as recreation facilities, campground, and playgrounds.

A-4 Developer's Responsibility

- a) The Developer is required to:
 - i. Cover any costs for the upgrade of a County road to accommodate a proposed development
 - ii. Provide an irrevocable form of security, to ensure the completion of road development according to County standards.
 - iii. Cover communication and related services (including public engagement) necessary for the review of an application, at the discretion of the County
 - iv. As a condition of subdivision or development permit approval, enter into an agreement with the County indicating responsibility of the developer for all servicing, infrastructure and utility costs associated with the development.
 - v. halt construction and report the finding of any possible historic resource to the *Alberta Culture and Tourism – Community Development, Historic Resources Division*, in accordance with Provincial Policy.

A-5 Contents of an ASP and Supporting Studies

- a) ASPs must address the following:
 - i. Plan purpose, description, location, and scope of plan area;
 - ii. Compatibility with the MGA, IDP policies (if applicable), the policies of the MDP, and other County plans and policies;
 - iii. A statement of the vision for the development;



- iv. A description of the study area in its present state with reference to special or unique physical or environmental constraints or features and how they are to be addressed within the Development Concept;
 - v. Information on existing edge conditions that may influence the development (if applicable);
 - vi. The location of sour gas wells and facilities within 1.5 kilometres of the plan area (if applicable);
 - vii. A Development Concept (map) of proposed land uses;
 - viii. An explanation of the Development Concept including rationale for proposed land uses, open spaces, and any design guidelines (as applicable);
 - ix. An explanation of the general location of major transportation routes servicing the area and impact on existing routes, including the general alignment of collector and arterial roads;
 - x. An explanation of site stormwater management, servicing, and utilities requirements in support of the Development Concept;
 - xi. An explanation on how the 10% **municipal reserve** dedication requirement will be met in accordance with County policy;
 - xii. Complete development statistics including areas, anticipated yields based on land use proposed, municipal reserve dedication, and population projections for residential areas (as applicable);
 - xiii. A phasing plan (map) that identifies the sequence of development;
 - xiv. Preliminary site concepts for open spaces, community amenities, commercial development, and multifamily sites (as appropriate); and
 - xv. A description of the public engagement undertaken.
- b) When a Conceptual Scheme is required instead of an ASP, County Staff will convey which requirements in subsection a) are required of the Developer.
- c) All ASPs should be accompanied by any necessary technical reports, as identified by County Staff, prepared by certified professionals including, but not limited to a:
- i. Geotechnical Report (if 15% or greater slopes are present including a Slope Stability Analysis);
 - ii. Hydrogeological Report;
 - iii. Biophysical Assessment and/or Wetland Identification Delineation Assessment (WIDA), and if required by the WIDA, a Wetland Assessment and Impact Report (WAIR);
 - iv. Environmental Impact Assessment Phase I (if required to identify actual or potential environmental contamination);
 - v. Historical Resource Act (HRA) clearance, and if required through the findings of the HRA, a Historical Resource Impact Assessment (HRIA));
 - vi. Traffic Impact Assessment;
 - vii. Stormwater Management Plan;
 - viii. Water/Wastewater Servicing Strategies;
 - ix. Any other report deemed necessary by the County.



A-6 Subdivision and Site Development

- a) All subdivision and development shall be serviced with franchise utilities unless specific approval has been granted to the developer to waive the requirement.
- b) All subdivision and development shall provide legal and physical access to a public road network.
- c) At the time of subdivision:
 - i. A drainage plan shall be prepared indicating how drainage will be managed in accordance with existing stormwater management Plans and all applicable County Standards;
 - ii. Road widening shall be implemented to bring existing roads to the approved classification width. Generally, road widening will follow the practice of 50% of the required additional width coming from each adjoining property except where development constraints make this approach impractical; and
 - iii. **Environmental Reserve** and **Municipal Reserve** shall be delineated in alignment with the policies of this MDP.
- d) All subdivision and/or development applications shall be accompanied by a site plan clearly indicating the intent of the application, and identify:
 - i. Locations of existing natural and man-made features;
 - ii. Locations of existing or proposed buildings or development;
 - iii. Locations of roads and accesses to the property;
 - iv. How the parcel or proposed development will be serviced;
 - v. Applicable side, rear and front setbacks; and
 - vi. North arrow;
- e) Plans of subdivision shall be prepared by a professional Alberta Land Surveyor.



