



# MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Bylaw 2013-18

The Municipal Development Plan was adopted on October 15, 2013, and subsequently amended by Bylaw 2014-20, 2014-11, 2018-01, 2019-40, and 2022-11. Wheatland County wishes to acknowledge the work and dedication to creating that Plan by Dillon Consulting



# Table of Contents

|  |           |   |           |
|--|-----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1. Introduction</b>                                 | <b>4</b>  | <b>Key Policy Area B - Managing Growth</b>      | <b>41</b> |
| 1.1 The Planning Hierarchy                             | 5         | 3.6 Residential Development                     | 42        |
| 1.2 Purpose of the MDP                                 | 7         | 3.7 Commercial and Industrial Development       | 45        |
| 1.3 Interpretation and Implementation<br>of the Plan   | 9         | 3.8 Natural Resource Development                | 48        |
| 1.4 Policy Context                                     | 10        | 3.9 Institutional Development                   | 50        |
| 1.5 Our County   | 13        | 3.10 Parks and Recreation                       | 51        |
| 1.6 Future Growth                                      | 14        | 3.11 Reserves                                   | 52        |
| 1.7 Key Challenges                                     | 15        | <b>Key Policy Area C - Servicing our County</b> | <b>55</b> |
| <b>2. Our Vision for Community Sustainability</b>      | <b>16</b> | 3.12 Infrastructure and Utilities               | 56        |
| 2.1 The Four Pillars of Sustainability                 | 18        | 3.13 Mobility and Transportation                | 59        |
| 2.2 Guiding Principles                                 | 22        | 3.14 Waste Management                           | 62        |
| <b>3. Land Use Plan - Key Policies</b>                 | <b>26</b> | 3.15 Sustainable Energy                         | 63        |
| <b>Key Policy Area A - Preserving<br/>our Heritage</b> | <b>27</b> | 3.16 Health and Safety                          | 65        |
| 3.1 Agriculture  | 28        | <b>4. Implementing the Plan</b>                 | <b>67</b> |
| 3.2 Natural Areas                                      | 31        | 4.1 Roles and Responsibilities                  | 69        |
| 3.3 Water Resources                                    | 34        | 4.2 The Planning and Development Process        | 70        |
| 3.4 Historic Resources                                 | 37        | 4.3 Public Engagement                           | 72        |
| 3.5 Tourism  | 39        | 4.4 Intermunicipal Engagement                   | 74        |
|  |           | 4.5 Financial Growth and Development            | 77        |
|  |           | 4.6 Plan Review and Amendment                   | 79        |
|  |           | <b>5. Transitional</b>                          | <b>81</b> |



# 1 Introduction The Planning Hierarchy

---

In Alberta, Land Use Planning is administered under the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA). The MGA identifies the hierarchy and relationship of statutory plans adopted by municipalities, and requires that each plan is to be consistent with the plan above it. Wheatland County is located within the South Saskatchewan River Basin, and the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) is the primary provincial land use policy document that guides planning throughout much of southern Alberta. In addition, statutory plans must be consistent with regional plans adopted under the Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA) and Growth Management Plans adopted by a Growth Management Board. The Subdivision & Development Regulation provides detailed guidance regarding the processing of subdivision and development permit applications.

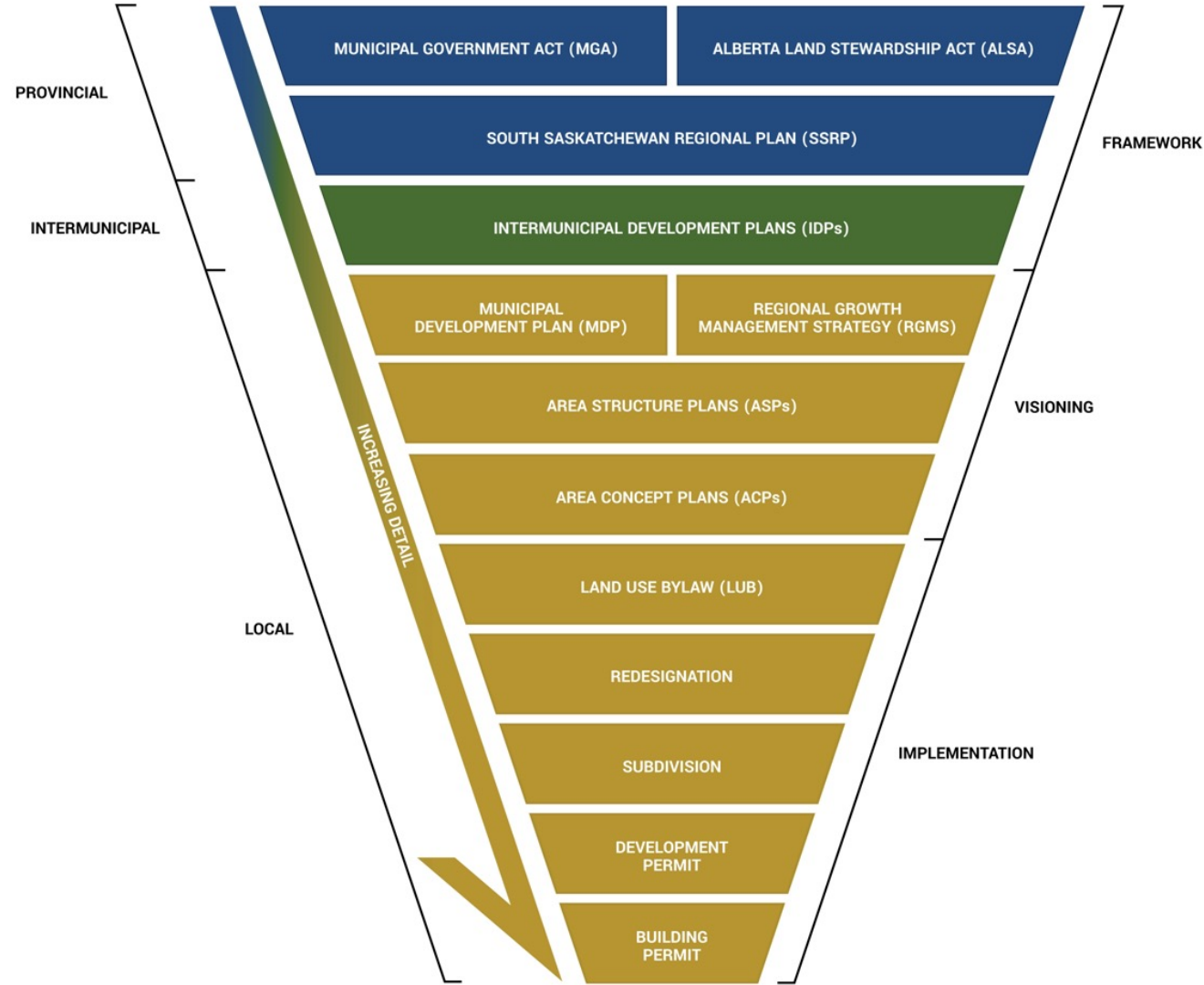


# 1.1 The Planning Hierarchy

Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDP) provide guidance for areas in close proximity to municipal borders, and typically focus on establishing a bridge between two or more municipalities' internal policy documents. These internal documents include the Municipal Development Plan (MDP), which serves as the County's principal statutory plan. Other planning tools used by the County to direct growth and development include the Land Use Bylaw (LUB), Area Structure Plans (ASPs), Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs) and Area Concept Plans (ACPs). Every municipality in Alberta must have a LUB and an MDP. Using ASPs, ARPs, and ACPs is not mandatory. The MDP is the overarching statutory policy document (Bylaw) approved by the County – all other plans must conform to this plan. If an application does not meet the requirements of this Plan, Section 4.10 provides a process for amending the MDP. Figure 1 on the next page shows planning tools that are typically used in Alberta.



**Figure 1**  
The Planning Hierarchy in Alberta

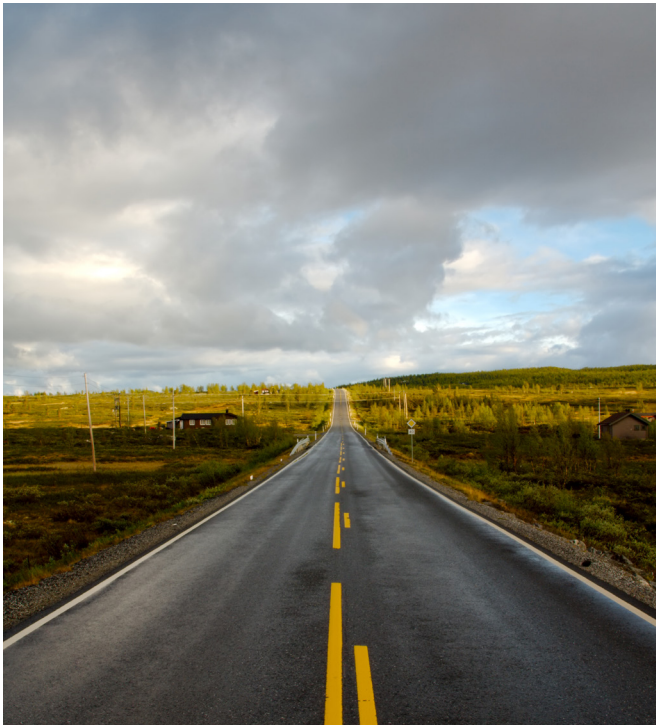




# 1.2

## Purpose of the MDP

The purpose of the Wheatland County MDP is to provide a general picture of what the County is to look like in the future and overall direction on how this can be achieved. It is a policy document adopted by Council that provides general direction for growth over the next 20-30 years. The Plan should undergo a standard review every five (5) years to ensure that it remains current to the philosophy of Wheatland County. While this MDP provides County-wide community planning and development policy, it is not a detailed plan. Detailed planning will occur through County- or developer-initiated Area Structure Plans (ASPs) and developer-initiated Area Concept Plans (ACPs). An Area Structure Plan is a statutory plan mandated by the *Municipal Government Act* while an Area Concept Plan is a non-statutory plan used to inform planning and development decisions. Using this MDP, the County will consider all future detailed plans and applications in terms of their conformity to the policy direction outlined here.



According to the *Municipal Government Act*, an MDP must address:

- The future land use within the municipality,
- The manner of and the proposals for future growth in the municipality,
- The coordination of land use, future growth patterns and other infrastructure with adjacent municipalities if there is no Intermunicipal Development Plan with respect to those matters in those municipalities,
- The provision of the required transportation systems either generally or specifically within the municipality and in relation to adjacent municipalities, and
- The provision of municipal services and facilities either generally or specifically.

It also must contain policies:

- Compatible with the subdivision and development regulations to provide guidance on the type and location of land uses adjacent to sour gas facilities,
- Respecting the provision of municipal, school or municipal and school reserves, including but not limited to the need for, amount of and allocation of those reserves and the identification of school requirements in consultation with affected school authorities, and
- Respecting the protection of agricultural operations.