Schedule B:

Definitions

The following definitions are applicable throughout the text of this Plan.

Alternative Energy: Energy generated in ways that do not deplete natural resources or harm the environment, especially by avoiding the use of fossil fuels and nuclear power.

Bareland Condominium Developments: means a condominium development with “bare land units” as defined in the Condominium Property Act.

Better Agricultural Land: Agricultural lands of higher quality, based on the Rural Farmland Assessment (RFA) data. Lands with an RFA rating of 28% or greater are considered better agricultural land, for the purposes of this Plan.

Biofuel: a fuel derived directly from organic matter. Examples include ethanol, biodiesel and methanol.

Brownfield Sites: A former industrial or commercial site where future use is affected by real or perceived environmental contamination.

Cluster Country Residential Development: Rural lands that have been subdivided to create multiple residential lots that are connected to or could be connected to communal services and are designed to group or “cluster” the residential uses together on smaller lots in order to maximize the retention of open space, agricultural land and sensitive natural areas.

Communal Recreation Areas: A planned recreational bareland condominium subdivision or a previously existing resort located in association with water and/or other recreational amenity features that may be serviced with privately owned communal piped water and sanitary sewer services for accommodation.



Communal Systems: Water, Sanitary or Storm systems that are privately owned and operated by a group of users within a specific area, and the system is separate from the existing municipal services. An example is a communal water system owned and operated within a condominium development.

Confined Feeding Operations (CFO): An agricultural operation where poultry or livestock are confined for the purposes of growing, finishing or sustaining by means other than grazing and does not include a breeding herd. Confined Feeding Operations are regulated by the Agricultural Operation Practices Act.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED): A multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through environmental design. CPTED principles of design affect elements of the built environment ranging from the small-scale (such as the strategic use of shrubbery and other vegetation) to the overarching, including building form of an entire urban neighbourhood and the amount of opportunity for "eyes on the street".

Dry Pond: Areas designed to be non-permanent water retention basins to handle storm water in the event of flooding caused by melting or extreme precipitation.

Eco-Tourism: Tourism directed toward natural environments, especially to support conservation efforts and observe wildlife. It is intended to be low-impact and often smaller scale than traditional mass commercial tourism.

Environmental Reserve (ER): Reserve land dedicated at the time of subdivision for the purposes of preserving natural features and open space and must be preserved in its natural state or used as a public park. ER can be dedicated on lands that consist of a swamp, gully, ravine, coulee, natural drainage course, land that is unstable, subject to flooding, or a strip of land not exceeding six metres wide abutting the shore of any water body.

Environmental Reserve Easement (ERE): An easement registered in favour of the County for the protection and enhancement of the environment. These easements may be preferred over the taking of Environmental Reserve (ER) where the lands do not present opportunities for public access. This easement is created under Division 8 of the MGA.

Environmentally Sensitive Lands: Land that may be considered undevelopable due to the presence of a swamp (wetland), coulee, lakeshore, natural drainage course, flooding, instability or the potential impacts on significant biodiversity from proposed and/or existing development.

Forest Management Agreements: is an area-based agreement between a forest company and the government of Alberta that permits the company to establish, grow, harvest and remove timber from Crown land.

Franchise Utilities: Privately owned utility (power, gas, water, telephone & internet) which operates in a designated area through an exclusive franchise granted by the responsible government.