It also may address:

- Proposals for the financing and programming of municipal infrastructure,
- The coordination of municipal programs relating to the physical, social and economic development of the municipality,
- Environmental matters within the municipality,
- The financial resources of the municipality,
- The economic development of the municipality, and
- Any other matter relating to the physical, social or economic development of the municipality.

The MDP may also contain statements regarding the municipality's development constraints, including the results of any technical studies and impact analysis, and goals, objectives, targets, planning policies and corporate strategies.

This MDP addresses each of these items, reflects current Council directions, and issues raised by residents during the public engagement process.

This MDP does not establish the rate of change that the County will see over the coming decades, nor does it specify a date when construction ('build-out') of its communities will occur. The rate of change will be determined by the free market, including landowners and new residents who create demand for homes and services; however, the MDP does specify how the County shall grow when the time comes – when landowners wish to develop their land, and demand for homes and services increases. The MDP is based on recent key policy decisions made by Council on behalf of County Ratepayers and Stakeholders, and it builds from the community vision that has been created by residents and facilitated by County Administration and its consultants. This vision provides the foundation for the planning principles that will be applied as planning matters arise. By making incremental decisions that follow the principles in this plan, the vision, goals and objectives of this plan will be implemented, and Wheatland County will continue to grow sustainably into the future.



# 1.3

## Interpretation and Implementation of the Plan



When interpreting and implementing this Plan, it is important to recognize it as a long-term policy-based guiding document. It is not intended to be used as a rule book or regulatory instrument like the Land Use Bylaw. The MDP is binding on the Subdivision Authority and binding on the Subdivision and Development Appeals Board in Development Appeals.

Interpretation and implementation of the Plan requires judgment and discretion by Wheatland County's decision-makers. This means balancing the long-term goals and objectives with specific circumstances of current issues.

This MDP contains policies that include the words "shall", "should" and "may". "Shall" policies are those that are mandatory and must be complied with. "Should" policies are those that the County encourages: compliance with the principle is required, but the method and level of compliance is subject to the discretion of the applicable approving authority. "May" policies are discretionary, with the level of required compliance determined by the applicable approving authority at that point in time.

# 1.4

## Policy Context

There are a number of provincial and municipal documents that influence the Municipal Development Plan. This section outlines those documents and considerations that the MDP must align with.

### 1.4.1 The Alberta Land Use Framework (LUF) and the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP)

The Alberta Land Use Framework (LUF) was created in 2008 as a response to rapid growth in the province, and divides the province into seven watersheds. The goal of the LUF is to develop regional plans for each watershed, which in turn will guide all future planning and development within its boundaries. Wheatland County is located within the South Saskatchewan River Basin, and the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) came into effect in September 2014 and was updated in 2017. The

SSRP directs growth and land use throughout the South Saskatchewan Basin, and all County statutory plans, non-statutory plans and the Land Use Bylaws shall be consistent with the SSRP.

Specifically, they should be consistent with the direction provided by the Land Use Framework and have regard for the Efficient Use of Land Policy which contemplates

- using green technologies,
- encouraging higher density residential development,
- supporting development where services already exist,
- planning land uses to reduce the frequency and length of travel through mixed use development.





### 1.4.2 Wheatland County Intermunicipal Development Plans

---

Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs) are agreements between two or more municipalities, which outline how planning and development decisions will be made when they affect both sides of the boundary lines. Wheatland County borders a number of other municipalities. These include similar rural jurisdictions, mid-sized urban areas, and small villages and towns. Each of these entities has their own Municipal Development Plan, Land Use Bylaw, and various local policy plans, and IDPs help bridge planning and development decisions concerning areas in proximity to municipal borders.

Each IDP is developed in accordance to the unique needs of the partner municipalities, but all must address a series of planning and development topics. These include environmental matters, planning and development application circulation, and the establishment of a conflict resolution process.



Wheatland County has current IDPs with the following municipalities:

- Town of Drumheller
- Foothills County
- Village of Hussar
- Kneehill County
- Newell County
- Village of Rockyford
- Rocky View County
- Special Areas No. 2
- Village of Standard
- Vulcan County

### 1.4.3 Wheatland County Regional Growth Management Strategy (RGMS)

---

The Wheatland County Regional Growth Management Strategy (RGMS), adopted in 2011, provides the future direction for growth within the County for the following 40 years. The RGMS identifies sustainable growth, social well-being, cultural preservation, and economic prosperity as goals to support regional growth in the County. It also outlines principles of sustainable community development including encouraging clustered, higher-density, multi-lot communities; preservation of natural landscapes; promoting water conservation and reuse; encouraging 'green infrastructure' in residential and non-residential areas; and support for agricultural land conservation. The RGMS was also used as a foundational document for the revision of the MDP.

### 1.4.4 Wheatland County 2022-2025 County Strategic Plan

---

The most recent County Strategic Plan provides a framework for the County to set priorities and make decisions. The Plan focuses on the vision of innovation while maintaining the County's cultural heritage. The Plan includes four (4) key strategic priorities: Diverse and Thriving Economy, Sustainable Organization, Strategic Partnership, and Communication. The vision and goals outlined in the Strategic Plan are reflective of the values that have been incorporated in the MDP.





# 1.5 Our County



Wheatland County is located approximately 40 kilometres east of Calgary and covers an area of 450,505 hectares (approximately 1.11 million acres). With a population of approximately 8,738 people (2021 Census), the County has been slowly but steadily growing over the past decade. There are twenty-five distinct communities in the County: this includes Hamlets such as Ardenode, Carseland, Chancellor, Cheadle, Cluny, Dalum, Gleichen, Lyalta, Namaka, Nightingale, Redland, and Rosebud; others include Eagle Lake, the Lakes of Muirfield, Speargrass, Strangmuir, Baintree, Tudor, Stobart, Crowfoot, and Makepeace. Each of these communities is governed and maintained by the County. Also located within County limits are three self-governed villages (Hussar, Standard and Rockyford), and the Town of Strathmore.

The County's economic foundation is agriculture; however, oil and gas, and manufacturing also play an important role within the local economy. Grain and beef production make up the largest agricultural activities, with many other agri-businesses emerging. There are currently more than 800 farms in operation within the County and farmland makes up approximately 97% of the County's land base.

The County has experienced development pressure in recent years, particularly concerning country residential and industrial lots. The growing industrial and commercial sectors and increased residential demand emphasizes the importance for long-term growth planning in the County.

# 1.6

## Future Growth

According to the 2021 federal census, Wheatland County has a total population of 8,738, a -0.6% decrease from 8,788 in 2016. Between 2016 to 2021, the County has seen a consistent split between males and females living in the County (48.5% / 51.5%). The population is slowly aging, as the median age of the population in 2021 (federal census) was 42.4 and the percentage of the population aged over 15 has increased from 80.34% in 2016 to 80.9% in 2021. Based on current trends, population growth within the County has been negligible. However, other areas have seen dramatic growth in a relatively short period of time in the past. As the regional population continues to increase, the County must be prepared for the potential for further growth.



# 1.7

## Key Challenges

In the preparation of this Municipal Development Plan, the County has received input from County Council and staff, other municipalities, field experts, government agencies and the residents and landowners within Wheatland County. Through the information collected, a number of key issues were identified, including (but not limited to):

- Preservation of agricultural lands;
- Growth and diversification of the economy;
- The need to ensure plans, policies, and procedures are in place to manage growth;
- Accommodation of growth and development in appropriate areas, while minimizing its impact (especially the impact of country residential and industrial development) on the agricultural land base, natural environment and water resources, existing communities, and quality of life;
- Reducing the strains growth puts on existing infrastructure including roads and waste management services; and
- Safe and sustainable water sources for our community and to ensure water and wastewater facilities are able to keep up with growth.





# 2

## Our Vision for Community Sustainability

---

Developed in concert with County residents and stakeholders, this Plan establishes a vision for the County based on four pillars of sustainability. In addition, guiding principles provide further detail to help achieve this vision.

- + Economic Prosperity
- + Environmental Responsibility
- + Cultural Vibrancy
- + Social Justice

The four pillars of sustainability are used to encourage and advance sustainability within communities. This approach to sustainable communities recognizes that the vibrancy of a community is strongly linked to the vitality of its cultural engagement, expression and celebration. For this MDP, a new Vision was created for the County, based on the approved County Mission and the Growth Vision that was approved in 2011 as part of the Regional Growth Management Strategy (RGMS), and updated to reflect Council's 2022 Strategic Plan.



## County Mission

Wheatland County is committed to provide services that recognize and encourage balanced, sustainable, long term growth and opportunities. We advocate prudent use of our resources and promote a quality of life for our citizens that reflect our agricultural heritage.

## RGMS Vision

Wheatland County promotes sustainable well-planned development which enhances and protects existing agricultural land and natural areas. We will do this in four ways: focusing growth in existing Hamlets, working with other municipalities to ensure mutually beneficial land uses in bordering areas, balancing growth while promoting good use of land, and improving and upgrading infrastructure in our communities to support a good quality of life.

## MDP Vision

Wheatland County seeks a balanced approach to sustainable, well-planned development which enhances and protects our agricultural and natural areas and resources over the long-term. We will promote a quality of life that reflects our rural heritage, and ensures a County that we can all be proud of. Sustainable levels of services and infrastructure will help our communities to grow for the benefit of all, promoting our community spirit.

**As Wheatland County continues to evolve and change, it will be shaped by this overarching MDP vision.**



## 2.1 The Four Pillars of Sustainability

For this MDP, visions were also developed for each of the four pillars including economic prosperity, environmental responsibility, social equity and cultural vitality.

### 2.1.1 Economic Prosperity

---

As a community cannot be sustainable without being able to provide jobs and services for residents, the first pillar of sustainability is the economy. Wheatland County's economy has grown from strong agricultural roots, which still is the predominant foundation. Recently, the energy industry has also contributed significantly to employment opportunities and the economic prosperity of the County. The Economic pillar relates to the strength, relationships and partnerships of businesses, industry leaders, educational institutions and the community at large. A healthy economy relies on and is built upon a strong cultural, social and environmental foundation.

The Economic Development Strategy was developed in 2018 in order to "direct future economic development that supports the County's current economic base and enables new opportunities for growth." The Strategy focuses on the themes of Community Development, Investment Readiness, Industry Development, and Tourism.

#### 2.1.1.1 Economic Vision

---

Ensuring economic sustainability of the County is a key priority. Wheatland County aims to create an attractive place for commercial and industrial development balancing the growth of new economic development with the conservation of agricultural land uses.



# The Four Pillars of Sustainability

## 2.1.2 Environmental Responsibility

The second pillar of sustainability is linked to human activities on the environment. The health of the environment strongly links to the nature and scale of activities in the other pillars (economic, cultural and social). Wheatland County's environment is made up of the landscape used for everything from farming and agriculture to housing and businesses, the waterways used for recreation and to provide clean drinking water, and natural areas that provide habitat for birds, fish and all types of wildlife. The environmental concerns of Wheatland County include water treatment and wastewater management, how oil and gas development may impact groundwater quality and quantity, recycling, maintenance of public areas, and adequate water supply for developments.