Green Area: The largely forested, unsettled area of public lands owned by the Government of Alberta, comprising most of northern Alberta, as well as the mountain and foothill regions. Lands within this area are managed for timber production, oil and gas development, watershed protection, wildlife and fisheries management, recreation and other uses. Within the County, a large proportion of the area south and north of Lesser Slave Lake contains a portion of the **Green Area**.

In contrast, the **White Area** contains lands within the “settled” portion of the province, and is comprised of settlements, agricultural use, as well as resource development and conservation.

Geographic Information System (GIS): A computer system for storing, manipulating, analyzing and displaying geographic and spatial data.

Hamlets: A small, unincorporated settlement within the boundaries of a municipality. Within the County, Hamlets include Enilda, Grouard, Jousard, Faust and Kinuso.

Hazard Lands: Lands that may pose a hazard to human settlement or bio-diversity due to natural features or man-made facilities and may include contaminated soils, landfills sites, sewage lagoons, flood plains, high water tables, sour gas facilities, unstable and/or steep slopes, and other hazards.

Highway Commercial: Commercial development adjacent to a major highway or arterial road that is intended to serve the travelling public, and includes uses provided for within the Land Use Bylaw.

Home-Based Business: A business whose primary office is in the owner's home, and as regulated within the Land Use Bylaw.

Land Use Bylaw (LUB): A land use planning tool with the purpose of regulating development in a manner that is specifically enabled by the provisions contained in the **MGA**.

Manufactured Home: A manufactured home, as defined within the Land Use Bylaw.

Market Gardens: A facility where plants such as flowers, herbs, fruits and vegetables are cultivated in greenhouses or outdoor garden plots and sold on-site to the general public. They are typically smaller in production scale and area in comparison to other types of farming.

Matters Related to Subdivision and Development Regulation (MRS DR): Alberta Regulation 84/2022, as amended from time to time, being the regulations made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council under the **MGA** that sets out the authority and responsibility for municipalities to govern the subdivision and development of land.

Métis Settlement or Métis Community: A Métis Settlement established by the Government of Alberta within or adjacent to the corporate boundary of the Big Lakes County. Within the County, these include Peavine, East Prairie, and Gift Lake Métis Settlements.

Mixed-use: A development that blends a combination of residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or industrial uses, where those functions are physically and functionally integrated.



Multi-lot Subdivision: The creation of 3 or more lots through the process of subdivision.

Municipal Government Act (MGA): R.S.A. 2000, c. M-26, as amended from time to time, being the main provincial legislation that sets out the roles of municipal officials and municipalities, including the content of an MDP.

Municipal Reserve (MR): Lands designated as Municipal Reserve are lands for schools, parks and public recreation purposes provided by the developer as part of the subdivision process.

Municipal Services: Piped water and sanitary sewer systems that are under the ownership of the County or other regional authority, are developed in accordance with County standards, and are licensed by the province.

Private Water and Sanitary Systems: Water and sanitary systems owned and operated separately from municipal services.

Public Utility Lots (PUL): A part of a land parcel designated as a public utility lot as defined in the **MGA**.

Rural Areas: Any land within the County that lies outside the boundaries of Hamlets, First Nation and Metis Settlements or Provincial Park.

Statutory Plan: A planning document, such as a Municipal Development Plan, Inter-municipal Development Plan or Area Structure Plan, which is contemplated by the **MGA**, and passed by Council for the County.

Steep Slopes: As defined in the Land Use Bylaw.

Universal Accessibility: Design principles meant to make development and spaces and environments that are inherently accessible to everyone, regardless of age, sex, physical abilities or disabilities.

Urban Area: The area within the Hamlets and Urban Municipalities within the County.

Urban Municipalities: The Towns of High Prairie and Swan Hills.

Value-added (in the context of agriculture): A change in the physical state or form of the product (such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam). The production of a product in a manner that enhances its value, as demonstrated through a business Plan (such as organically produced products).