## 2.1.2.1 Environmental Vision

Wheatland County treasures its unique environment, including the natural assets, waterways and productive agricultural land that contribute to the rural character of the area. The County is committed to environmentally sustainable and responsible development and management. Strategic management for the future will ensure the protection of environmentally significant areas from inappropriate development, energy conservation and generation, and require environmental overviews as part of the development process.

# The Four Pillars of Sustainability

## 2.1.3 Social Justice

---

The third pillar of sustainability is Social Equity, which speaks to equality and justice between members of the community, and social capital between individuals and groups in the community. Wheatland County's social equity benefits the young and elderly members of society, as well as the marginalized and other individuals in need of assistance.

## 2.1.3.1 Social Vision

---

Through the support of urban communities in the provision of recreational services, infrastructure and opportunities, Wheatland County aims to enhance the quality of life of County residents. By improvement of community and emergency services and enhancement of recreation and tourism, Wheatland County intends to encourage residents to interact, live and retire in the community.

# The Four Pillars of Sustainability

## 2.1.4 Cultural Vibrancy

---

The last pillar of sustainability is Cultural Vibrancy, which relates to community and the inheritance from the past and the legacy to the future. A vibrant culture builds lively communities where people want to live, work and visit. Wheatland County's cultural sites and activities are both tangible and intangible and include events such as rodeos, the Rosebud School for the Arts and Dinner Theatre, heritage sites such as the Gleichen Water Tower, the Gleichen Anglican Church, Gleichen Cenotaph and Sproule Heritage House. In addition, many local communities have publications that explore the history of the area and the people who have lived here for generations.

## 2.1.4.1 Cultural Vision

---

Wheatland County plans to bring a greater awareness of its heritage in order to create a strong sense of community. By promoting the County's cultural landscape and sense of self, the County can encourage residents to interact, live and retire within the community.



## 2.2 Guiding Principles

The MDP vision is supported by twelve Guiding Principles, which were developed to ensure that all aspects of this Plan strive towards two things: sustainable land use and sustainable design. These principles are also based on current County directions and goals set in other documents, including:

- Focusing growth near growth nodes,
- Promoting Smart Growth,
- Incorporating Conservation Subdivision Design principles in country residential development,
- Encourage farmland management practices that help improve the environment, and
- Creating safe and ecologically sound neighbourhoods to work, live and play.



Sustainable land use broadly includes the distribution, location, and timing for the appropriate conversion of land from its current Agriculture and Natural Area uses, to Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, and other uses, to meet forecasted growth and market shifts in the County. It also influences transitions between land uses, providing services to new growth areas, infrastructure alignments, and redevelopment and densification / intensification of underutilized land.

Sustainable design, on the other hand, includes the physical characteristics of new and existing communities, as well as their

surrounding landscapes. Enhancing and maintaining buildings and their properties may include eco-friendly and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified buildings.

The Guiding Principles were created to positively influence planning and development in the County as a whole. They are based on two existing sets of principles that guide sustainable development and are designed to improve quality of life: Smart Growth and Conservation Subdivision Design. Smart Growth advocates compact, walkable, and mixed-use communities that protect natural areas by concentrating development away from undeveloped land. Conservation Subdivision Design protects as much of the natural environment as possible, while still allowing for conventional subdivision densities, by setting higher standards for subdivision configuration and layout, and by requiring higher levels of community benefits from development.

The Guiding Principles fall under six categories, relating to Agriculture, Environment, Economic Growth, Responsible Development, Community Development, and Regional Collaboration.

## Agriculture

### Protection of Agricultural Lands

- Preserve the County's agricultural heritage and support the cornerstone of the local economy. Focus growth and development away from highly productive agricultural areas.

### Support Agricultural Producers

- Maintain viability of existing operations, and protect the right to farm. Be open to innovative agricultural businesses and new technology, and provide opportunities for commercial and industrial support services.

## Environment

### Environmental Protection

- Ensure development respects natural landscape features such as natural areas, wildlife habitat, and environmentally sensitive areas. Development should enhance aesthetic, environmental, and financial value, and minimize disturbances to waterbodies, drainage courses, steep slopes, and sensitive vegetation.

## Economic Growth

### Promote Economic Opportunities

- Establish Wheatland County as an attractive place to do business at a local, regional, national, and international scale. Encourage economic diversification and job creation by retaining, promoting, supporting established operations, small businesses, and emerging sectors. Embrace opportunities presented by the regional transportation network and other modes of transportation, such as rail.

## Responsible Development

### Growth within Existing Communities and Appropriate Areas

- Encourage communities with access to daily activities and services, where residents can support local businesses, recreate, and interact with one another. Make use of existing infrastructure, and allow for efficient and cost effective expansion of services and improvement of the transportation network. Allow for a variety of housing types and tenures to accommodate residents at all stages of life.

### Responsible Development

- Require appropriate improvements to infrastructure, ensuring that development respects the surrounding community and minimizes impact to neighbouring lands.



## Community Development

### Identity and Civic Participation

- Support unique, vibrant, diverse, and inclusive communities, and encourage participation in community life and decision-making.

### Recreation and Active Transportation

- Support safe infrastructure for walking and cycling, in addition to driving.

### Complete Communities

- Promote Wheatland County as a great place to live and work for all stages of life.

## Regional Collaboration

### Regional Partnerships

- Maintain strong relationships with municipal neighbours, and recognize the benefit of working collectively to overcome planning, development, transportation, and servicing challenges.

### Regional Economic Growth

- Encourage opportunities for business development within the County that contributes to regional economic growth.

### Regional Culture

- Support and enhance the community and culture unique to Southern Alberta.

# 3

## Land Use Plan

### Key Policy Areas

---

The key policies of the Wheatland County MDP are broken into three main areas:

- A. Preserving our Heritage,
- B. Managing Growth, and
- C. Servicing our County.

# Key Policy Area A

## Preserving our Heritage

---

When considering the history and cultural past of the County, the most important things are the long-standing tradition of agriculture in the County (since its founding), its natural areas and water resources, and historic resources. This section considers each of these aspects of the County that need to be preserved and protected. It also includes policies on tourism, which will depend on the very protection and preservation of the County's heritage. The County believes that land is a finite resource and that all development needs to consider the land and the environment with extremely high regard.



# 3.1

## Agriculture



Agriculture is the economic backbone of Wheatland County, and as the County's name suggests, our roots are in the agriculture industry. To this day, agricultural use remains the single largest land use within the County, and includes farms involved in grain production and livestock, and other agri-related businesses. These uses vary in their intensity and effect on the land, and although agricultural practices are essential to the County's economic sustainability, they are a change to the natural state of the land, and therefore the County recognizes the importance of environmental considerations in Agricultural Development as equally as in any development type. Some agricultural practices are under the jurisdiction of the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB), and while the County does not make decisions on these applications, it does have a role in commenting on them, which the County will continue to do.

The County recognizes the need for land for agricultural support services and secondary agricultural uses. The County recognizes the need for diversification in the agricultural industry to buffer against fluctuating industry productivity. The County feels that the protection of land for agricultural practices and related uses will always remain a policy and a major priority.

This section further explores the protection of agricultural land and the expansion and diversification of agricultural operations.



### 3.1.1 Agricultural Objectives

---

1. Ensure that agriculture remains a strong component of the Wheatland County community.
2. Protect and minimize the fragmentation of existing agricultural lands.
3. Encourage diversification, innovation, and use of best practices within agricultural operations.
4. Consider environmental impacts and mitigate conflicts between agricultural and other land uses.

### 3.1.2 Agricultural Policies

---

1. All lands within the County are deemed to be agricultural lands unless designated for alternate uses.
2. The County shall protect the right to farm through this MDP and its implementation.
3. The County shall consider the environment and state of land in consideration of agricultural land use applications.
4. The County shall encourage the inclusion of value-added operations and accessory uses in the consideration of agricultural land use applications.
- d. Provide physical access to a developed roadway for the proposed parcel and remainder parcel. Panhandle access should not be considered;
- e. Maintain the remainder lands as agricultural use; and
- f. Not create long, linear strips.

#### The proposed parcel should:

- g. Reflect the existing conditions of the land, such as farmstead areas, shelter belts, environmental areas, and areas required to provide access; and
- h. Minimize the impact to agricultural lands by avoiding cultivated lands.

#### First-Parcel-Out Subdivision

5. The creation of a First-Parcel-Out of an unsubdivided quarter section may be considered provided the following criteria are met. The proposed parcel shall:
  - a. Not cause a quarter section to exceed the Maximum Non-Agricultural Area in accordance with Policy 3.1.2.6;
  - b. Contain a habitable dwelling, or a suitable building site for a dwelling;
  - c. Be located a minimum of 300 m from the right-of-way of a Highway, if the site is undeveloped at the time of application;

#### Maximum Non-Agricultural Area

6. The Maximum Non-Agricultural Area of a quarter section should be 20 acres.
7. All parcels subdivided from a previously unsubdivided quarter section shall contribute to the Non-Agricultural Area.
8. Additional parcels beyond a First-Parcel-Out may be considered provided the following criteria are met. The proposed parcel shall:
  - a. Not cause a quarter section to exceed the Maximum Non-Agricultural Area.

- b. Not result in more than five (5) parcels within a quarter section unless otherwise permitted by an Area Structure Plan or Area Concept Plan;
- c. Satisfy the criteria in Policy 3.1.2.5 a to f; and

The proposed parcel should:

- d. Satisfy the criteria in Policy 3.1.2.5 g and h.

### 3.1.3 Confined Feeding Operation (CFO) Policies

1. The County shall act as a referral agency and respond in accordance with the MDP and LUB when the Natural Resources Conservation Board is processing applications for Confined Feeding Operations.
2. Applications proposing the creation of parcels within 400 metres (0.25 mile) of an existing Confined Feeding Operation should not be supported.

#### First-Parcel-Out Definition:

A First-Parcel-Out is the subdivision of a single parcel from a previously un-subdivided quarter section.

#### Un-subdivided Quarter Section Definition:

An un-subdivided quarter section contains a single parcel, typically for agricultural use, and is approximately 160 acres in size. Minor deviations to account for non-developable parcels may exist, for example: road, rail, canal, or utility rights-of-way; road widening; waterbodies and drainage courses; and environmental reserves.



## 3.2 Natural Areas

The County is home to a wide variety of landscapes, including grasslands, wetlands, wooded areas, riparian areas, and badlands. Landscapes that have not been previously altered by human activity (often referred to generally as natural areas) provide many important environmental services to the County. They help provide clean water and air for residents, and provide habitat for wildlife.

This section aims to protect, enhance, and conserve the County's natural areas, water features, and environmentally sensitive areas, in order to provide habitat for vegetation and wildlife, and clean air and water for residents and visitors. These resources are irreplaceable and contribute to the character and identity of Wheatland County. Responsible stewardship will ensure that these resources are available to future generations.



### 3.2.1 Natural Area Objectives

1. Protect existing natural areas and environmentally significant areas.
2. Promote natural areas as a resource for recreational activity.
3. Preserve and protect wildlife corridors to connect wildlife populations.
4. Support the ongoing efforts of the Agricultural Service Board (ASB) to maintain a balance between agricultural and natural areas.

5. Minimize pollution to the County's air, water and land resources.
6. Cooperate effectively with the relevant Government of Alberta agency and other provincial agencies when considering developmental impacts on natural areas and environmentally significant areas.

### 3.2.2 Natural Area Policies

1. Applications proposing a local plan, land-use amendment, subdivision, or development permit which may impact an Environmentally Significant Area may be required to submit an environmental impact analysis or biophysical assessment.
2. The County shall encourage all planning and development applications to include land conservation strategies, including smaller parcels, multi-lot clustering, and conservation easements.
3. Dedication of Environmental Reserve (ER) shall be considered in accordance with requirements of the *Municipal Government Act* and consultation with relevant provincial regulatory bodies.
4. Notwithstanding Policy 3.2.2.3, registration of an Environmental Reserve Easement (ERE) may be considered in lieu of Environmental Reserve dedication.
5. The County shall consider the visual impact of planning and development on the natural environment, to mitigate any impact on the scenery of natural areas.
6. Development on hazardous lands, including steep slopes, low lying areas, riverbanks and areas of potential subsidence, is strongly discouraged.
7. Owners of land adjacent to, and users of, Environmentally Significant Areas and environmental reserves are encouraged to act responsibly to ensure these reserves remain natural.

#### Environmentally Significant Area (ESA):

- a) Areas which perform a vital environmental, ecological or hydrological function such as aquifer recharge;
- b) Areas which contain a unique geological or physiographic feature(s);
- c) Areas which contain significant, rare or endangered species;
- d) Areas which are unique habitats with limited representation in the region or a small remnant of once large habitats which have virtually disappeared;
- e) Areas which contain large and relatively undisturbed habitats and provide shelter habitat for species which are intolerant of human disturbance as determined by studies prepared by a qualified professional;
- f) Areas which contain plants, animals, or landforms which are unusual or of regional, Provincial or national significance; and/or
- g) Areas which provide an important linking function and permit the movement of wildlife over considerable distance.





### 3.2.3 Policies for Development in Environmentally Significant Areas

1. The County should establish a clear and comprehensive process for reviewing planning applications within provincially recognized Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs).
2. Applicants who wish to develop in an Environmentally Significant Area shall undertake an Environmental Overview, at their cost, to the satisfaction of the County.
3. The County requires that protective measures be taken where a proposed development would be located in or near the following:
  - Fish spawning grounds,
  - Nesting, feeding and staging areas for birds,
  - Historical and archaeological resource sites,
  - Wintering areas for ungulates,
  - Wildlife corridors, or
  - Wetlands.

### 3.2.4 Protection of Vegetation Policies

1. Clearing of existing trees or natural vegetation for residential development should be minimized.
2. The County encourages the use of best management practices for controlling noxious weeds, prohibited noxious weeds or invasive plants.
3. The County encourages the use of landscaping techniques that enhance the natural environment and reduce water consumption. Such landscaping techniques may include:
  - Prohibiting noxious weeds and invasive plants;
  - Encouraging plant materials that are hardy and native to the region; and
  - Encouraging drought-tolerant species in combination with permeable or pervious surface materials.

# 3.3

## Water Resources



The County's water is not only a resource, it is an important part of the natural environment and it plays an integral role in the quality of life that we enjoy. Alberta's Water for Life Strategy guides the management of water in the province to ensure the availability of safe, secure drinking water supplies. All County residents share the responsibility to ensure a healthy, secure and sustainable water supply for our communities, environment, and economy.

The County's water resources include both surface water that exists in rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands, as well as groundwater. Riparian Areas are the transition zone adjacent to waterways, and they play a very important role in protecting water quality. Wetlands serve many functions in the natural landscape. The loss of wetlands and

riparian areas due to development can be detrimental to surface and groundwater quality and quantity. Unless carefully mitigated, planning and development proposals adjacent to wetlands and riparian areas can have a detrimental impact. These effects include altering stormwater flows, reduced wetland diversity, and compromised water quality and quantity.

In Alberta, water resources such as wetlands may be protected as Environmental Reserve in the subdivision process (as per the MGA) or through other provincial legislation such as the *Water Act* and *Public Lands Act*. They can also be protected by ensuring that any adjacent development is appropriate in location, design and scale. This section identifies objectives and policies that will enable the County and its stakeholders and residents to protect the County's water resources for today and for future generations.

### 3.3.1 Water Resources Objectives

---

1. Recognize the importance of both surface and groundwater in supporting the County's quality of life.
2. Ensure the County's management of water resources is consistent with modern watershed management policies, processes and science.
3. Encourage the conservation and best use of the County's surface and groundwater.
4. Manage development to protect the County's surface and groundwater quality and quantity.
5. Increase the tree canopy within communities to reduce evaporation and promote infiltration.
6. Protect the County's Wetlands.
7. Direct growth and development away from undisturbed and agricultural lands to reduce the number of impervious surfaces.
8. Reduce the overall land disturbance and impervious surfaces associated with development.

### 3.3.2 Water Resources Policies

---

1. The County should inventory all significant waterbodies (to be defined at that time by the County), which shall be recognized and considered during all stages of the planning process. The inventory should be kept current.
2. The County will continue to work with landowners to encourage protection of groundwater quality by promoting programs such as capping abandoned water wells.
3. The County encourages the prevention of pollution to its surface water resources through source runoff.
4. The County requires that all applications comply with municipal requirements and the Provincial *Water Act* when applicable.
5. The County encourages the design of landscaping to reduce the need for water, such as the planting of native vegetation to reduce water use.
6. The County will rely on provincial standards to develop setback requirements for riparian lands adjacent to waterbodies.
7. Applications impacting riparian land shall protect riparian land from negative impacts through mitigation plans. Mitigation plans shall include, but are not limited to, a:
  - Site-specific stormwater management plan,
  - Erosion and sedimentation control plan,
  - Construction plan,
  - Biophysical impact assessment, and
  - Environmental protection plan.
8. The County may require water quality testing for all commercial, industrial, and utility applications, and for residential multi-lot applications.
9. Recognizing riparian lands as



environmentally significant areas, the County may require dedication of these lands as Environmental Reserves or Environmental Reserve Easements at the time of subdivision, as guided by the MGA and other municipal planning policies, guidelines, or documents.

### 3.3.3 Stormwater Management Policies

---

1. Treatment of stormwater shall be required prior to discharge in receiving natural environmental features and water resources, including wetlands, riparian lands and reserve lands.
2. All applications may be required to provide stormwater management plans, and any future site-specific grading/drainage plans shall be in conformance with the overall stormwater management plan.
3. Where appropriate, and in accordance with provincial policies and requirements, proposals may incorporate low impact development features, such as bio-swales or ditches, for stormwater management as opposed to installing piped systems.

### 3.3.4 Water Supply Policies

---

1. All applications shall adhere to the standards within the *Water Act*.
2. Each new multi-lot residential proposal without municipal water service (at time of subdivision) should provide its own water supply on-site. Trucking water into the site is discouraged and applications with such concepts should not be accepted.
3. Applications proposing the use of individual, privately-owned water wells and septic systems shall not be accepted where municipal water and / or sewage services are available.
4. The County may initiate a well water monitoring program in consultation with the relevant Government of Alberta agency.



## 3.4 Historic Resources



The conservation and preservation of Wheatland County's past is an important consideration within its communities. Heritage sites, historic buildings, and culturally significant areas of the County provide opportunities for community gathering, celebration of culture and heritage, and tourism. The stories and treasures of historic residents and early homesteaders help give current residents a sense of belonging. Historic resources exist throughout the County, including many barns, grain elevators, farm buildings, and some old school buildings or sites that have evolved into Community hall sites.

Providing support to preserve historic resources will ensure enjoyment and education for future generations, and it is important that

the character and design of all new development in the County respect and reflect its historical roots. However, the *Municipal Government Act* and the *Historical Resources Act* require a municipality to pay full compensation to the landowner if a property is designated a historical site under this legislation, which may not always be financially feasible for the County. These policies require cooperation between the municipality and the landowner to preserve and protect the historic area.

### 3.4.1 Historic Resources Objectives

1. Conserve and protect characteristics of the County that reflect Wheatland's unique history and rural flavour.

### 3.4.2 Historic Resources Policies

1. Owners of significant historical buildings and/or building sites are encouraged to restore these buildings on their original sites, and to register with available historic resource listings.
2. The County supports the selection and protection of historic resources with Provincial historic site designations.
3. The County supports applications to grant programs that would enable an inventory survey of current historic resources, which can help coordinate preservation efforts and mitigate the impact of future planning and development.
4. Developers are encouraged to use the names / surnames of local pioneers when naming streets and developing neighbourhoods.
5. New applications and redevelopment projects within the central areas of Hamlets should incorporate architectural design elements from the County's past.
6. The County shall explore programs to identify families and individuals who contribute to the heritage and character of the County.
7. The County shall explore multiple avenues of funding heritage preservation in order to maintain and preserve cultural sites.
8. The County shall work with members of the community and long-time residents who can teach us about our heritage and traditions.
9. The County should consider promoting select historic resources as tourism opportunities, to raise awareness and promote their preservation and the County's heritage.
10. The County shall encourage and support the installation of heritage recognition plaques at historic resources and other sites of interest.
11. The County may consider allowing the subdivision of parcels due to the potential or actual designation of a historic resource.





# 3.5

## Tourism/Visitation

Tourism makes an important contribution to the County's recreation, cultural and historical activities, and developing a strong, diversified, and community oriented tourism economy is of great importance to the County. The County supports the expansion of existing tourism options such as day-use areas, campsites, public lake/river access, and culinary tourism areas. Investing in new opportunities will provide many economic benefits throughout the County. Many tourism opportunities will build on the rural and agricultural heritage of the County, which will need to be protected and enhanced.



### 3.5.1 Tourism/Visitation Objectives

1. Promote year-round tourism within the County as an economic development tool and business generator.
2. Leverage the County's abundant natural areas as a tourism attraction and investment opportunity while protecting its environmental sensitivity.
3. Leverage the County's history and experience in agriculture as a source of tourism activities.
4. Diversify the County's agricultural opportunities into tourism destinations such as agritourism, culinary tourism, and rural tourism.
5. Increase business visitation through investment attraction efforts such as site visits, hosting conferences, and overnight stays.

### 3.5.2 Tourism/Visitation Policies

1. The County may promote publicly-owned natural areas for tourism activities, and encourage their use to both residents and visitors.
2. The County encourages tourism as a mechanism for delivering economic development and employment opportunities.
3. The County encourages sustainable business opportunities that promote tourism.
4. The County should facilitate coordination between tourism-generating and other local businesses to encourage greater tourism activity.
5. The County shall require tourism applications to demonstrate that they will have no significantly adverse effects or other social impacts on nearby land uses, or that such effects will be mitigated to the County's satisfaction.
6. The County should restrict incompatible land uses from locating in areas that would have significant negative impacts on tourism developments. Likewise, tourism developments should be restricted from locating in areas where there may be negative impacts perceived from existing land uses.
7. The County may require that tourism applications demonstrate that they will cause no adverse impacts on the natural environment, including but not limited to ground and surface water, soil quality, air quality, wildlife and vegetation. If impacts are expected, the application must demonstrate how these will be mitigated.
8. The County shall support Provincial initiatives to reduce camping and off-trail vehicle use in environmentally significant areas.



# Key Policy Area B

## Managing Growth

---

Wheatland County believes that the support of urban centres within the rural environment is extremely important. While preserving the County's heritage is the first Key Policy Area of the MDP, managing growth is the second important function of this MDP. This section includes objectives and policies to help manage and direct the growth of our communities, including residential, commercial and industrial, natural resource, education and institutions, and parks and recreation uses. Wheatland County believes that all proposals should be taken into consideration, however the suitability of the land itself and the compatibility within the surrounding community is important. New growth and development is encouraged to locate in Hamlets or in close proximity to urban areas.



# 3.6

## Residential



Residential development in Wheatland County has traditionally been limited to Hamlets and the rural farmstead, via previous “first parcel out” policies for rural residential parcels. More recent residential development has occurred mostly in the western portions of the County, partly due to the proximity to larger urban centres such as Calgary and Strathmore.

The County’s main limitations include the provision of servicing and the compatibility

with existing uses, in particular, agricultural operations. As growth has increased throughout the County, the preservation of agricultural lands has grown in importance. Along with protecting agricultural land, Wheatland County sees residential development as part of the future. Future growth and development must, however, occur in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner in order to ensure the long term prosperity of the County.

Previous County bylaws determined that, on a general basis, only the Hamlets which at the time still contained a grain elevator would continue to be recognized by the County as a Hamlet. This MDP continues to recognize these same locations even though some no longer retain their elevators. Wheatland County currently recognizes twelve Hamlets, including: Ardenode, Carseland, Chancellor, Cheadle, Cluny, Dalum, Gleichen, Lyalta, Namaka, Nightingale, Redland and Rosebud. There are also a number of named areas within the County that are not Hamlets, including Strangmuir, Eagle Lake, Baintree, Tudor, Stobart, Crowfoot, Makepeace and the Lakes of Muirfield and Speargrass golf course communities.

This MDP requires all planning proposals that would result in six (6) or more lots per quarter section prepare an Area Concept Plan (ACP), or Area Structure Plan (ASP), and provide access to County water and wastewater servicing, unless in an urban area.



### 3.6.1 Residential Objectives

---

1. Ensure residential areas are planned efficiently, with minimal impacts to agricultural operations, existing residents, existing infrastructure, and the environment.
2. Ensure Wheatland residents have access to a range of affordable housing types, and a diversity of housing choices such as accessory dwellings, to accommodate all stages of life.
3. Ensure Wheatland residents enjoy family-oriented communities where children can play.
4. Encourage residential growth towards serviced Hamlets and existing residential areas.
5. Recognize and allow for different needs and secondary land uses on parcels where residential activity is the primary land use.

### 3.6.2 Residential Policies

---

1. The County shall evaluate all residential applications in relation to both the subject land and the surrounding area.
2. Applications that result in six (6) or more lots per quarter section shall prepare an Area Concept Plan (ACP), or Area Structure Plan (ASP) and provide access to County water and wastewater servicing, unless in an urban area.
3. An Area Structure Plan may be required on the basis of the following criteria:
  - a) The scale and scope of the proposed development
  - b) Proximity to adjacent municipalities, transportation corridors, or environmental features
  - c) Consistency with the surrounding land use
  - d) At the discretion of the County
4. New residential areas may be considered on the basis of the following criteria:
  - a) Proximity to regional transportation corridors
  - b) Proximity to Hamlets and other residential areas
  - c) Traffic generation
  - d) Stormwater management
  - e) Water and wastewater servicing
  - f) Mitigation of land use conflicts
  - g) Lighting and visual impacts
  - h) Aesthetics and development standards
  - i) Efficient use of land and connection to adjacent lands
  - j) Environmental impacts
5. Multi-lot residential applications should consist of a variety of parcel and building types, for the creation of more dynamic and resilient neighbourhoods.
6. All residential applications should demonstrate that they will cause no adverse impacts on the natural environment, including but not limited to ground and surface water, soil quality, air quality, wildlife, and vegetation. If impacts are expected, the application must demonstrate how these will be mitigated.

### 3.6.3 Hamlet Residential Policies

---

1. Applications for residential areas within a Hamlet shall be evaluated in accordance with Section 3.6.2 of this Plan, in addition to this section.
2. Residential proposals within Hamlets should be of the density to allow efficient municipal and community service delivery.
3. The County supports the specialized housing for seniors and those with special needs, in Hamlets and within neighbouring urban communities where appropriate utilities and services are available.
4. The County may consider residential off-site levies to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of costs between the proponents of all new and future growth within Hamlets.



# 3.7 Commercial and Industrial



The County is home to a number of businesses that support agriculture and other services. The County recognizes the many benefits that commercial and industrial development provide to the community. These operations can affect surrounding land uses however, so mitigation of these impacts is required. The County features a number of Area Structure Plans, including West Highway 1 (WHASP) and Goldfinch Industrial (GIASP), which were adopted in order to focus commercial and industrial development in strategic locations within the region. The Regional Growth Management Strategy (RGMS) encourages responsible growth throughout the County, meaning new development areas may be considered in the future, subject to the adoption of an Area Structure Plan. Some County Hamlet Area Structure Plans also identify areas where future business development may be considered.

### 3.7.1 Commercial and Industrial Objectives

---

1. Allow for the expansion and diversification of the County's commercial and industrial base.
2. Promote the growth and diversification of employment opportunities, including local or home-based businesses.
3. Encourage commercial and industrial uses to locate in designated areas.
4. Facilitate employment for residents within close proximity to their places of residence.
5. Facilitate a good supply of properly located industrial and commercial land to meet market needs.

### 3.7.2 Commercial and Industrial Policies

---

1. The County encourages commercial and industrial uses that support the agricultural community, enhance tourism and community development, provide employment opportunities, and diversify the local and regional economy.
2. Commercial and industrial development is encouraged to locate within identified areas, and shall be considered in accordance with the appropriate Area Structure Plan or Area Concept Plan.
3. Infill and intensification of existing industrial and commercial areas should be supported as a means of promoting the efficient use of land and infrastructure, subject to amendments to existing approved plans.
4. The creation of new commercial and industrial areas shall require the preparation of an Area Structure Plan or Area Concept Plan, in accordance with County requirements. Adoption of the plan may be considered on the basis of the following criteria:
  - a) Proximity to regional transportation corridors
  - b) Proximity to Hamlets and other residential areas
  - c) Traffic generation
  - d) Stormwater management
  - e) Water and wastewater servicing
  - f) Mitigation of land use conflicts
  - g) Dust, odour, noise, lighting, and visual impacts
  - h) Aesthetics and development standards
  - i) Efficient use of land and connection to adjacent lands
  - j) Environmental impacts
5. New single-lot commercial and industrial proposals that are limited in scope and scale may be considered in accordance with the criteria in Policy 3.7.2.4, and the policies of this Plan.



6. The County shall consider transportation access as a major component of commercial and industrial applications in order to properly manage vehicle traffic from employment, patronage, and the shipment of goods and services.
7. The County shall require that commercial and industrial applications demonstrate that they will cause no significant adverse impacts on the natural environment, including but not limited to, ground and surface water, soil quality, air quality, wildlife and vegetation. If impacts are expected, the application must demonstrate how these will be mitigated.
8. The County shall consider the broader area context and the impact of cumulative development into consideration for all commercial and industrial applications.
9. The County should support opportunities for agro-industrial activities such as the processing and/or shipping of agricultural products, where appropriate and in accordance with the policies of this Plan.
10. New commercial or industrial applications in the County shall not be approved on lands that are proposed for annexation unless the lands are so identified in an Intermunicipal Development Plan.
11. The County may consider commercial and industrial off-site levies, and / or local improvement taxes, to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of costs between the proponents of all new and future development, in designated commercial or industrial areas.
12. Home-based businesses are promoted as an economic development opportunity that mitigates demand on existing infrastructure.
13. Home-Based Businesses that accommodate small, non-intrusive, low risk, low intensity developments that can be integrated into and are compatible with adjacent non-commercial or non-industrial sites, should be supported. Uses that exceed the definition of a Home-Based Business shall be located within an appropriate business area and land use district.



# 3.8

## Natural Resource Development



Wheatland County is rich in natural resources with extensive coal, oil and gas fields, gravel reserves, and solar and wind resources for power generation. In accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*, Municipal and Provincial jurisdiction can overlap in some cases. As such, County involvement is critical in order to provide local perspective and to respond to the needs of our residents. All of these resources are a great benefit to the community, bringing economic development

and jobs, and they must be managed responsibly. There are also a number of sour gas facilities within the County, which are governed by the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER).

### 3.8.1 Natural Resource Development Objectives

1. Ensure natural resources are managed safely and effectively, and that extraction activities are respectful of surrounding land uses.
2. Encourage effective reclamation of spent natural resource development sites.
3. Preserve the quality and quantity of groundwater resources affected by extractive industries through setbacks and industry best-practices for operations.
4. Cooperate effectively with all provincial and federal agencies responsible for applicable governing legislation.
5. Cooperate effectively with sour gas facility owners / operators to ensure the safety of County residents.
6. Ensure new natural resource developments comply with setback requirements as determined by AER and the Subdivision and Development Regulations.

### 3.8.2 General Natural Resource Development Policies

---

1. The County shall review applications proposing natural resource developments and may require strategies to minimize impacts on infrastructure, the natural environment, and resident quality of life.
2. The County should collaborate with proponents of natural resource applications and residents in order to promote and develop mutually satisfactory strategies to mitigate impacts of extraction operations.
3. New Area Structure Plans (ASPs) shall identify known areas of natural resources and establish a plan for their potential subdivision and development.
4. New natural resource developments are discouraged from locating in close proximity of Hamlets, water bodies, Environmentally Significant Areas, natural areas, and provincially designated historic sites.
5. All natural resource development applications must demonstrate that they will cause no adverse impacts on the natural environment, including but not limited to, ground and surface water, soil quality, air quality, wildlife and vegetation. If impacts are expected, the application must demonstrate how these will be mitigated.
6. The County may initiate well-water monitoring programs in consultation with the relevant Government of Alberta agency.
7. Applications within 220 metres of a pipeline right-of-way shall be referred to the pipeline operator for review and input.
8. Applications proposing ground disturbance within 30 metres of a pipeline, or that propose a crossing of a pipeline, may require written consent from the pipeline operator.
9. Landowners are encouraged to collaborate with pipeline operators prior to submission of an application concerning lands that are within 220 metres of pipeline infrastructure.



### 3.8.3 Oil and Gas Development Policies

---

1. Oil and gas companies are encouraged to meet provincial setbacks to minimize disruption to nearby farming operations and other land uses.
2. The County shall maintain contact with all provincial and federal agencies responsible for applicable governing legislation, and report any infractions that are brought to attention.



# 3.9

## Institutional

While there are currently only a few institutions in the County, with growth comes the potential for more, such as schools, community halls, and places of worship.

### 3.9.1 Institutional Objectives

1. Institutions in the County are well-supported and serve as gathering places within their communities.
2. Institutions in the County are available to both urban and rural residents, and are located within existing communities.

### 3.9.2 Institutional Policies

1. New institutional uses are encouraged to locate in or near new or existing Hamlets and other urban areas.
2. New residential areas should locate in areas serviced by existing institutions.
3. Applications for new residential areas should consider the impact on current school services.





# 3.10

## Parks and Recreation

Recreation, parks, and open spaces are an important part of communities. Residents value recreation opportunities along with parks and open spaces within communities, especially in the County's Hamlets. These areas provide health, social, and environmental benefits for residents of the County. The County's Open Space, Recreation and Cultural Master Plan provides more information and further details.

### 3.10.1 Parks and Recreation Objectives

1. Recognize the importance of recreational opportunities in the County, and value the positive role of parks and other gathering places in the everyday lives of residents.
2. Encourage high-quality recreational facilities that meet the needs of all residents, across all age, economic, and cultural backgrounds.
3. Protect and expand natural areas that are used for outdoor recreation activities, and preserve them for traditional uses such as hunting, fishing, and hiking.
4. Promote the establishment of a range of sites for different parks and recreational activities.

### 3.10.2 Parks and Recreation Policies

1. The County encourages sustainable recreational opportunities of all types, accessible to all residents.
2. The County shall continually explore the acquisition and re-use of land for new parks and recreation facilities.
3. The County shall ensure that new capital expenditures on recreation facilities avoid duplicating existing area facilities.
4. The County may consider recreational uses that are low-impact, passive, and do not require permanent structures.



# 3.11

## Reserves

Reserves are obtained when a subdivision of land occurs. The types of reserves that could occur are environmental reserve (ER), municipal reserve (MR), school reserve (SR) or municipal and school reserve (MSR). Money in lieu of municipal, school or municipal and school reserves can also be obtained.

### 3.11.1 Environmental Reserve (ER) or Environmental Reserve Easement (ERE)



Under Section 664 of the MGA, and subject to Section 663, the County may require the provision of Environmental Reserve (ER) during the consideration of subdivision applications. Lands subject to ER are typically environmentally significant, unsuited, or dangerous for development. Registration of an Environmental Reserve Easement (ERE) can alternately be used instead of ER. In this case, an easement preventing development within the impacted area is registered against the land. The benefits and features of an ERE include:

- Lands remain private property on title,
- The landowner controls public access,
- The land that is subject to the ERE must remain in a natural state and cannot be a “public park”,
- The municipality enforces the “easement”,
- The easement runs with the land, and
- The easement does not lapse if municipality fails to enforce it.

### 3.11.2 Municipal and School Reserve (MR or MSR)

---

Subject to section 663 of the MGA, as indicated in Section 666(1), the County may require the owner of a parcel of land that is the subject of a proposed subdivision to:

- a) Provide part of that parcel of land as municipal reserve, school reserve or municipal and school reserve;
- b) Provide money in place of municipal reserve, school reserve or municipal and school reserve; or
- c) Provide any combination of land or money referred to in clauses (a) and (b).

As per Section 666(2), 666(3), and 666(4), in providing municipal reserve land to the County, the amount of land that may be required may not exceed 10% of the parcel of land less the land required to be provided as environmental reserve and the land made subject to an environmental reserve easement. Cash-in-lieu of land is based on a market value appraisal of the existing parcel. Traditionally 10% of total land that is (net) developable is required in the form of land to be dedicated as municipal reserve (MR). In some cases, the cash-in-lieu reserve may be accepted at the discretion of County Council.

### 3.11.3 Reserve Objectives

---

1. Protect natural and unique features, river valleys, and floodplains.
2. Protect landowners and homeowners from constructing on lands that have dangerous or inadequate conditions for a dwelling.
3. Ensure that new subdivisions provide an adequate amount of open space, parks and trails for residents and users, if necessary.
4. Ensure that new multi-lot subdivisions provides an adequate amount of land for future schools.
5. Ensure that reserves are provided to the maximum amount permitted by the *Municipal Government Act*.

### 3.11.4 Reserve Policies

---

1. The County shall protect environmentally sensitive and significant areas and other significant natural areas from development by dedicating Environmental Reserve (ER) or Environmental Reserve Easement (ERE) in accordance with Section 664 of the MGA, and relevant County policies.
2. Municipal or school reserves should be dedicated in accordance with the Municipal Reserve Policy.
3. Dedication of Municipal Reserve lands for school reserve purposes should be provided subject to the requirements of the relevant school authority.
4. Dedication of Municipal Reserve lands for parks, open space, and recreational purposes should be provided subject to the Open Space, Culture, and Recreation Master Plan.
5. Municipal Reserve dedication may be deferred when considering subdivision applications proposing the creation of parcels with future subdivision potential, as per relevant policies.
6. Cash-in-lieu of Municipal Reserve dedication shall be required in instances where physical lands are not required, and where future subdivision is, in the opinion of the County, unlikely.





# Key Policy Area C

## Servicing Our County

---

The last of the three key policy areas included in this MDP is Servicing our County - which ensures that the County's communities, economy, and activities are sufficiently and efficiently serviced.



# 3.12

## Infrastructure and Utilities



This section explores the movement of wastewater, stormwater, and potable water to, from and within residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional areas of the County.

### 3.12.1 Infrastructure and Utilities Objectives

---

1. Maintain and improve the level of municipal water and wastewater servicing provided throughout the County.
2. Provide the same level of quality municipal water and wastewater services throughout the County, whether for residential or non-residential purposes.
3. Minimize the need for future water and wastewater service expansion and increased maintenance costs.
4. Provide municipal water and wastewater services in an environmentally responsible manner.

### 3.12.2 Infrastructure and Utilities Policies

---

1. New growth should locate in areas with or adjacent to existing municipal water and wastewater services, and shall consider the broader areas servicing requirements and the effect upon them.
2. All residential proposals that would result in a total of six (6) or more lots per quarter section, outside of an urban area, shall provide access to piped servicing, at the developer's expense.
3. All new development shall connect to existing municipal services, provided by the landowner/developer at their cost, where and when available.
4. All new development that connects to municipal water services shall have water meters.
5. The County shall continue to develop a water and wastewater master plan to guide the gradual expansion of municipal services.
6. The County shall continue the implementation of water metering for all existing municipal service customers.
7. Where there is potential for municipal water service, new development must plan for future water pipelines (i.e., reserving the pipeline right of way).
8. The County shall consider the following for all new applications:
  - Low impact development infrastructure such as bioswales / wetlands, stormwater collection, and permeable or pervious paving surfaces. These strategies reduce the need for hard infrastructure such as piping and help mitigate the impacts of extreme weather such as storm sewer flooding.
  - Water conservation and reuse measures such as low-flow water fixtures and drought tolerant landscaping, to mitigate future expansion of potable water services.
  - Stormwater conveyance does not negatively impact downstream landowners.
  - Natural drainage patterns are mimicked as much as possible.
9. All new planning or development shall be supported by new, or improvements to existing, municipal services, and shall be prohibited if such improvements cannot be serviced or adequately maintained.
10. Expansions and improvements to municipal services that are required to accommodate a planning or development application shall be the financial responsibility of the developer and/or landowner, unless deemed in the greater community interest by the County.
11. Expansions and improvements to municipal infrastructure shall not compromise the long-term financial sustainability of the County.
12. The County should cooperate with area municipalities for the joint-provision of municipal services should the need arise in specific areas.

### 3.12.3 Privately-Owned Water and Wastewater Policies

---

1. All residential proposals that would result in six (6) or more lots per quarter section, outside of an urban area, require a connection to existing County water servicing.
2. Proposals that would result in fewer than six (6) lots per quarter section may be serviced with individual, privately-owned water wells and private sewage treatment systems.
3. All privately-owned water wells and septic systems shall comply with all applicable provincial and federal legislation and shall have approval from the relevant Government of Alberta agency.
4. Privately-owned water wells and septic systems are prohibited in Hamlets and other areas where municipal water and wastewater services are available.





# 3.13

## Mobility and Transportation

This section explores the efficient movement of residents, visitors, goods and materials to, from and within the County. This considers all modes of local, regional, and national transportation. Transportation for residents and visitors is crucial to any municipality, but so too is the reliable movement of goods and services. Wheatland County faces transportation challenges with a widely dispersed population over a large, rural area, with urban centres and Hamlets.

### 3.13.1 Mobility and Transportation Objectives



1. Develop and maintain a safe, efficient and convenient transportation network for residents, workers, and the shipment of goods.
2. Develop networks that will be compatible between different transportation network types.
3. Provide multi-modal transportation choices for residents as much as possible.
4. Develop networks that account for long term expansion and/or future connection with neighbouring networks.
5. Prioritize pedestrian infrastructure in Hamlets and other urban areas.
6. Develop and expand a trail and pathway network for recreational walking and biking, in the County's urban areas.

### 3.13.2 Mobility and Transportation Policies

---

1. The County shall explore expanding pedestrian networks in existing hamlets and urban areas.
2. The County may explore a plan to develop trail and/or pathway systems for recreational usage as identified in the Wheatland County Open Space, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan.
3. The County should encourage the installation and maintenance of pedestrian-oriented lighting, landscaping, and street furniture, to encourage walking and use of pedestrian infrastructure.
4. Road construction and upgrade plans shall incorporate types of pavement that are compatible with adjacent land uses, the area aesthetic, and the type and volume of expected traffic.
5. Expansions and improvements to transportation infrastructure shall not compromise the long-term financial sustainability of the County.
6. The County shall continue to prioritize the long-term upgrade and/or maintenance of major local roads and shall continue to maintain and review a list of priority projects.
7. The County shall coordinate with area municipalities, Alberta Transportation and Transport Canada to explore partnerships and other funding opportunities for the maintenance, enhancement, and expansion of local roads.
8. The County may devise an asset management plan to identify and monitor the condition of transportation infrastructure.
9. The County should consider the construction of noise barriers where traffic noise begins to negatively impact adjacent residential uses.
10. New developments should avoid access routes that involve a rail crossing.

### 3.13.3 Mobility and Transportation Policies for New Applications

---

1. New planning and development applications shall be supported by new, or improvements to existing, transportation infrastructure (at the developer's expense), and shall be prohibited if such improvements cannot be serviced or adequately maintained.
2. New planning and development applications should be located in areas with existing transportation infrastructure that can be utilized, to reduce the need for road expansion and mitigate future operating costs.
3. Expansions and improvements to transportation infrastructure that are required to accommodate a subdivision or development application shall be the financial responsibility of the developer and/or landowner, unless deemed in the greater community interest by the County.

4. New subdivisions or developments shall construct legal and physical road access; any required connections shall be provided to County standards by the landowner/developer at their cost.
5. New multi-lot applications may provide internal road access (including service roads); construction shall be to County standards by the landowner/developer at their cost.
6. Commercial, industrial, or multi-lot residential applications should be required to prepare a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA);
  - a) any required upgrades to existing infrastructure shall be provided by the landowner/developer at their cost.
  - b) New infrastructure shall be provided by the landowner/developer at their cost.
7. New planning and development applications shall consider multi-modal network connections where feasible, including trails and road linkages.
8. New planning and development applications located in hamlets and other urban areas shall provide pedestrian networks.
9. Road construction and upgrades must be carried out in a manner that limits impacts on wildlife, natural areas, and historic resources. Construction and upgrades should conform to the natural terrain, minimize the extent of site alteration, and mimic natural drainage patterns, where possible.



# 3.14

## Waste Management

This section covers solid waste and looks at waste diversion, management (reduction, reducing and recycling), sustainable procurement and efficient use of materials.

### 3.14.1 Waste Management Objectives

1. Increase waste diversion from the landfill through a mix of education, recycling, and composting.
2. Promote waste diversion and awareness within the County.

### 3.14.2 Waste Management Policies

1. The County shall continue to support its relationship with the Drumheller and District Solid Waste Management Association, and the Southern Alberta Energy from Waste Association (SAEWA) for waste management services, and their efforts to:
  - Develop and maintain a composting system to process local wet waste; and
  - Expand its recycling system in both physical capacity and range of accepted materials.
2. The County shall facilitate resident and business education on waste diversion and related topics, including the importance of reducing, reusing, and recycling.
3. The County should explore new and/or innovative waste management technologies and strategies, in partnership with neighbouring municipalities and other organizations, to improve the effect of waste diversion efforts.
4. The County should provide waste management services that meet specific needs of agricultural operations.





# 3.15

## Sustainable Energy

The County has a vested interest in meeting energy needs in an efficient, affordable, sustainable and reliable manner while minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and impacts to air quality and our natural environment. Emerging technologies will play an increasing role in our energy mix, and could include resources such as wind, solar, geothermal, waste energy and biomass, or cogeneration. This section focuses on municipal operations and infrastructure in the area of sustainable energy (including clean and renewable energy).



### 3.15.1 Sustainable Energy Objectives

1. Support the development of emerging technologies in power generation to spur innovation and job creation.
2. Support the development and delivery of renewable energy for powering and heating County homes and businesses.
3. Support an array of different power generation sources to allow for a diversified energy supply that is more resilient and can continue to meet growing demand.
4. Encourage best practices in sustainable energy and energy conservation to reduce the environmental impact of the County's energy usage.
5. Cooperate effectively with Alberta Energy Regulator, Alberta Utilities Commission, the relevant Government of Alberta agency, and all other bodies responsible for applicable governing legislation.

### 3.15.2 Sustainable Energy Policies

1. The County encourages the safe and community-appropriate installation of private energy generation technology, in accordance with provincial and federal legislation.
2. Sustainable energy development as an accessory use may be permitted in any land use designation provided it is community-appropriate in terms of scale and location, and is in compliance with the policies of this Plan, and all applicable provincial and federal legislation.
3. Sustainable energy development as a primary use may be considered in any land use designation, except for Hamlet residential, provided it is community-appropriate in terms of scale and location, and is in compliance with the policies of this Plan, the County Land Use Bylaw, and all applicable provincial and federal legislation. Proposals shall provide reasonable justification for the alternate use.
4. Sustainable energy development siting shall include setbacks according to industry-specific best practices, in order to protect sensitive land uses from potential safety hazards, visual and noise intrusion, and other negative impacts.
5. Sustainable energy developments are encouraged to produce impact studies demonstrating the extent of negative impacts, and any proposed mitigation measures, related to some or all of the following areas:
  - Noise and/or vibration,
  - Sightlines and/or shadows,
  - Natural heritage and/or water bodies,
  - Archaeology and/or historic resources,
  - Air travel, and
  - Telecommunications.
6. New sustainable energy developments shall demonstrate that there will be no adverse impacts on the operational efficiency of existing, similar developments in reasonable proximity.
7. The County shall support the Southern Alberta Energy from Waste Association (SAEWA) as it explores waste to energy technology as part of reducing the County's environmental impact.
8. Sustainable energy developments shall demonstrate that they will cause no adverse impacts on the environment, including but not limited to surface and groundwater, soil quality, air quality, wildlife and vegetation. If impacts are expected, the application must demonstrate how these will be mitigated.
9. Sustainable energy developments shall include plans and reserve funds to account for the decommissioning of infrastructure and restoration of affected land, in accordance with provincial legislation.
10. The County encourages all development applications to incorporate land use patterns and facility design that promotes energy efficiency.
11. The County may encourage the promotion of energy conservation practices through educational programs, and public awareness campaigns.

# 3.16

## Health and Safety

This section explores providing accessible health, social and emergency services to all residents and visitors. Police Services are provided by five local detachments of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP): Beiseker, Bassano, Drumheller, Gleichen, and Strathmore. Wheatland County Peace Officers protect infrastructure and enforce provincial traffic and County bylaws. Ambulance services are provided in partnership with the Wheatland and Adjacent District Emergency Medical Services Association (WADEMSA) and Alberta Health Services. Fire services are provided by County-run fire departments and Fire Associations.



### 3.16.1 Health and Safety Objectives

1. Maintain and improve the level of social and emergency services provided throughout the County.
2. Ensure County social and emergency services are high quality, prompt, and create safe and healthy communities for residents, whether for rural or urban areas.
3. Ensure communities are well-designed to protect public safety, encourage healthy living, and reduce the risk of fires.
4. Minimize the long-term operating costs of social and emergency services.
5. Establish County-wide education and awareness programs targeting public safety, health promotion, and the root causes that impact general healthy living.

### 3.16.2 Health and Safety Policies

---

1. The County shall support its relationship with local RCMP detachments in their provision of police services.
2. The Manager of Emergency and Fire Services shall liaise with all local volunteer fire departments to ensure safe, efficient fire protection and operations.
3. The County shall continue to support WADMSA and Alberta Health Services in their provision of ambulance services, and the County's emergency response teams.
4. The County shall use best efforts to ensure that social and fire services are adequately provided to all residents.
5. The County shall coordinate with area municipalities for the joint-provision of social and fire services should the need arise in specific areas.
6. The County shall conduct needs assessments and operational reviews of fire services and safety and peace officers, as needed, to ensure they are meeting the needs of all residents in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
7. The County shall encourage developments located outside of areas with adequate social and emergency services to consider incorporating fire safety and prevention measures.
8. The County should encourage planning and development applications to include design elements that facilitate accessibility for emergency service providers, encourage healthy living and walkability, and increase public safety through fire prevention and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
9. The County shall encourage private water suppliers to incorporate distribution systems for fire suppression.





# 4 Implementing the Plan

---

As the Wheatland County Municipal Development Plan (MDP), this document meets the requirements of Section 632 of the Alberta *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) by addressing:

- Future growth and development within the County;
- Coordination of land use, future growth patterns and other infrastructure with adjacent municipalities;
- Provision of municipal services and facilities;
- Policies on municipal reserves, sour gas and agricultural operations; and
- Environmental matters.

The MDP will be implemented over the next 20-30 years, with amendments as required and reviews approximately every five years. The success of any statutory plan depends on the efforts that are directed towards integrating its policies into decision-making. This MDP provides the direction for County Council, Administration and residents to evaluate proposals and decisions that will affect growth, in the context of a long-term plan for the County.

Several measures beyond those specified in this document may also be used by Council to implement the policies of this Plan, including adopting new bylaws (such as design guidelines) and administrative procedures (a new application process or fee structure, for example). Implementation of this Plan will require the input, support and cooperation of residents and stakeholders from the private and public sectors. This section outlines policies and procedures to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of this Plan.

# 4 Implementing the Plan

---

The previous three sections contained the three key policy areas for the County: Preserving our Heritage, Managing our Growth and Servicing the County. This section covers the implementation of the Plan, ensuring that the MDP Vision can be achieved within the coming years. This section covers:

- 1 Roles and Responsibilities,
- 2 Area Structure Plans (ASPs), Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs) and Area Concept Plans (ACPs),
- 3 Reserves,
- 4 The Development Process,
- 5 Public Engagement,
- 6 Intermunicipal Cooperation,
- 7 Financing the MDP, and
- 8 Plan Review and Amendment.

# 4.1

## Roles and Responsibilities



Successful implementation of this MDP relies on cooperation and collaboration between Council, Administration, residents, and developers.

County Council exercises its authority within the mandate of municipal governments prescribed by the *Municipal Government Act*. Council has the responsibility of approving the MDP and future amendments to it. Council has the authority to approve the subsequent plans, policies, bylaws, programs and activities to implement the MDP and to approve the budgets associated with these implementation activities.

County Administration operates under the direction of County Council and has responsibility for preparing plans and policies and undertaking the programs and activities that support implementation. The MDP helps to outline areas where current policies and future actions will require the cooperation of all departments.

County Residents have an opportunity to participate in the implementation of the plan, by sharing their thoughts in additional public engagement sessions, such as those that are held for the adoption of ASPs for their community, or Public Hearings.

Lastly, County Landowners / Developers have the responsibility to follow all policies outlined in this MDP, including the Vision, Objectives, Policies and processes that it outlines. The MDP facilitates other documents that will help guide growth and development in the County's various communities, and landowners and developers have a responsibility to follow all other approved County policies that may apply to their land, in the Land Use Bylaw, Area Structure Plans, and any other statutory plans. This MDP outlines the planning process to assist the development community in understanding potential implications for future proposals.



# 4.2

## The Planning and Development Process



This MDP will be partially implemented through more detailed planning, which will need to follow the policies outlined here. Area Structure Plans (ASP) and Area Concept Plans (ACP) are general preliminary plans for a full site showing the basic proposal and the intentions for addressing the development requirements and/or issues. Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs) are developed for an area of the County which has already been developed. In practice, ARPs guide how an existing built up area, neighbourhood or Hamlet should develop in the future.

While implementation of this MDP will rely on the integration of its Vision, Objectives, and Policies into Council decision-making, many of its policies will be implemented through the planning and development process, which includes land use redesignation, statutory plans (and amendments), subdivision, and development permit applications. This section highlights some of the key components of this process, with objectives and policies for each.



### 4.2.1 Planning and Development Process Objectives

---

1. Create a basis for planning decisions that will be fair and equitable to all applicants and affected parties.
2. Recognize that each application will have unique aspects and allowing decisions to consider these.
3. Create a system whereby planning decision rationale may become more consistent over time.
4. Ensure that the appropriate level of detailed planning is completed for each community/hamlet, as required, prior to significant growth, so that a Community Vision and specific policies can be developed for each. This Vision and its policies will provide the approving authority with criteria with which to evaluate future applications.
5. Ensure that complex applications are guided by appropriate policy documents (ASP, ACP, ARP), in order to establish a set of expectations and requirements among the developer, residents and stakeholders, and the County.
6. Use an ASP, ARP or ACP in relation to the complexity and potential impact of the proposal.
7. Ensure that ASPs are not amended prematurely.

### 4.2.2 Planning and Development Process Policies

---

1. All applications shall follow the application process as outlined in the County Land Use Bylaw (LUB), as appropriate.
  2. All applications shall be evaluated comprehensively. This includes, but is not limited to, any applicable legislation, statutory and non-statutory policies, bylaws and policies, sound planning practice, and stakeholder and applicant engagement.
  3. Applications proposing novel solutions reflecting emerging trends and technologies may be considered in accordance with the vision and goals inherent to this plan, in accordance with the requirements of this plan.
  4. An ASP, ARP or ACP shall be prepared for more complex applications, as determined by Council with the input of the planning staff, including all proposals that would result in six (6) or more lots per quarter section.
  5. The implementation of all policies contained in the MDP shall have regard to the provisions and conditions set in all ASPs and ARPs.
  6. Council decisions should follow all policies included in approved ASPs and ARPs, and should reflect the nature and intent of approved ACPs.
- Council may decide not to consider an amendment to an existing ASP if it has not yet been fully implemented and/or all approved lots have not yet been fully developed.

# 4.3

## Public Engagement



To ensure proper public engagement and achievement of County goals, public engagement and consultation programs need to be transparent, inclusive, collaborative, and provide an accessible opportunity for the exchange of information. Participants must be able to cooperate with the County to generate solutions that may not have otherwise been considered, with the benefit of local knowledge. Timely notification of events, clearly presented background information and best practices, and credible analysis are all critical to effective engagement. Many decisions are constrained by already-established priorities, financial constraints or existing development rights, which should be clearly articulated at the outset of a project.

### 4.3.1 Who Should be Involved?

Potential public stakeholders include residents, advocacy groups, non-profit agencies, businesses and landowners. Active public participation in County decision-making is critical for understanding what each party values and how to prioritize County goals. Opportunities for public input include making submissions to County Council or staff, commenting at public hearings and meetings, workshops, and volunteering for Council committees. Participants should also have the opportunity to consider and comment on public information and studies.

### 4.3.2 Public Engagement Objectives

---

1. Engage residents through education, promotion and public debate on County issues.
2. Ensure that residents and stakeholders have the appropriate means of participating in the County decision-making process.
3. Demonstrate that public comments will be considered seriously, and that the efforts taken are respected.
4. Identify where landowners will be notified of adjacent proposals and invited to comment.

### 4.3.3 Public Engagement Policies

---

1. The County shall provide all public information relating to planning matters to all residents, either at the County office or online.
2. The County shall seek public input on planning matters, wherever possible. The County shall consider, but not be bound by, the input received from the public, and shall balance this input with other considerations relating to the long-term interests of the County.
3. Public engagement may be facilitated at any level of the decision-making process, and should be commenced as early as possible in the process.
4. Public input may be obtained through a variety of methods, including open houses, public meetings, community newsletters, citizen advisory groups, workshops, and surveys.
5. At the discretion of the approving authority, and guided by the County's Adjacent Landowner Notification Policy, landowners shall be notified and invited to provide public comment for consideration of an application.
6. Pursuant to the provisions of Part 17, Division 12, Section 692 (1) of the *Municipal Government Act*, as amended, before giving second reading to (a new or amendment to) a proposed statutory plan or bylaw, County Council must hold a public hearing.
7. The County will establish a public participation program for amendments to this MDP which describes opportunities for public input based upon the scope and intent of the amendment.



# 4.4

## Intermunicipal Cooperation



The County shares boundaries with thirteen other jurisdictions: eleven municipalities, one special area, and one First Nation Reserve. Within the County are the Town of Strathmore, and Villages of Rockyford, Standard and Hussar. Adjacent to the County are the Counties of Newell, Starland, Vulcan, Rocky View, Kneehill, Foothills, Town of Drumheller, Special Area #2, and Siksika First Nation Reserve.

Section 631 of the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) allows two or more councils to adopt an Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) for those areas of land lying within the boundaries of the municipalities as they consider necessary. Wheatland County currently has ten IDPs with adjacent municipalities.

With municipalities adjacent to the County where there is no IDP, the County has established an Intermunicipal Referral Area, within which landowners must be notified directly when a planning application or

request is received. The Intermunicipal Referral Areas are areas of the County where adjacent municipalities or urban centres are likely to have an interest, or feel the effects of a particular development. The purpose of the Intermunicipal Referral Area is to designate where individual notification of planning applications and requests are required.



### 4.4.1 Intermunicipal Objectives

---

1. Ensure healthy relationships with the County's municipal and First Nation neighbours.
2. Ensure development adjacent to the County does not negatively impact the County, and ensure development within the County does not negatively impact adjacent municipalities or First Nations.
3. Provide opportunities for the County and adjacent jurisdictions to communicate and resolve disputes.
4. Promote effective and cooperative planning, decision-making and service delivery with its neighbours.
5. Outline a procedure for referring proposed applications to adjacent municipalities.

### 4.4.2 Intermunicipal Policies

---

1. The County shall create open channels of communication with intermunicipal planning partners at political and administrative levels.
2. The County shall maintain plans and processes that provide greater certainty for land use decisions where impacts cross municipal boundaries, particularly where they include: the cumulative effects of development, utility servicing, transportation issues and impacts, environmental implications, and Plan implementation.
3. Where appropriate, the County shall mitigate any intermunicipal dispute in accordance with the relevant Intermunicipal Development Plan.
4. In cases where the County has a dispute with a municipal neighbor where no Intermunicipal Development Plan has been adopted, alternative dispute resolution processes such as facilitated negotiation, mediation, or arbitration should be considered.
5. Where appropriate, the County should work with adjacent jurisdictions to pursue opportunities for the joint provision or improvement of utility services, transportation infrastructure, and community services.
6. Where appropriate, new IDPs may be prepared and adopted in collaboration with adjacent municipalities to enhance working relationships and address issues of mutual interest. These IDPs shall be prepared in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*.



### 4.4.3 Intermunicipal Referral Area Policies

---

1. The Intermunicipal Referral Area is all land (including all adjacent urban centres, Hamlets, named areas, and adjacent municipalities) surrounding the County, within one quarter section (0.80 km / 0.5 miles) of the County boundary.
2. Any applications within the Intermunicipal Referral Area will be circulated to the related jurisdiction for comment, unless otherwise agreed to in writing or in accordance with the relevant Intermunicipal Development Plan.
3. For lands in an adjacent municipality that abut the common boundary, the County requests that the adjacent jurisdiction refer the matter to the County for review and comment.
4. Referral items may include:
  - Creation of, or amendment to, a statutory plan (IDP, MDP, ASP, etc.);
  - Creation of, or amendment to, the Land Use Bylaw (redesignation);
  - Development applications which may present significant compatibility concerns with adjacent land uses within adjacent municipalities;
  - All subdivision applications;
  - Applications for road closures that may have an impact on surrounding municipalities;
  - Local or regional community facilities; and
  - Any other item mutually deemed appropriate by both jurisdictions.
5. No new industrial or commercial developments shall be approved within the Intermunicipal Referral Area without due consideration to all responses from affected adjacent municipalities.
6. The County will consider all comments and requests received from planning application referrals.
7. Unless otherwise negotiated, written responses to any applications circulated by either the County or adjacent jurisdictions are due within thirty (30) days of the circulation date. If no response is received within this time, the response may be considered as "no objection".



# 4.5

## Financial Growth and Development



A policy document such as this MDP requires careful consideration about costs associated with implementation. These costs may be borne by the County, developers, residents or a combination of the three, and is dependent on the nature of the objectives, policies and recommendations. It is important to ensure that the MDP does not put an unreasonable financial burden on any one party as a result of growth in the County. This section covers the financial aspects of implementing the MDP, including uses and sources of funds, revenue and expenditure management, sharing and leveraging of resources among departments and partners, and new funding sources and financial tools. The County has a number of tools at its disposal to ensure financial sustainability throughout the planning process, including developer constructed infrastructure pursuant to appropriate Development Agreements and securities, payment of off-site levies and oversize cost contributions.

### 4.5.1 Financial Objectives

1. Ensure fiscally appropriate policy direction on growth management for the County.



### 4.5.2 Financial Policies

---

1. The MDP's objectives, policies and supporting subsidiary plans, policies, strategies, guidelines, programs and activities may act as the basis for department business plans and annual budget submissions. The County's business planning process will lead to a County business plan that supports the County's Strategic Plan and this MDP.
2. The County shall consider the financial impacts of all growth when reviewing and approving applications.
3. Applicants may be required to enter into a Development Agreement with the County which may require the applicant to construct, install or pay for any on-site and off-site improvements and utilities which are needed to serve the proposal (including, but not limited to, on-site storm water facilities, road upgrading, and any required easements, and access requirements) or pay an off-site levy or redevelopment levy.
4. The County shall obtain appropriate securities from developers.
5. Prior to approving subdivision and/or development applications, the County shall ensure that full cost recovery methods are in place to capture the cost of development to the extent permitted by law.





# 4.6

## Plan Review and Amendment



As a statutory plan approved by Council, the MDP establishes long-term growth management policies for the entire County. The specific relevance, timing, and sequence of its policies will be determined (and may change over time) by the County's dynamic and evolving economy, social fabric, and environmental conditions. It is prudent to review this document every five (5) years or as deemed necessary by Council, to ensure it meets current development conditions and Council priorities. The County has established a process to enable the public, community groups, adjacent municipalities, boards, commissions, other government agencies, and others to propose changes to this MDP.

### 4.6.1 Review and Amendment Objectives

1. Provide for periodic review and amendment of the MDP.

## 4.6.2 Review and Amendment Policies

1. When considering adopting or amending a statutory plan (IDP, ASP, ARP), Land Use Bylaw, Area Concept Plan (ACP), subdivision or development permit applications, the County shall review the proposal in accordance with the MDP, and other relevant policies, plans, and legislation.
2. The County, in consultation with the community, should undertake reviews of the MDP every five years to verify that its objectives and policies are current, effective, and consistent with other County policies that may be adopted from time to time.
3. An annual review shall consider proposed amendments that do not require substantive changes to this Plan and development regulations.
4. A five-year review shall consider amendments:
  - that could be considered in the annual review as well as those outside the scope of the annual review; or
  - relating to substantive changes to this Plan and corresponding regulations.
5. The County or a landowner may initiate an amendment to the MDP. The County shall require the submission of such background information as is considered necessary to support the amendment. Amendment of the MDP shall follow the appropriate procedures as outlined in the *Municipal Government Act*.
6. The County shall commence the process to amend this MDP within six months following any annexation of land that affects the County.
7. Proposed amendments to this Plan shall be accompanied by any changes to statutory plans, the Land Use Bylaw, and other related policies and guidelines so that they are consistent with this Plan.
8. There are many other documents and policies that have been approved by Wheatland County, and in some cases the Government of Alberta, that apply to planning and development in the County. While the MDP has been developed to be consistent with these, it does not supersede provincial policies, legislation or regulations.





# 5 Transitional

---

Complete subdivision and re-designation applications which were received by Wheatland County prior to the adoption of this plan, as amended, may be considered in accordance with the Municipal Development Plan policies in place at the time of application submission.



Wheatland County  
242006 Range Road 243  
Wheatland County, AB  
T1P 2C4

T: (403) 934-3321  
E: [admin@wheatlandcounty.ca](mailto:admin@wheatlandcounty.ca)  
W: [wheatlandcounty.ca](http://wheatlandcounty.ca)